

Office of Gun Violence Prevention

2023 Annual Report

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COLORADO
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Health & Environment

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The Office of Gun Violence Prevention: Executive Summary

The Office of Gun Violence Prevention (OGVP or the office) in the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE or the department) is required to report on its activities by November 30 of each year (C.R.S. § 25-20.5-1206(2)). The OGVP is a public health agency, not a law enforcement agency, so much of the scope of the office's work is providing guidance and expert insight to other agencies to make data-informed strategic decisions and coordinating extreme risk protection order education and awareness strategies. OGVP works closely with the Office of Suicide Prevention, the Attorney General's Office, the Office of School Safety, and the Department of Public Safety. Additionally, OGVP is a member of the Governor's Crime Prevention Cabinet Working Group, comprised of leadership from multiple state agencies collaborating to make Colorado one of the top 10 safest states in the country.

The purpose of the office is to coordinate and promote effective efforts to reduce gun violence and related traumas and promote research regarding causes of, and evidence-based responses to, gun violence.

The responsibilities of the office include

- Increase the awareness of, and educate the general public about, state and federal laws and existing resources relating to gun violence prevention, including the following.
 - The availability of, and the process for requesting an extreme risk protection order.
 - How to report a lost or stolen firearm.
 - Best practices for safe storage of firearms.
 - Accessing available mental health and substance use resources and how to refer people to needed mental health and substance use treatment services, including suicide prevention.
 - Safe and responsible gun ownership, including increasing awareness of compliance with state and federal law.
- Conduct awareness campaigns directed toward gun owners, parents and legal guardians of children, and professions that provide services to people and communities disproportionately affected by gun violence.
- Develop and provide materials and training resources to local law enforcement agencies, health care providers, and educators to assist those agencies, providers, and educators with educating the public about the laws and resources described above and other effective gun violence prevention strategies.
- Administer a grant program, subject to available money, to award grants to organizations to conduct community-based gun violence intervention initiatives that

are primarily focused on interrupting cycles of gun violence, trauma, and retaliation by providing culturally competent intervention services.

- Create and maintain a resource bank of regularly updated and accurate materials and resources as Identify and apply for available federal grants and other funding to further its work to prevent gun violence.

Office of Gun Violence Prevention's highlights during the reporting period

- Over the course of two days, experts from across the state gathered to take an initial step toward building an effective community-based approach to firearm violence prevention in Colorado.
- Distributed approximately \$550,000 in grant funding to support community-based gun violence prevention initiatives throughout Colorado.
- Completed a listening tour in collaboration with the Injury and Violence Prevention Center (IVPC) at the Colorado School of Public Health (CSPH), in four communities in Colorado to receive direct input from communities impacted by firearm-related injuries and deaths.
- Worked with the Office of Suicide Prevention to address the intersections between risk and protective factors, suicide, and firearms.
- Participated with the Attorney General's Office, the Office of School Safety, and the Department of Public Safety as a part of the Governor's Crime Prevention Working Group focused on meeting the Governor's goal of making Colorado one of the top 10 safest states in the country.
- Launched the first statewide educational campaign and campaign website on gun safety and ways to support someone in crisis, including mental health support and the use of an extreme risk protection order. Media buys included print, commercials, earned media and social media.
- Created resource bank web pages and one-pagers about a variety of topics, including Colorado laws, firearm harms, and gun violence prevention approaches (i.e., secure storage, out-of-home storage, and extreme risk protection orders). The team also curated an external resource library and data sources that feed into a dashboard that will allow visitors to explore firearm-related data in Colorado.

Report requirements

As directed by C.R.S. § 25-20.5-1206(2)(a), on or before November 30 of each year, the office shall report to the department on the activities it has conducted in the previous 12 months. The report must include information about the awareness and education campaigns conducted by the office; effective gun violence intervention programs identified and conducted by the office; any federal grants or other funding the office applied for and whether the office received those grants or other funds; and a general summary of new and relevant research included in the office's resource bank and the nature of research assistance provided by the office.

Awareness and education campaigns

Information about the awareness and education campaigns conducted by the office

The department aims to reduce gun violence and firearm injury through the development and implementation of programs designed to educate Coloradans on existing resources relating to gun violence prevention, including the following.

