

Suicide prevention tips for firearm dealers

Your awareness and vigilance could help save a life.

No firearm dealer or their sales staff wants to sell a firearm that will be used for a suicide. While not all suicides are preventable, you could reduce the odds that a gun bought at your store today is used in a suicide tomorrow.

We all know you can't take a bullet back!

4 steps firearm dealers can use to help customers who are contemplating suicide

1. Look for warning signs in customers:

Take all signs seriously.

Change in mood

- Looks anxious, avoids eye contact
- Seems out-of-sorts; appears distraught (shaking, fighting back tears)

Unusual response to firearms

- No knowledge about firearms AND no interest in learning; asks no questions, just picks out a gun
- Seems disinterested in which firearm they are purchasing or is unresponsive to your questions about the purchase
- Gives unconvincing response when asked how they intend to use the firearm they plan to purchase
- No interest in firearm maintenance or safety, may quickly pick the least expensive option

Comments & verbal clues

- Comments or jokes about suicide: "Pretty soon it won't matter." "I'm tired of life." "I just want out."
- Mentions a recent crisis, such as a divorce, job loss, or other setbacks
- Mentions being a burden to others. "My family would be better off without me."
- Makes comments that could suggest thoughts of suicide (e.g., "I don't need a lot of ammunition; I won't have the gun for long.")



3. Ask about suicide:

It's OK to ask. Doing so will NOT plant the idea in someone's mind.

"Sometimes, when people are having a hard time, they think about suicide. Is that something you have thought about?"

You can also ask: "Are you thinking about suicide?" OR "Are you thinking about killing yourself?"

- Don't wait - ask the question. If you are unable to do so, ask your manager to assist you immediately
- If the customer is reluctant to answer, keep trying with another approach
- If they answer yes, listen carefully and then offer to call the Suicide Prevention Lifeline at (800) 273-TALK or text the Crisis Text Line by texting 'MT' to 741-741
- Offer compassion, not advice. Avoid judgment. Do not make assumptions about what YOU think makes their life worth living



- Acknowledge their struggles and feelings: "That sounds frustrating." "Thank you for telling me."
- Assure them that you care, and help is available. "I want to make sure you're OK."
- Persuade them to get help. Their primary care provider and 2-1-1 are great places to start "Is there someone you trust whom I can call to help you?"

SLOW

2. Slow down the sale:

Trust your instincts; you have a right to refuse service and/or a sale of a firearm to anyone.

- Ask: "What is your interest in buying a firearm? How do you plan to use it?"
- Recommend training prior to a purchase if the customer has little or no firearm experience
- Suggest the customer take some time to think over a firearm purchase
- If they claim to be purchasing a firearm for self-defense, suggest pepper spray as another option
- Notify the store owner or manager (if applicable) if you are at all uncomfortable with a prospective sale
- If you deny a sale, notify nearby ranges and dealers that the customer may visit their shops. If you believe there is a risk of imminent danger such as harm to self or others, consider a call to 911 and ask for a Crisis Intervention Team-trained officer to assist you

4. Remove dangers:

Putting time & distance between someone at risk for suicide & lethal means can save a life.

- If they say yes to the suicide question, ask, "Do you have a plan?" "Do you have a way to carry out your plan?"
- Ask if they have access to lethal means such as stockpiled medication, a firearm, or other items
- If yes, suggest they remove or lock them up until they feel better. Ask if someone they trust can temporarily hold onto those items. "How can we keep you safe for now?"
- Please direct them to use a gun lock, gun safe, lockbox, or other safe storage methods available in your store
 - Most law enforcement are also willing to temporarily hold firearms in the case of a crisis
 - Remember, if you are concerned the customer might harm themselves or others, call 911 and ask for a Crisis Intervention Team-trained officer



Suicide Prevention Lifeline 800-273-TALK (8255)

For Veterans Press 1

Available 24/7, the Lifeline can help you help others

SAFER
COMMUNITIES
MONTANA

Crisis Text Line text 'MT' to 741-741

Montana 211: Visit montana211.org or call 2-1-1

Trevor Project - LGBTQ (866) 488-7386

Learn more and request free gun locks and other tools at <https://bit.ly/SaferCommunitiesMT>