

# State Gun Safe Storage Laws and Child Mortality Due to Firearms

October 1997

Peter Cummings, MD, MPH; David C. Grossman, MD, MPH; Frederick P. Rivara, MD, MPH; et al Thomas D. Koepsell, MD, MPH

## Author Affiliations

JAMA. 1997;278(13):1084-1086. doi:10.1001/jama.1997.03550130058037

## **Abstract**

**Context.** —Since 1989, several states have passed laws that make gun owners criminally liable if someone is injured because a child gains unsupervised access to a gun. These laws are controversial, and their effect on firearm-related injuries is unknown.

**Objective.** —To determine if state laws that require safe storage of firearms are associated with a reduction in child mortality due to firearms.

**Design.** —Anecological study of firearm mortality from 1979 through 1994.

**Setting.** —All 50 states and the District of Columbia.

**Participants.** —All children younger than 15 years.

**Main Outcome Measures.** —Unintentional deaths, suicides, and homicides due to firearms.

**Results.** —Laws that make gun owners responsible for storing firearms in a manner that makes them inaccessible to children were in effect for at least 1 year in 12 states from 1990 through 1994. Among children younger than 15 years, unintentional shooting deaths were reduced by 23% (95% confidence interval, 6%–37%) during the years covered by these laws. This estimate was based on withinstate comparisons adjusted for national trends in unintentional firearm-related mortality. Gun-related homicide and suicide showed modest declines, but these were not statistically significant.

**Conclusions.** —State safe storage laws intended to make firearms less accessible to children appear to prevent unintentional shooting deaths among children younger than 15 years.