

Firearms & Mental Health
 What firearm owners should know

Amy Barnhorst, MD
 Director, The BulletPoints Project
 California Firearm Violence Research Center
 Vice Chair for Community Mental Health
 Department of Psychiatry, UC Davis

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Why is it important for firearm owners to learn about mental health?


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Owning a firearm comes with responsibilities and risks

- Firearm owners are stewards of safety
- Protecting yourself and your loved ones includes more than keeping them safe from accident or attack

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Mental health crises and firearms can be a deadly combo



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Disclaimer

- This presentation deals with sensitive topics like mental health and suicide prevention
- If you are struggling with mental health issues or suicidal thoughts, confidential assistance is available 24/7

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline:
Call or text 988 or chat at 988lifeline.org

- We also share additional resources at the end of the presentation

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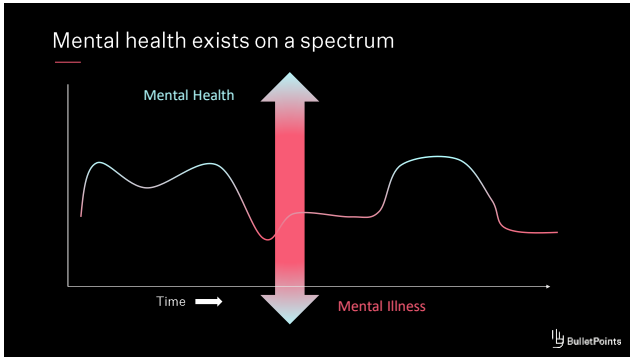
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What is mental health and what is mental illness?

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- ### Mental health can worsen from internal or external stressors
- ▢ Relationship loss
 - ▢ Job loss
 - ▢ Medical conditions
 - ▢ Legal problems
 - ▢ Financial problems
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- ### ... which can cause a variety of symptoms...
- ▢ Insomnia and fatigue
 - ▢ Inability to concentrate
 - ▢ Low self-worth
 - ▢ Poor diet and low physical activity
 - ▢ Social isolation and disconnectedness
 - ▢ Irritability, anxiety, and sadness
 - ▢ Increased drug or alcohol use
- BulletPoints

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...and potentially lead to or exacerbate a mental illness

- Major depressive disorder
- Generalized anxiety disorder
- Bipolar disorder
- Borderline personality disorder
- PTSD
- Schizophrenia

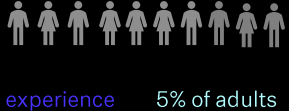


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Mental illness is common in the United States




20% of adults experience any mental illness each year



5% of adults experience a serious mental illness

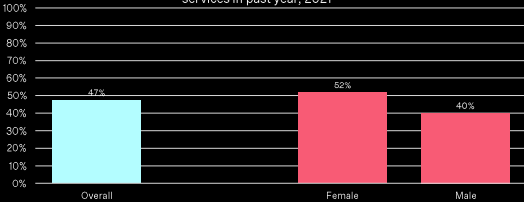
NAMI Fast Facts



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Only about half receive mental health services

Percent of US adults with any mental illness who received mental health services in past year, 2021



Category	Percentage
Overall	47%
Female	52%
Male	40%

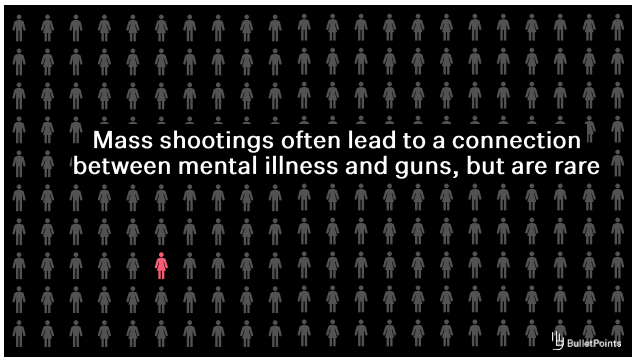
Figure adapted from NIMH Mental Health Information; data from SAMHSA



