

**To: All Providers**  
**From: PerformCare**  
**Date: 9/1/2022**  
**Subject: Suicide Prevention #7: Lethal Means Safety**

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September is Suicide Prevention and Awareness Month! September 10<sup>th</sup> is World Suicide Prevention day! For September, PerformCare would like to address the topic of “Lethal Means Safety” for crisis planning with those at risk for suicide. Half of those who die by suicide in the United States used a firearm. Most deaths by firearm (2/3) are suicides. Suicide attempts with a firearm have one of the highest rates of a death (85-90%).

Most people attempt suicide impulsively during acute periods of mental crisis, typically using whatever means is most readily available. As many as one in four suicides occur in the first five minutes following making the decision to suicide. (Deisenhammer & Strauss, 2009). Given the lethality of firearms, this calls for addressing access to weapons in managing clients with suicidal thinking. Reducing access to firearms (effective means of rapid lethality) can determine whether a person at risk for suicide lives or dies.

The Suicide Prevention Resource Center offers a free online training for clinicians that focuses on how to reduce access to the methods people use to take their life. This training is called “Counseling on Lethal Means (CALM)”. The training addresses three components of reducing access to lethal means for those at risk for suicide. They include: identifying people who could benefit from lethal means counseling; asking about their access to lethal methods; and working with the person and their families to reduce access.

#### References

Deisenhammer EA, Ing CM, Strauss R, et al. The duration of the suicidal process: How much time is left for intervention between consideration and accomplishment of a suicide attempt? *Journal of Clinical Psychiatry*. 2009;70(1):19-24.

<https://www.dhs.pa.gov/Services/Mental-Health-In-PA/Pages/988.aspx>

<https://afsp.org/an-introduction-to-firearms-and-suicide-prevention#storing-firearms-safely>

[www.sprc.org/resources-programs/calm-counseling-access-lethal-means](http://www.sprc.org/resources-programs/calm-counseling-access-lethal-means)