



FAQ: Firearm Retailers & Suicide

01

If I deny a sale to a suicidal person, won't they just use another method?

Some won't, others will. But almost every other method they would use is less likely to kill them. Also, other methods allow time for rescue or for the person to change their mind mid-attempt.

03

Suicide is a sensitive subject—I'm concerned about offending my customers or making them feel uncomfortable.

This is indeed a difficult subject; but it's also true that thoughtful conversations about hard topics can produce good outcomes, in this case even save lives. A customer might see a poster or brochure in your store, for example, and talk his newly-divorced brother into putting his guns into storage until his depression lifts.

05

Does relocating the guns for a while always work?

There are no guarantees. But it's a simple step to make things safer. Reducing a suicidal person's access to guns and other lethal means is only one part of a broader suicide prevention plan.

02

Will a person who attempts suicide and survives eventually figure out a way to kill themselves later?

Suicidal feelings often pass over time. Studies that follow people over many years have found that over 90% of those who survive a suicide attempt do not go on to kill themselves later.

04

Suicide is a personal choice—it's your right to end your life. Who am I to intervene?

Some people attempt suicide after a lot of deliberation and are virtually certain their life is no longer worth living. But most are ambivalent, and many attempt during a crisis. Over half of attempters report less than an hour passed between deciding on suicide and making the attempt, according to a number of studies.

988 Suicide Prevention Hotline

If you or someone you know needs help now, call or text 988 or chat at [988lifeline.org](https://www.988lifeline.org)

06

Could I be sued if I refuse to make a sale to someone who passes the background check?

As firearm retailers, you are NOT violating 2nd amendment rights by refusing a purchase or rental if weyou suspect something isn't right; it is well within your legal rights to deny a transaction (as long as this denial is not simply based on a person's race, ethnicity, religious beliefs, or sex).

08

I have had a customer purchase a gun for suicide, and he didn't exhibit ANY warning signs at all.

You can't always spot people who are suicidal. We agree, some suicidal customers won't show any outward signs, and firearm retailers aren't mind readers. But there have been occasions when a dealer asked a person who seemed shaky whether they should really be buying this gun, and they admitted they were considering suicide. We can't save everyone, but we can save some.

10

What do I say to a customer who keeps a gun at home for self-defense but is worried a family member is suicidal?

Protecting the people we love means knowing the biggest threats to their safety. This can change over time. When a person is struggling with a mental health or drug/alcohol problem, suicide is usually a bigger risk than a serious attack.

07

Customers could be acting funny for other reasons besides suicide—first-time customers are often a little nervous and don't know anything about guns.

It's hard to know for sure if someone is suicidal. Use the Tip Sheet to help you and your staff identify customers with warning signs. Usually new customers are eager to hear advice from staff, and will gladly respond to questions that retailers ask as we try to help them select the best firearm for their purposes. It's those who are reluctant to talk about the purchase, or who seem to be troubled, who require extra caution.

09

The Tip Sheet says over 1-in-20 firearm suicides were with guns purchased within a week, usually the same day. What's that based on?

The reports that investigators file will sometimes note, for example, that they found a receipt for the gun at the death scene, or a family member reported that the victim just bought the gun.