



State Legislation as a Protective Factor in Adolescent Suicide Rates



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Background: Gun injury is a leading cause of death among U.S. children with nearly 1,300 killed by guns every year and 38% are suicides. Each state has its own laws regarding guns, but only 32 out of 50 states have child protection or safe storage laws.

Purpose: To examine the relationship between child access prevention laws (CAP), safe firearm storage laws, and adolescent suicide by firearms in the U.S.A.

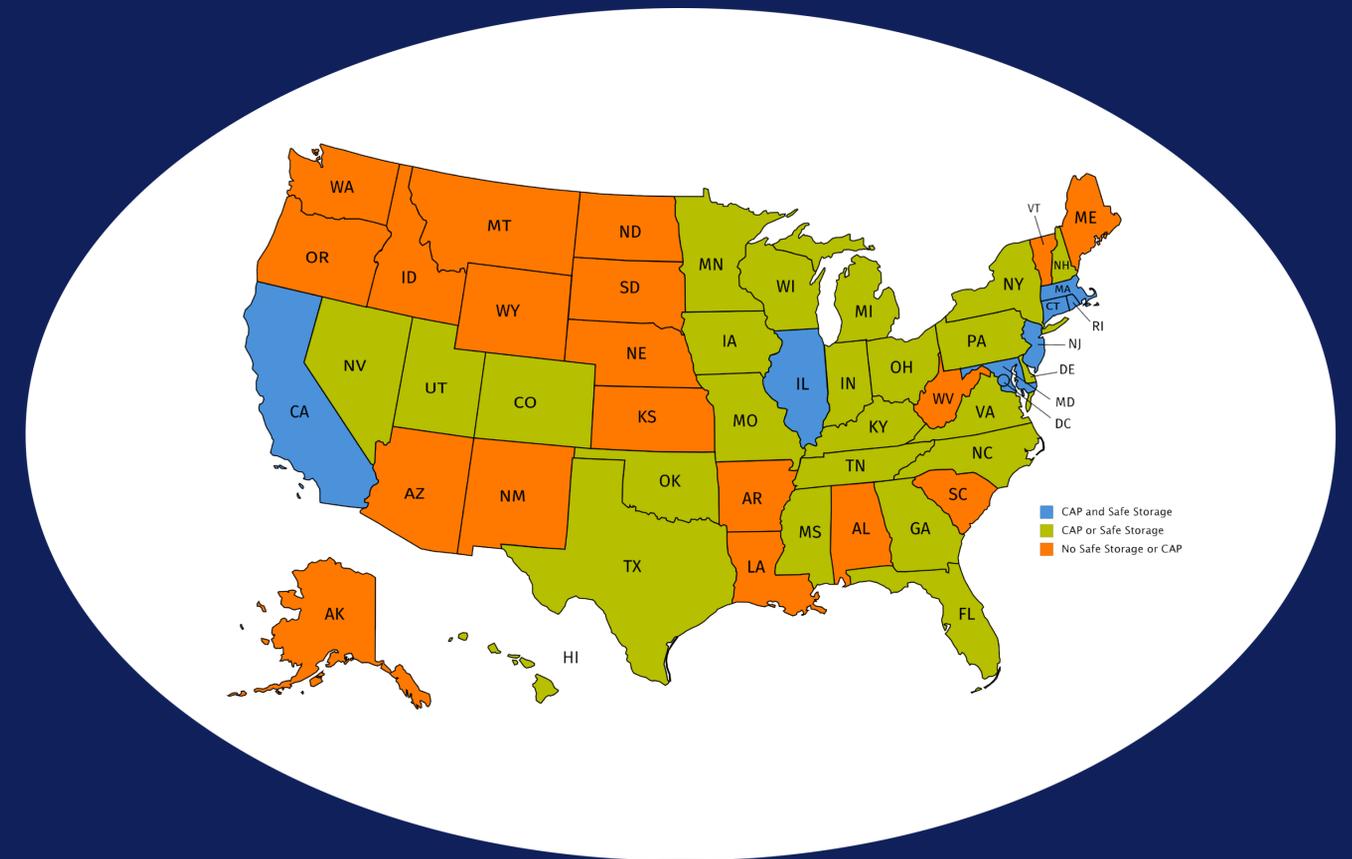
Methods: Secondary analysis of public access data from the CDC's WISQARS, state legislation for the years 2009-2016, and the Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence.

Sample: All 50 states plus the District of Columbia.

Data Analysis: Descriptive and correlational analysis of state legislation, CAP and safe firearm storage laws were done using adolescent suicide rate determined per state by the CDC.

Results:

- Twenty-eight states have CAP laws, 12 have safe storage laws, and 8 have both.
- Suicide rates were more likely to be higher in states that had an absence of CAP laws ($r = 0.41, p < .05$).
- Suicide rates were more likely to be higher in states that had an absence of safe storage laws ($r = 0.67, p < .01$).
- Only 46% (13) of states with a CAP laws compared to 83% (10) of states with safe storage laws were below the national suicide average.
- Eight states have both CAP and safe storage laws, these states were strongly correlated with suicide rates below the national suicide average ($r = 0.67, p < .01$).



Conclusion/Implications:

- Gun legislation, such as CAP and safe storage laws, may provide a protective risk reduction factor for adolescent suicide by reducing access to firearms.
- The eight states with both CAP and safe storage laws all have ACA Medicaid expansion that covers mental health services for the most vulnerable low-income families.
- Nurses are front line providers that assess family safety at home, school and in the community. By providing vital expertise and advocacy nurses can influence policy protecting children from exposure to unsafe firearms in households.