



## Protect Children from Firearms

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### Position

The Washington Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics supports efforts to encourage the safe storage of firearms, specifically by enacting a child access prevention law in Washington State.

### Issue

Recent tragedies in Washington State that resulted from young people accessing firearms have drawn attention to the urgent need to address firearm injury prevention, particularly as it relates to children and teens.

Child access prevention (CAP) laws impose criminal liability on adults who allow children to have unsupervised access to firearms. Twenty-seven states and the District of Columbia have CAP laws in place; Washington State does not. States with CAP laws have seen measurable decreases in unintentional firearm injuries. In 12 states where CAP laws were in effect for at least one year, unintentional deaths fell by 23% among children under age 15. Another study found that CAP laws were associated with an 8.3% decrease in suicides among 14-17 year olds. A 2006 study concluded, "the best evidence indicates that suicidal individuals generally do not have a long-term, sustained will to die. Therefore, restricting access to firearms, a highly lethal means of suicide, is an important preventive strategy."

### Quick Facts

- Approximately 200 children through age 19 died due to gun injuries during 2009-13 in Washington.
- In 2013, firearms were involved in 1 of 6 of all deaths of youth ages 15-24.
- Nearly half of all child suicides and 42% of all child homicides in King County are gun related.
- An estimated 55,000 children in Washington State live in homes with loaded, unlocked firearms.
- In 2013, 36% of Washington households had at least one firearm; 18% had an unlocked firearm.
- About 90% of fatal firearm incidents involving children occur in the home.
- More than 14% of 8th grade students and almost 23% of 12th grade students in Washington State reported that it was easy to get a handgun.
- During the 2013-2014 school year, the Washington Superintendent of Public Instruction reported 91 incidents involving a firearm on school premises, facilities or transportation systems.