



The Impact of Firearms on Self-Harm and Violence: Recognizing Warning Signs in Schools



To protect your students and community, it is important to recognize and understand the risks associated with self-harm, violence toward others, and the critical role firearms play in these contexts. Use this resource to identify warning signs and better understand the scope of these issues in school settings.



Key Statistics

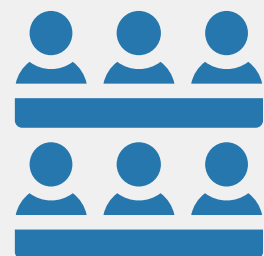
Self-Harm and Suicide



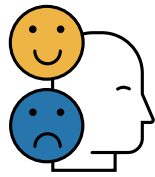
- ➔ Colorado ranks fifth in the nation for suicide deaths.
- ➔ In 2021, there were **850** firearm-related deaths in Colorado, **75%** of which were suicides.
- ➔ Men are four times more likely to die by suicide than women, often because they use firearms.

Violence Toward Others

- ➔ Firearms are used in nearly 50% of mass attacks.
- ➔ A recent study found that 75% of school shooters accessed firearms from a parent or relative.
- ➔ Research shows that 77% of school shooters shared their intent for violence with someone beforehand.
- ➔ Over 50% of ERPO petitions in Colorado are filed due to threats of violence against others.
- ➔ All school shootings analyzed by the U.S. Secret Service showed identifiable warning signs.



Warning Signs



Recognizing **behavioral changes** is essential to **preventing harm**

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Warning Signs of Self-Harm

- ➔ Talking about feeling hopeless, being a burden, or experiencing unbearable pain
- ➔ Withdrawing from activities or isolating from friends and family
- ➔ Experiencing sudden changes in sleep patterns, either sleeping too much or too little
- ➔ Experiencing harassment, bullying, or other stressful life events
- ➔ Being preoccupied with death or giving away prized possessions
- ➔ Increasingly using substances, especially alcohol or drugs
- ➔ Exhibiting sudden changes in mood, including extreme fatigue or unexpected high spirits

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Warning Signs of Violence Toward Others

- ➔ Sudden withdrawal or irritability
- ➔ Obsession with weapons, violent content, or prior shootings
- ➔ Bullying or targeted harassment based on identity differences like race, gender, or religion
- ➔ Substance abuse or escalating risky behaviors
- ➔ Direct threats to harm others, either verbally, in writing, or online
- ➔ History of cruelty to animals or previous incidents of harassment and aggression
- ➔ History of child abuse, neglect, or trauma
- ➔ Behavioral patterns like being withdrawn, socially isolated, or antisocial

Firearms and Risk Amplification



Firearms **dramatically increase** the **lethality** and **likelihood** of both self-harm and violence toward others

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Self-Harm

- ➔ Firearms are the most lethal method of suicide, leading to fatalities 90% of the time, compared to 4% with other methods.
- ➔ Easy firearm access significantly escalates the risk of suicide, especially among youth.
- ➔ Suicide accounts for the majority of firearm-related deaths in the United States, with over 23,000 firearm suicides occurring annually (64 every day).

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Violence Toward Others

- ➔ School shootings often involve firearms obtained from the shooter's own household.
- ➔ Easy firearm access increases the likelihood of escalation from ideation to action.
- ➔ Research shows that 64% of attackers exhibited behaviors that warranted an immediate response, but intervention often did not occur.
- ➔ Firearms play a significant role in mass shootings, with 173 targeted attacks between 2016 and 2020 involving three or more victims.



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