- Safe and responsible gun ownership/storage best practices, including increasing awareness of compliance with state and federal law.
- The availability of, and the process for requesting extreme risk protection orders.
- The process to report lost or stolen firearms, including reporting requirements in state law.
- Available mental health and substance misuse resources and the process to refer people to needed mental health and substance use treatment services, including suicide prevention.

The office expects to positively impact the lives of all Coloradans, particularly priority audiences, in order to interrupt the cycles of gun violence and accidental injury in our state. These priority audiences include the following.

- Gun owners and their households.
- Parents, caregivers, legal guardians.
- Professionals who provide services to people and communities disproportionately impacted by gun violence, i.e., suicide prevention professionals, law enforcement and criminal justice professionals, educators, medical and mental health care providers, domestic violence prevention/intervention professionals, and youth violence prevention/intervention professionals.

The office finalized and executed a contract with a vendor for its first statewide education campaign, which includes communications in both English and Spanish. The education campaign began with a review of existing research and an examination of gun violence prevention offices in other states.

The office and its vendor then gathered input and feedback from stakeholders in various communities across Colorado, including gun owners, people living in households with firearms, people impacted by firearm injuries and deaths, health care and mental health care professionals, community partners, and subject matter experts working to prevent gun violence. That input informed creative campaign strategy, tactics, messaging, and creation of campaign materials during FY 2022-23.

Strategic campaign direction and deliverables were created with input from strategic partners, including the Office of Suicide Prevention, and the Injury & Violence Prevention Center, which includes faculty and other research staff from the Colorado School of Public Health and the University of Colorado School of Medicine.

The work is evolving to be responsive to ongoing changes in policy, including [Senate Bill 23-170](#), which expanded petitioner groups for Colorado's Extreme Risk Protection Order law and also established a hotline to receive and refer calls from the public regarding the process to file for an Extreme Risk Protection Order and direction to relevant resources.

The campaign launched during this reporting period, including the creation of a [campaign website](#). The next report will focus on education campaign activities and tactics during FY 2023-24, including implementation and distribution of campaign materials.

Gun violence intervention programs

Effective gun violence intervention programs identified and conducted by the office

Community Grants

The Office of Gun Violence Prevention provided approximately \$550,000 in grant funding to support community-based gun violence prevention initiatives throughout Colorado during this reporting period. The funds from this grant program were to be used for education, training, and community programs that promote and support responsible gun ownership practices, safe storage, awareness of existing laws, and mental health and substance use resources.

Grantees include:

- Academy of Urban Learning, Denver, CO - The organization is a Denver Public Schools charter high school serving Denver-area students ages 14 to 21. The organization will purchase a social and emotional learning curriculum that teaches core social-emotional learning skills and provides opportunities for practice, discussion, planning, and goal setting.
- Bridge to Justice, Boulder, CO - The organization's attorneys serve as a free and confidential legal resource for individuals who want to file for an Extreme Risk Protection Order. Bridge to Justice also trains attorneys across Colorado to provide similar services.
- Colorado Ceasefire Outreach, Denver, CO - Ceasefire Colorado Outreach educates the public about Extreme Risk Protection Orders via news media, building communities on social media, and delivering in-person Extreme Risk Protection Order training events across the state.
- Colorado "I Have A Dream" Foundation, Denver, CO - The foundation serves over 180 youth aged seven through 18 in the Green Valley Ranch, Montbello, and Westwood neighborhoods who receive academic enrichment, mental health services, and social-emotional learning support in order to lessen the likelihood of youth involvement in gun violence.