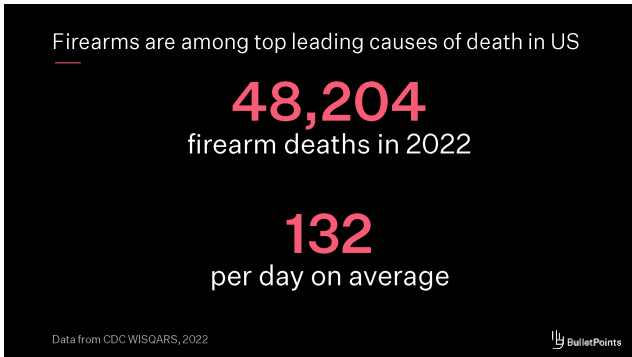
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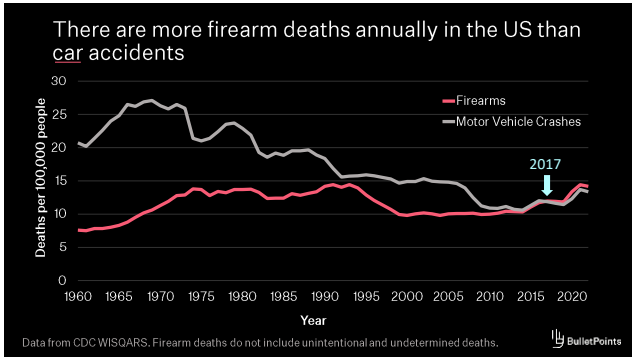
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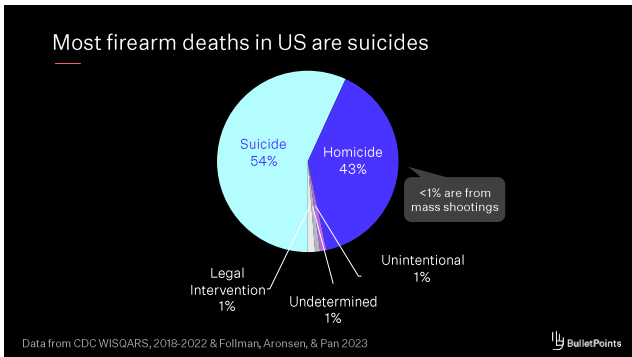
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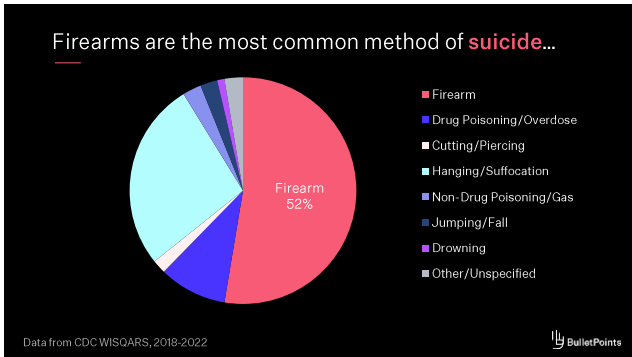
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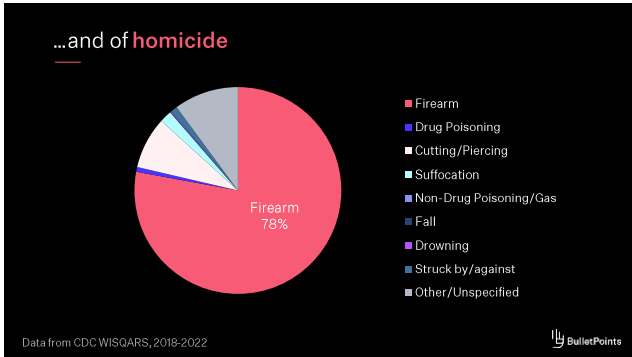
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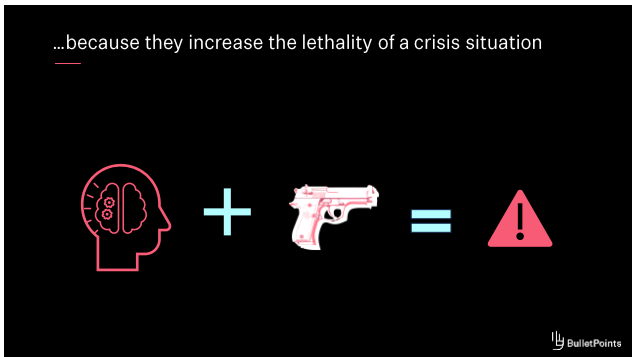
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How can you tell when someone is at risk or in crisis?

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Risk factors for suicide




Medical or psychiatric

- Depression, bipolar disorder, or schizophrenia
- Dementia or other cognitive impairment
- Substance misuse, especially alcohol
- Chronic pain or serious medical illness




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Risk factors for suicide



Situational


- Poverty or financial problems
- Recent relationship or job loss
- Isolation or hopelessness
- Legal problems



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Risk factors for violence


- ▢ Intense anger
- ▢ Impulsive behavior
- ▢ Hallucinations or paranoia
- ▢ Perceived injustice, grudge-holding or grievance
- ▢ Domestic disputes
- ▢ Increased alcohol or drug use



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Other signs of crisis


- ▢ Hopelessness
- ▢ Feeling like a burden
- ▢ Lack of future-oriented thoughts
- ▢ Wanting to not be around anymore
- ▢ Withdrawing from friends and family
- ▢ Drastic changes in personality or behavior



