



# How to have conversations about preventing youth gun injuries in your community

Gun injuries shouldn't be the leading cause of death for children and teens. Whether you are a parent, caregiver, aunt, uncle, teacher, coach, or another concerned adult, we can all agree that it's important to help protect kids from gun violence. It often starts with a conversation.

## Learn about gun violence in your community and nationwide

To have informed conversations about the impact of gun violence in your community on children and teens, familiarize yourself with the latest stats and research. Learn the gun laws in your state, and pay attention to local news stories about gun violence affecting youth.

Homicides account for the majority of gun-related deaths, specifically interpersonal violence and domestic violence. However, mass shootings often get more media attention than other forms of gun violence. This can skew public perceptions of the types of gun violence that most affect children and teens, and importantly, how they can help prevent it.

In fact, many gun injuries and deaths involving young people are the result of access to unsecured guns in the home. These include unintentional shootings—when a gun is discharged by someone, often a child, who didn't mean to do so; gun suicides; and intentional shootings such as interpersonal or community gun violence. Approximately 75% of youth unintentional shootings and gun suicides involve a gun that was kept loaded and unlocked.

# Learn about gun violence in your community and nationwide

## (Continued)

Survivors of youth gun violence may approach conversations around prevention differently from people who have not experienced it. By learning about how gun violence affects our communities, we can understand how to reduce the impact of gun violence on children and teens.

For more details, explore trusted resources, including [Johns Hopkins University Center for Gun Violence Solution's report](#) on how gun violence affects children and teens and the Ad Council's own research on Americans' beliefs about gun violence. [Visit our tools and resources page at AgreeToAgree.org/Resources](#) for more helpful links.

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## Start a conversation

It may feel uncomfortable raising the topic of gun violence in your community with a friend, family member, or anyone else for the first time. But research shows that people agree that these conversations can make a difference. When you start a conversation about gun violence prevention, you're starting an important conversation that people want to have.

**82%**

**of Americans agree that having more productive conversations can help reduce gun injury and deaths among children and teens.**

Source: Ad Council-BPI Survey, 2024

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## Be open and honest

Start the conversation by talking about why community gun violence prevention matters to you personally. Maybe you are upset by the amount of gun violence occurring locally or nationally, or if you're a parent or caregiver, maybe you are concerned about keeping the kids in your life safe.

To encourage others to share their experiences, ask open-ended questions and listen to their responses.

# Be open and honest

## (Continued)

**"Have you heard the statistic that gun injuries are the #1 cause of death for children and teens? What do you think we as a community can do to change that?"**

**"Most unintentional shootings happen because a child had access to an unlocked gun at home. What do you think would encourage more people to secure their guns?"**

**"How can we get more people talking about gun violence and how to prevent it?"**

### Why this works

Opening up about your feelings and experiences and encouraging others to do the same builds connections.

## Find common ground

When you mention gun violence prevention, some people may feel the topic is too controversial to talk about. Instead, think of it as a way to find common ground on a topic that matters. Americans agree on more than we think when it comes to preventing gun violence. For example, here are some statements that we can all generally agree with:

**"Every kid deserves a childhood free of gun violence."**

**"It bothers me that gun injuries are the leading cause of death for children and teens."**

**"As adults, we have a responsibility to keep kids safe. Talking about gun violence is part of that."**

### Why this works

Focusing on what you have in common will help you both feel more at ease so you can really listen to and understand each other.

## After the chat

- If others ask questions you aren't sure how to answer, let them know you will try to find answers and get back to them. [Check our resources page to learn more at AgreeToAgree.org/resources.](https://AgreeToAgree.org/resources)
- Continue to educate yourself and others. Check reliable sources to learn the facts on gun violence in your community.
- Connect with local organizations working to prevent gun violence and support those affected, and learn how you can collaborate with them.

# After the chat

## (Continued)

- Know the local gun laws.
  - Learn about strategies that help to reduce gun violence, including secure gun storage and taking action if you recognize if someone is in crisis.
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## Tips for having productive conversations

- Remember that everyone's thoughts, feelings, and experiences matter. No matter how someone feels about gun ownership or secure gun storage, it's important to listen to their perspective.
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- Avoid letting the conversation turn political. Keep the focus on community safety and protecting children and teens from gun violence.
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- Stay calm. Emotions can escalate the conversation and make it harder for you to understand each other.
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- Respect other peoples' boundaries. If someone wants to end the conversation, let them, but keep the lines of communication open. You can say, "If you ever want to talk more about this, I'll be here."

If you or someone you know is struggling or in crisis,  
call or text **988** to be connected with the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline.

**Learn how to have the conversation at [AgreeToAgree.org](https://AgreeToAgree.org)**

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