

NAMI Means Restriction Education

Donna Fox
NAMI Minnesota

Based on the Means Restriction Education model developed by Dr. Marcus Kruesi, Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences Medical University of South Carolina

Learning Objectives

- Achieve greater understanding of means restriction and its relationship to completed suicide
- Learn various options for safely securing firearms, and for effectively restricting access to other lethal means
- Acquire practical skills for presenting means restriction education to a parent/caregiver who is in crisis once the risk of suicide has been accessed
- Understand why parents who have received this evidence based practice of means restriction education are 3.8 times more likely to take new action

2007 MN Student Survey

- In Hennepin County, 27% of 12th graders and 26% of 9th graders had an emotional or behavioral problem, with only 40% receiving treatment.

When asked if they were often unhappy, depressed or tearful:

- 33% of 12th graders in Hennepin County said, "yes"
- 36% of 9th graders in Hennepin County said, "yes"

When asked about thoughts of suicide

- 27% of 12th graders and 22% of 9th graders thought of killing themselves in the last year
- 15% and 12% respectively said they had tried to kill themselves
- This means that in Hennepin Co. nearly 2,000 teenagers said they had attempted suicide



The suicide rate among adolescents and young adults were three times higher in the American Indian community than in other racial/ethnic groups

American Indian and Hispanic 12th graders were more likely to report suicide attempts than other racial/ethnic groups, at 21 percent and 18 percent respectively

The rate of reported suicide attempts among African Americans (13 percent) and Asians (10 percent) was also higher than the overall rate

Minnesota Dept of Health 2001

National Alliance on Mental Illness



Availability can make all the difference

- The adolescent brain is not fully developed, therefore the suicide of a young person is often an impulsive act
- A gun in the home doubles the chance of a young person dying by suicide
- Hiding a gun, ammunition, or a gun lock key is about as successful as hiding Christmas presents
- When a gun is not found in the home, it is often found in the home of a friend or relative
- Tell every family of this risk; even those without guns!

National Alliance on Mental Illness



What is the most frequent method of attempt? Overdose

On what? Over the counter medications

What medication is commonly found in medicine cabinets in very large amounts?

Acetaminophen or Tylenol

National Alliance on Mental Illness

It is best to remove all:

- **firearms**
- **medications (both prescription and over the counter)**
- **knives and other sharp objects**
- **ropes and like materials**
- **alcohol**
- **car keys**

Safe Gun Removal

- Although many police departments don't have written policies, most will provide safe pick up and storage of firearms when informed of a risk of suicide in a home
- Families need to know that the serial number will be checked for ownership and links to previous crimes, and a ballistics test may be done
- Smaller departments may not have room for gun storage

The Use of Locks

- A variety of trigger and gun locks are available as well as gun safes
- A metal lock box is very useful for medications. Only very small amounts should be available. Use pill packs.

Keys are better than combinations, but the key must be kept on your person at all times.

Critical Ingredients for Suicide Prevention in a Facility?

- Increased observation
- Decreased access to means

Parents need to know:

- A family history of mental illness, suicide attempts and/or completed suicides increase their child's risk of suicide
- A good indicator of a future attempt is a previous attempt

Limited Time Parent Education

Three Steps

1. Inform the parents that their child is at risk of suicide and tell them why
2. Tell them they can reduce the risk through the removal of lethal means
3. Tell them how they can achieve this

Step One

- Inform the parent that their child is at risk of suicide and tell them why (previous attempt, depression, etc.)
- Do not have this discussion near the child
- If there is resistance, don't debate whether there is a risk. Agree that "we all care about your child's safety"
- "Has anyone in your family died by suicide?"
- Stick to the facts and statistics

Step Two

- Tell them they can reduce this risk through the removal of lethal means
- "The risk of overdose increases with the availability of medications in the home, and the presence of a gun doubles the risk of suicide"
- If they argue that their child will just find the means somewhere else:
"Your child is impulsive. Would you like to make a suicide attempt easy or difficult?"

Step Three

- Discuss options for the removal of means
- Have an idea of local police department policy regarding firearm disposal or refer them to a CIT (Crisis Intervention Team) officer in their precinct
- Discuss options for locking away means like medications and the importance of keeping the key
- Stress that hiding means is not effective
- Problem solve with the parent to find the best options
- Explain that their child should not spend time alone
- TEST the parent

Evidence shows that there can be very little retention of verbal instructions when a person is under great stress

So ask them to repeat the information back:

- What indicates that your child is at risk?
- Is there a gun in the house?
- What is your plan for safe keeping?
- Are medications available?
- What will you do with them?

Research data shows that when means restriction education was not documented in the person's medical records, it probably was not given. Make a habit of giving families the benefit of this life saving information and documenting it in the medical records.

Role Play

- Find a partner
- Practice the 3 steps of means restriction education
- Take turns being the parent
- Don't forget to have them repeat back what they have learned!



- Please hand one of our NAMI yellow post cards with crisis phone numbers to each family who receives means restriction education. When all of the yellow cards are depleted we have reached a goal set in the grant. Thank you!
- Also hand out gun locks and metal lock boxes for medications (we are working on getting these) when you feel it would be helpful for a particular family.

National Alliance on Mental Illness



Donna Fox
 Program Director
 651-645-2948 Extension 101
dfox@nami.org

National Alliance on Mental Illness



NAMI Minnesota

800 Transfer Road, Suite 31
 St. Paul, MN 55114
 1-888-473-0237
 651-645-2948
www.namihelps.org



National Alliance on Mental Illness