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Ideation or threats



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Owning a handgun increases the risk of suicide by:

3.7x
for all suicide

...compared to non-owners

Studdert et al. 2020

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Living in a home with a handgun increases the risk of homicide by:



2.3x
for all homicide

...compared to people in homes without handguns


Studdert et al. 2022 

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When an abusive partner has access to a gun, the victim's risk of homicide increases by:

5x


...compared to those without gun access


Campbell et al. 2003 


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Between 1999-2018:

2/3 of school shootings were carried out by children under 18



 In **80%** of those cases, the guns came from the child's home or the home of a relative or friend

Cox & Rich 2018 

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Access to a firearm increases the risk of suicide and homicide

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What can you do?

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Putting time and space between a person in crisis and a firearm can keep a bad situation from getting worse

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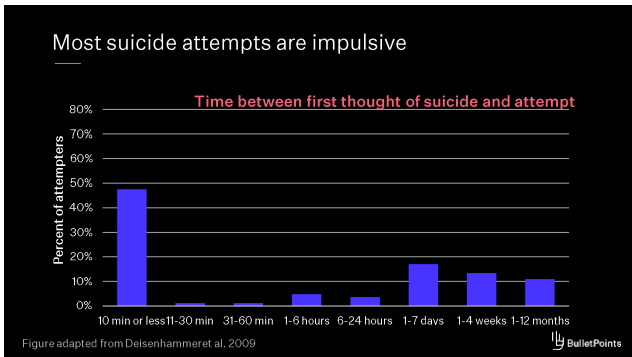
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Most people in a suicidal crisis won't just find another way

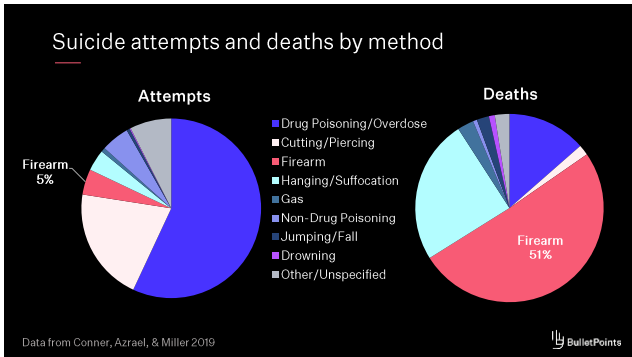
- Some may, but nearly anything else is less likely to be lethal
- Others may delay their attempt and crisis may resolve in the meantime
- Odds of survival go up if deadliest method taken away

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Policies that remove firearms from people in crisis can also prevent violence

- Civil protective orders (“restraining orders”) that temporarily restrict the person subject to the order from accessing firearms:
 - Reduce the risk of intimate partner homicide and injuries
 - Have been used to prevent at least 58 mass shootings in California


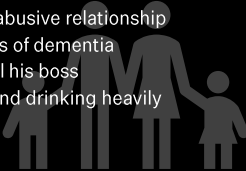
Zeoli et al. 2016; Zeoli & Webster 2010; Willie et al. 2021; Pear et al. 2022



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You can help keep your family and friends safe

- Teenager who is self-harming
- Housemate who just got out of an abusive relationship
- Older family member who has signs of dementia
- Friend who has said he wants to kill his boss
- Spouse who has been depressed and drinking heavily



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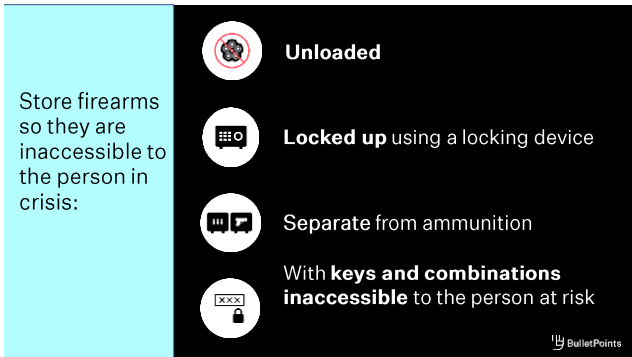
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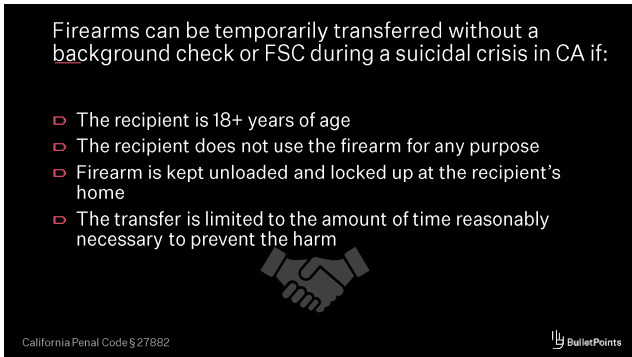
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Emergency actions may be necessary in higher risk situations