- Community Health Partnership/Teller County Mental Health Alliance, Teller County, CO - The alliance hosts workshops through its, "Safe Homes, Safer Families" program, which include talks from local gun violence prevention speakers and raffles for gun safes/locks.
- Community Pearl / Southwest Vida, Denver, CO - This youth-led, youth leadership team is focused on gun violence prevention efforts in Southwest Denver. Young people cultivate writing skills while discussing issues like youth violence, bullying, and substance misuse in a local magazine. Participants also develop public speaking skills while presenting at youth-led community events.
- Contemporary Learning Academy, Denver, CO - This multiple pathway school serves students in 9th through 12th grade. The school procured gun safety locks and firearm lock boxes and provided education on best practices for safe storage of firearms, including safe storage requirements, to parents and caregivers.
- Denver Center for 21st Century Learning, Denver, CO - The organization's Colorado Music Bridge program provides an organized, modern, inclusive curriculum utilizing keyboards, voice, and applications such as songwriting and recording as a means to reduce the likelihood that community members will become involved in gun violence.
- Denver Center for International Studies at Baker, Denver, CO - The school purchased and distributed gun locks, facilitated community presentations on safe storage and Extreme Risk Protection Orders, taught students healthy conflict resolution skills, and produced high-quality instructional materials designed for educators.
- Denver Health and Hospital Authority, Denver, CO - DHHA procured gun safety locks and firearm lockboxes for patients, produced training materials for health care providers, and created safety education materials for patients.
- District Attorney's Office 20th Judicial District, Boulder, CO - The office provides pro bono legal services around Extreme Risk Protection Orders. The office distributed trigger locks, car locks, and gun safes to increase the adoption of safe storage practices within the 20th Judicial District.
- Families Against Violent Acts, Denver, CO - The organization hosted three social-emotional workshops for youth (20 youth per workshop), 12 grief support groups averaging 35 unique individuals, two holistic wellness group sessions, and two gun violence prevention workshops for 25 youth per workshop. Additionally, they hosted the Heal The Hood-Violence Prevention Community Event with approximately 900 community members in attendance.
- From The Heart Foundation, Denver, CO - The foundation delivers a 12-week "Mental Health And Wellness" Program for young men and women between ages 8-12 and a similar course designed for young men and women ages 13 and older. From the Heart also produced two videos to spread awareness of gun violence prevention resources.

- Gang Rescue and Support Project, Denver, CO - Denver youth program Gang Rescue and Support Project (GRASP) conducts a peer-run intervention program for male participants of color ages 13-24 who are at-risk of gang involvement or are presently active in gangs.
- Gunnison County Substance Abuse Prevention Project, Gunnison, CO - The community coalition provides youth and family training around suicide prevention projects and also used funds to grow the Gunnison Middle School Sources of Strength program, which helps in the prevention of suicide, violence, bullying, and substance abuse through training, education, and support. The coalition also distributed free gun locks with safe storage and mental health resource materials to community members.
- Kids Above Everything, Denver, CO - The media arts mentorship program supports youth by providing mental health services and social-emotional-based afterschool programming to lessen the likelihood of involvement with gun violence.
- Legacy Foundation For Family and Community Development, Denver, CO - The collective developed suicide prevention, social-emotional intelligence development, conflict resolution skills, grief management, resilience development and pro-social programming for youth and families in order to lessen the likelihood of community member involvement in gun violence.
- Lincoln County Public Health, Hugo, CO - Lincoln County Public Health hosted an educational event for the region about gun safety and best practices for storage of firearms. Training was provided for law enforcement, health care workers, educators, school administrators, and other priority community partners to learn more about suicide prevention and grief management.
- Make a Chess Move, Denver, CO - The organization hosted “Youth Safe Zone Workshops” to research and propose solutions for youth gun violence. The organization also conducts additional events to implement those solutions at a community level.
- McBride Impact, Aurora, CO - This organization used funds to provide youth involved in or impacted by gun violence with protective factors, to include youth learning entrepreneurial, project management, technical screen printing, workplace, teamwork, and communication skills.
- Mind Springs Health, Grand Junction, CO - The Western Slope’s largest provider of behavioral health services provided gun locks and gun safes to high-need areas in order to promote safe storage best practices in Colorado households.
- Moffat County Public Health, Craig, CO - Moffat County Public Health conducted hunter safety courses and distributed gun locks and safes to community members.
- North Range Behavioral Health, Greeley, CO - North Range Behavioral Health distributed gun safes to residents in order to increase safe storage practices.

