

SPEAK FOR SAFETY

ILLINOIS

COVID-19 and Gun Violence Prevention: Orders of Protection

As the COVID-19 virus forces Illinoisans to 'shelter-in-place', there is an increased risk of domestic violence and suicide resulting from the presence of a firearm in the home. While social distancing protocols are vital in slowing the spread of the COVID-19 virus, confinement in the home can be life-threatening for people experiencing domestic violence or mental health crisis. Furthermore, isolation, limited access to legal remedies, reduced access to community-based domestic and mental health violence services can further exacerbate combustible domestic violence and mental health crisis.

The facts about the Presence of a Firearm in Cases of Domestic Violence and Suicide

Easy access to firearms is a significant risk factor for injury and death, in the context of both domestic violence and suicide.

There is a strong link between firearms and fatal domestic abuse. National research shows that simply living in a state with a high rate of firearm ownership increases a woman's risk of being fatally shot in a domestic violence incident¹. Access to firearms is a major threat to victims, making it five times more likely that a woman will be killed². Abusers intent on harming an intimate partner, especially if they use a gun, often harm other people who happen to be on the scene: children, friends, grandparents, total strangers.

Access to a firearm can also make the difference in someone successfully taking their own life. Suicide is a devastating public health crisis in the United States claiming the lives of 23,000 Americans every year, including 1,100 children and teens³. About 40% of firearm deaths in Illinois are suicides, and the overall suicide rate for the state rose almost 23% from the year 1999 to 2016^{4,5}.

Firearm suicide in the United States represents...



The COVID-19 crisis has strained the social service agencies charged with providing support to individuals in these situations to capacity and

access to healthcare and mental health services are severely limited. Many domestic violence shelters are full, leaving domestic violence victims at home with their abuser, who may be laid off or working from home due to the pandemic. These factors have the potential to combine in devastating ways, and we must find a remedy to keep our homes and communities safe.

- <https://www.wfmj.com/story/31082682/more-women-killed-by-someone-they-know-in-states-with-high-gun-rates>
- https://lawcenter.giffords.org/gun-laws/policy-areas/who-can-have-a-gun/domestic-violence-firearms/#footnote_1_326
- <https://preventfirearmsuicide.efsgv.org/about-firearm-suicide/statistics/>
- <https://preventfirearmsuicide.efsgv.org/states/illinois/>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/suicide/infographic.html#graphic1>

Laws designed to protect potential victims

Firearm Restraining Order

The Firearms Restraining Order (FRO) is a tool to remove firearms immediately from a respondent. The FRO is a civil order that temporarily prohibits a respondent who is at-risk of harming themselves or others from possessing or purchasing firearms. These orders can be petitioned for by family, household members and law enforcement, providing them a judicial pathway to proactively address their concerns about a loved one. By removing firearms, the FRO law creates safer circumstances for the individual to seek treatment, stabilize their behavior, and access resources to address the underlying causes of their dangerous behaviors.

Order of Protection

Orders of protection can prohibit or restrict the respondent (the person you are worried could cause harm) from possessing firearms during the duration of the order. These orders can also offer protections such as no-contact provisions, stay-away orders, and required counseling provisions. However, removing firearms through this process requires a full hearing, which must include the respondent. As many courts are currently only hearing emergency petitions, the court may use its discretion to extend an Emergency Order of Protection, meaning firearms won't be removed, thereby leaving the petitioner at risk. Please visit the Illinois Court website for more information about your court.



**Firearm
immediately
removed**



**Firearm not
immediately
removed**

Suicide and Domestic Violence with a Firearm in Illinois

In Illinois, a firearm is used to commit nearly two in every five suicides, and the firearm suicide rate in Illinois increased 39% between 2009 and 2018¹.

From 2013 to 2017, 49 women were fatally shot by an intimate partner in Illinois. This represents 86% of all intimate partner gun homicides in the state, compared to 81% nationwide.

Furthermore, black women in Illinois are 4 times as likely as their white counterparts to be fatally shot by a partner².

¹ <https://preventfirearmsuicide.efsgv.org/states/illinois/>

² <https://everytownresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Every-State-Fact-Sheet-Illinois.pdf>