

CHILD ACCESS PREVENTION

WHAT IS A CHILD ACCESS PREVENTION (CAP) LAW?

A Child Access Prevention (CAP) law holds gun owners accountable for failing to store their firearms securely in settings where children may be present. **Secure storage means storing guns locked, unloaded, and separate from ammunition.**¹ The strongest CAP laws reflect whether a child could access the firearm – not just whether they harmed someone with it. These laws can prevent unintentional shootings, suicides, and other firearm-related tragedies by encouraging responsible gun storage.²

SECURE STORAGE PROTECTS CHILDREN

- Every day in 2020, an average of 13 children and teens were unintentionally killed or injured with guns.³
- Experts estimate that if all household guns were kept locked, suicides and unintentional deaths among youth could be reduced by up to 32%.⁴
- 76% of school shooters get the gun from a parent or close relative.⁵

GUNS IN OUR HOMES

- Guns are the leading cause of death for children and teens in the U.S.⁶
- Storing firearms securely at home is important for reducing firearm-related suicides, unintentional deaths and injuries, as well as gun thefts.
- Firearms are stored locked and unloaded in only 3 out of 10 gun-owning households with children.⁷
- Roughly 4.6 million children in our country live in a home with a loaded, unlocked gun.⁸
- Nearly a quarter of parents whose child reported handling a gun in their home were unaware that the child had done so.⁹

WISCONSIN'S CURRENT CAP LAW PUTS CHILDREN AT RISK

Wisconsin's current CAP law only holds gun owners accountable if a child under the age of 14 accesses an unsecured gun and uses it to cause harm, such as in an unintentional shooting or crime.¹⁰ The law fails to address the broader risk of a child gaining access to a firearm in the first place. This narrow scope leaves too many children vulnerable to unintentional shootings, suicide, or involvement in gun tragedies.^{11, 12}

THE NEED FOR AN UPDATED WISCONSIN CAP LAW

Wisconsin's law needs to be strengthened to better protect our children. The law should apply to any situation where a child could access an unsecured gun and the age threshold should be raised to 18 to help safeguard teens, who are increasingly at risk for suicide and unintentional shootings. It will also hold gun owners more accountable for properly securing their firearms, regardless of whether a tragedy actually occurs.

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12. "Child Access Prevention & Safe Storage in Wisconsin." Giffords, 6 Mar. 2023, giffords.org/lawcenter/state-laws/child-access-prevention-and-safe-storage-in-wisconsin.