- Odd Duck LLC, Keystone, CO - Odd Duck distributed gun locks and safes to approved local community organizations in order to increase safe storage practices in the Keystone area.
- Pikes Peak Suicide Prevention Partnership, Colorado Springs, CO - Pikes Peak Suicide Prevention Partnership conducts Safe Homes, Safer Firearm Safety workshops to provide education regarding how safe storage can help prevent suicide, evidence-based gatekeeper suicide prevention, Extreme Risk Protection Orders, and suicide prevention resources. The partnership also facilitates a Youth Violence Prevention program providing recreational activities to teens, facilitated by men with lived experience with gun violence.
- Poudre School District Mental Health Team, Fort Collins, CO - The district distributed gun locks and safes to community members with school-aged children.
- Shoot Indoors, Denver, CO - The indoor shooting range provided 14 free gun safety classes for community members.
- Sims-Fayola Foundation, Aurora, CO - The foundation provided youth of color with programming that has a social-emotional focus to increase community involvement and academic success while lessening the likelihood of youth involvement in gun violence.
- St. Thomas Episcopal Church, Denver, CO - The church distributed 450 trigger locks during two community events.
- Struggle of Love Foundation, Denver, CO - The foundation distributed 400 gun locks while hosting an educational outreach event and implemented a 12-week violence interruption program for underprivileged youth and families.
- Suicide Prevention Coalition of Eagle Valley doing business as SpeakUp ReachOut, Eagle, CO - The coalition implements a comprehensive paid radio, newsprint, digital, poster, media, and event tabling campaign featuring the Colorado Gun Shop Project and safe and responsible gun ownership / safe storage best practices.
- The Road Called STRATE, Aurora, CO - The organization provides intensive case management to 100 community members at risk of involvement with gun violence by providing services necessary for success, including youth counseling, GED preparation classes, employment training, mental wellness services, substance misuse resources, and assistance with overcoming obstacles to employment.
- Thriving Families, Denver, CO - The organization offers programs that support women, children, and their families during pregnancy and just after a baby is born. They created and provided training to program members on how to refer people to needed mental health and substance use treatment services, including suicide prevention, social-emotional intelligence development, conflict resolution skills, grief management, and resilience development. They also educate families about safe and

responsible gun ownership, including safe storage and the process for requesting an Extreme Risk Protection Order.

Listening Tour

The Office of Gun Violence Prevention, in collaboration with the Injury and Violence Prevention Center (IVPC) at the Colorado School of Public Health (CSPH), completed a listening tour in four communities in Colorado to receive direct input from communities impacted by firearm-related injuries and deaths. More than 150 people attended five listening sessions in Milliken (Weld County), Cortez (Montezuma County), Durango (La Plata County), and Colorado Springs (El Paso County). The goals of these sessions were:

- To collect feedback from diverse stakeholders that can inform the Office of Gun Violence Prevention's efforts in the future.
- To hear the voices and real-time needs and concerns of Coloradans.

Data was collected and then analyzed using a combination deductive-inductive coding procedure, which resulted in the identification of key themes from the community conversations and can be used to inform the future work of the office. Key themes are identified below.

1. Structural Factors: Issues like cost, funding, and internet access were identified as barriers to effective gun violence prevention.
2. Sociocultural and Behavioral Factors: Substance use, cultural awareness, and differing beliefs about firearm ownership were discussed as contributing factors to gun violence.
3. Protective Factors: Family and community involvement, as well as prosocial activities, were seen as protective against violence.
4. Education: There's a need for increased accessibility to firearm safety and mental health resources.
5. Government Role: The importance of compromise and trusted partnerships between government agencies and communities was emphasized.
6. Messaging: The role of language and methods in state-level messaging was discussed, indicating a need for effective communication strategies.

Public Health Roundtable on Firearm-Related Violence Prevention

The Office of Gun Violence Prevention collaborated with Trailhead Institute to host the Public Health Roundtable on Firearm-Related Violence Prevention in June 2023 in order to address the public health crisis of firearm-related violence and ensure communities have the information and ability to address it. The two-day roundtable convening brought together approximately 100 experts invited from across the state who hold diverse backgrounds as community leaders, researchers, and public health professionals.

Centering on collaboration and accountability, the cross-sector event served as an initial step towards building an effective community-based approach to firearm violence prevention in Colorado and will set the course of action for public health initiatives around this topic. The roundtable's objectives were to:

- Develop shared language around what we mean by a public health approach to firearm violence prevention.
- Allow an opportunity for cross-sector partners to identify where their expertise and lived experience can contribute to a public health approach.
- Develop an initial draft of risk and protective factors as well as community-based solutions for preventing firearm-related violence.
- Initiate the development of tools needed by urban, rural, and suburban communities across the state that face an array of firearm-related violence.

The agenda for this event was designed to build an apolitical framework and shared definition of what a public health approach to firearm-related violence prevention is. Takeaways may be found in the Public Health Roundtable on Firearm-Related Violence Prevention Report.

