

Questions about Storing Firearms

If a member of your family is going through a mental health problem and is at increased risk of suicide, the safest option for any household firearms is to store them away from home until the person has recovered.

- **Self-Storage Facilities** – Many self-storage facilities welcome storage of firearms. Those that offer storage drawers are the least expensive option for someone who only needs to store a few handguns. Many facilities don't offer drawers, and the smallest unit size is a 5 foot by 5 foot unit. These go for \$30-\$75/month depending on location and whether they're climate-controlled. Guns should be stored unloaded. Some facilities allow storage of ammunition, others don't. Some facilities don't allow storage of firearms but assume that there may in fact be firearms in their units since they don't see what people put in their units. At 24 hour facilities you can retrieve your property at any time as long as you've been paying your storage bills. One advantage of self-storage is that retrieving your guns does not involve a background check. You'll find many facilities online.
- **Gun shops and shooting ranges** – Some gun shops and shooting ranges rents lockers for a fee. At a gun range, only you have the key, and there is no need for a background check when you retrieve the guns. If guns are stored at the gun shop, they must be logged onto the shop's books, so the gun owner will need to go through a background check to retrieve the guns.
- **Storing with friends or family** – Storing firearms with someone you trust is a comfortable and cost-free option for many people. Rules depend on your state, but the NRA-ILA [website](#) and the smartgunlaws.org website summarize prohibited persons under local laws.
- **Pawn shops** – Pawn shops will take guns in exchange for a "loan" and charge a monthly interest fee (e.g. on a loan of \$100 at 20%, the interest owed every month will be \$20). To retrieve the guns you repay the loan, pay all interest due, pass a background check, and fill out federal firearm paperwork

Some **law enforcement** departments (not all) will take firearms. Some offer temporary storage, some offer permanent disposal options, and some offer both.

- **First**, call your local police department, sheriff or state police.
- **Identify** yourself and explain your concern.
- **Ask** for the Officer on Duty; write down his/her name and the department's name.
- **Arrange** with the officer a time and location for him/her to pick up the firearms, if they offer that service.
- **Do not** bring the firearms to the police department unless told to by the Officer on Duty.

Do the Firearms Need to Be Ready to Go in a Certain Way?

- If you know how to safely unload the firearms, unload it.
- If you do not know how to unload the firearms, tell the Officer before he/she arrives to pick it up.
- If the Officer asks you to bring the firearms to the police station, name who will bring it, what the person looks like, and the time the person will arrive.

What Happens to the Firearms?

- The gun owner and the Officer will complete some paperwork.
- What happens next depends on the department. If the owner no longer wants it, some departments may have it melted down while others may sell it.
- If they store your guns, in most cases, you will need to go through a background check to get them back.
- Departments that offer temporary storage may have different policies regarding how to retrieve it (e.g., if applicable in your state, the gun owner may need to bring in a valid firearm owner ID card).

What if Storage or Disposal Isn't an Option?

- **Lock** the unloaded firearms in a gun safe or tamper-proof storage box with ammunition locked in a separate location. (BETTER YET, don't keep ammunition at home.) Trigger locks and cable locks are sold in sporting goods stores and where firearms are sold. Some police departments offer free locks. Be sure the keys and storage box combinations are kept away from the person at risk.
- If you already lock your guns but the at-risk person has access, change the combinations or buy new locks and don't disclose the location of the keys. **Remember:** This does not guarantee safety. Family members often know one another's hiding places.
- The best option is to disassemble your guns, and lock up a key component, like the slide, or the firing pin, separately from the gun.

What if a Family Member Carries Firearms as Part of the Job?

- **Store the gun at work if possible. If not, then...**
- **Remove** all the firearms but the one required for work **and lock it very securely. Lock ammunition separately.**
- **Remember:** Using locking devices or locked storage does not guarantee absolute safety, but does present a barrier to an impulsive act.

People Prohibited from Receiving Firearms

Under federal law, [18 U.S.C. § 922\(d\)](#), no person may purchase or possess a firearm if they fall into the following categories, nor may any person knowingly sell, deliver, or otherwise transfer a firearm to any person falling into these categories:

- Is under indictment for or has been convicted in any court of a felony;
- Is a fugitive from justice;
- Is an unlawful user of a controlled substance (drug user);
- Has been adjudicated as a mental defective or committed to a mental institution;
- Is an illegal alien;
- Has been dishonorably discharged from the armed forces;
- Has renounced his or her citizenship;
- Is subject to a court order issued after a hearing which restrains him or her from intimate partner violence; or
- Has been convicted of a misdemeanor domestic violence offense.