- Protective Orders - for mandated relinquishment of firearms
- 5150 Mental Health Hold - if the person needs mental health treatment



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Various protective orders allow for firearm removal in a crisis



 Domestic Violence Restraining Orders	 Elder or Dependent Abuse Restraining Orders
 School Violence Restraining Orders	 Civil Harassment Restraining Orders
 Workplace Violence Restraining Orders	 Gun Violence Restraining Orders



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A Gun Violence Restraining Orders (GVRO) is a temporary civil order



A GVRO is a court order to have a person's guns temporarily removed based on a "significant danger in the near future" to themselves or another with a firearm

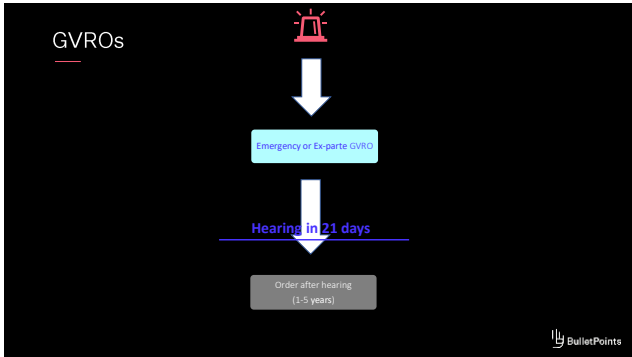
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In California, various people can petition for a GVRO

- Petitioners:
 - family and household members
 - law enforcement
 - school officials or teachers
 - employers or co-workers
 - dating partners or co-parents




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Mental Health Holds (5150)



- Involuntary psychiatric hold for dangerousness to self or others (or grave disability)
- Pathway to inpatient hospitalization



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The Second Amendment protects the rights of private citizens to own firearms


A well regulated Militia being necessary to the security of a free State, the Right of the People to keep and bear Arms shall not be infringed."

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Federal and State law prohibit firearm ownership and purchase for some mental health-related events


- The Gun Control Act of 1968 regulates the firearm industry and owners
- Some prohibitions are targeted at specific mental health-related events



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The Gun Control Act regulates the firearm industry and owners


- Prohibits ownership by a list of "prohibited persons" including
 - Felons
 - Unlawful users of or people addicted to a controlled substance
 - Respondents to DV restraining orders
 - Anyone "adjudicated as a mental defective" or who has been "committed to any mental institution"



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Someone is "Committed to a Mental Institution" after they are psychiatrically hospitalized

- Not just put on a "5150" hold
- Happens after an involuntary admission to a psychiatric hospital
- Requires hearing before a judge or hearing officer

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California State-level mental health prohibitions

- Psychiatric admission for dangerousness to self or others > 5-year state-level prohibition
- Court-ordered outpatient psychiatric treatment > prohibition for duration of order
- Conservatorship




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You could be the person in crisis


- Make a plan just in case
 - Involve trusted person
 - Designate a strategy to make your firearms inaccessible
 - Store offsite
 - Change combinations
 - Disassemble
- Know what mental health and crisis resources are available

These are temporary measures until you've recovered



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You can take steps to care for your mental health




Stay Active




Stay Positive




Connect with Others




Get Enough Sleep



Create Coping Skills



Enjoy Hobbies



Seek Care When You Need It

Adapted from Captain Awesome: <https://captain-awesome.org/mental-health/>



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What mental health resources are available?



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For free, 24/7 confidential crisis support:

Suicide Prevention & Mental Health Crisis Lifeline

Call or text **988**

Chat online at 988lifeline.org

Veterans Crisis Line
for Veterans and their loved ones

Call **988** then Press **1**

National Domestic Violence Hotline

Call **1 (800) 799-7233**

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For more information about mental health:

Walk the Talk America
Pro-2A non-profit bridging the gap between mental health and responsible firearm ownership

Visit walkthetalkamerica.org

National Shooting Sports Foundation (NSSF) & American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP)

Visit braveconversation.org

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)

Visit nami.org

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For help finding mental health and supportive services:

Mental Health America
Find help for yourself or someone else

Visit mhanational.org/get-help

Psychology Today
Therapist locator

Visit www.psychologytoday.com/us/therapists

211
Local health and social services, including food, shelter, counseling, substance use services, and employment assistance

Call 211 or visit 211.org

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For more information on protective orders:

Domestic Violence Restraining Orders

Visit selfhelp.courts.ca.gov

Gun Violence Restraining Orders

Visit speakforsafety.org

Other Civil Protective Orders

Visit selfhelp.courts.ca.gov



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