Partnership with the Office of Suicide Prevention

The Office of Gun Violence Prevention continues to work closely with the Office of Suicide Prevention (OSP) to address the intersecting topic of firearm suicide prevention. OGVP and OSP partnered in FY 2022-23 to expand the reach of the Gun Shop Project to all 64 Colorado communities; increase the reach of Operation Veteran Strong; and fund lethal means modules for Man Therapy. More information on these programs are below.

Man Therapy

[Man Therapy](#)¹ is an interactive mental health campaign focusing on men ages 25-54 that uses humor to cut through stigma and address issues like depression and suicide, substance misuse, anger, anxiety, and divorce. The campaign allows men to evaluate their mental health and provides resources such as how to take care of oneself; therapy referral sources, links to local support groups and organizations, profession-specific resources, as well as a crisis line. Since Man Therapy's launch in July 2012,

¹ OSP partnered with Cactus Marketing Communication and the Carson J Spencer Foundation (no longer in operation) to create Man Therapy (mantherapy.org), which launched in July 2012.

there have been over 395,000 Colorado website visits to mantherapy.org. Free Man Therapy materials can be ordered on the [OSP web page](#).

Operation Veteran Strong

OSP and OGVP secured funding to support a statewide expansion of [Operation Veteran Strong](#) (OVS), which is a free and confidential website for veterans and community members to reduce mental health stigma, improve help-seeking behaviors, and connect to resources. The OVS platform went live on June 1, 2021 with focused outreach in six high-risk counties² and 15 rural counties.

Colorado Gun Shop Project

The Gun Shop Project is an education and awareness project that partners with firearm advocates, gun shops, firing ranges, and firearm safety course instructors to adopt and promote a firearm safety and suicide prevention message. The core message of this federally-funded initiative is that temporarily limiting a suicidal individual's access to firearms is a critical aspect of firearm safety.

Funding

Any federal grants or other funding the office applied for and whether the office received those grants or other funds

In coordination with the Office of the Governor and Office of the Attorney General, the Office of Gun Violence Prevention received gun violence prevention-specific funding via the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act. OGVP and the Colorado Attorney General's Office partnered to submit proposals to the JAG (Justice Assistance Grant) Board for how they plan to use their portion of the funds (\$1,122,173) which include various Extreme Risk Protection Order-related projects and grant programs to increase the number of community organizations implementing evidence-informed gun violence prevention and intervention initiatives. The funding will enable these organizations to develop and implement initiatives that are specifically designed to prevent, intervene, and interrupt cycles of gun violence, trauma, and retaliation in their communities.

OGVP maintains awareness of upcoming funding opportunities as appropriate.

Resource Bank

A general summary of new and relevant research included in the office's resource bank and the nature of research assistance provided by the office

The Office of Gun Violence Prevention is working with the Injury and Violence Prevention Center (IVPC) at the Colorado School of Public Health (CSPH) to create a resource bank where all Coloradans can learn about firearm injury and its prevention in our state.

² El Paso, La Plata, Larimer, Mesa, Montezuma, and Pueblo.

The resource bank will be housed on the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment’s website and will serve as a resource for individuals and communities to understand what firearm injury and death look like in Colorado – and to explore solutions and approaches, informed by research, that may reduce the overall burden of firearm injuries and deaths.

Resource bank web pages and one-pagers have been drafted and cover a variety of topics, including Colorado laws and firearm harms such as suicide, community violence, mass shootings, and intimate partner violence. It also contains information about gun violence prevention approaches, such as secure storage, out-of-home storage, extreme risk protection orders, lethal means safety counseling, and more. The team has curated an external resource library as well as data sources that feed into a dashboard that will allow visitors to explore firearm-related data in Colorado. The data include morbidity and mortality rates of firearm deaths, Colorado Bureau of Investigation background checks, and extreme risk protection order use in Colorado. These and other data are from law enforcement agencies, emergency medical services, health care providers, and state agencies.

Conclusion

The Office of Gun Violence Prevention is continuing its work to implement innovative data-driven initiatives, expand collaborations, fund gun violence prevention and firearm safety programs across the state, and decrease the impact of gun violence and accidental firearm injuries across Colorado. The next report will focus on activities in FY 2023-24. Activities will include continued focus on the resource bank, new work completed during the public education campaign, and continuing to build out the grant program.