



Emergency Department Means Restriction Education

Program Description

The goal of this intervention is to educate parents of youth at high risk for suicide about limiting access to lethal means for suicide. Education takes place in emergency departments and is conducted by department staff (an unevaluated model has been developed for use in schools). Emergency department staffs are trained to provide the education to parents of child who are assessed to be at risk for suicide. Lethal means covered include firearms, medications (over-the-counter and prescribed), and alcohol. To help with the safe disposal of firearms, collaboration with local law enforcement or other appropriate organizations is advised.

The content of parent instruction includes:

1. Informing parent(s), apart from the child, that the child was at increased suicide risk and why the staff believed so;
2. Informing parents that they can reduce risk by limiting access to lethal means, especially firearms; and,
3. Educating parents and problem solving with them about how to limit access to lethal means.

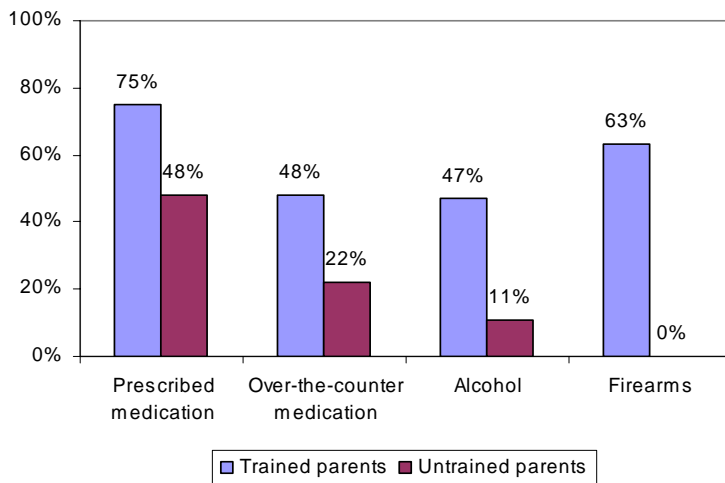
Evaluation Design and Outcomes

Evaluation of the program consisted of a prospective follow-up design of 103 adults whose children were seen in an emergency department for mental health assessment or treatment. Children were included in the evaluation if they received a mental health assessment, regardless of whether suicide behavior and ideation were present.

Assignment to the treatment or no-treatment conditions

was by convenience. A follow-up telephone interview of parents indicated that exposure to the means restriction education program resulted in a statistically significant increase in the self-reported restriction of means in their homes (see Figure 1).

Fig. 1: Percent of Parents Restricting Access or Disposing



SPRC Classification

Effective

Program Characteristics
Intervention Type Treatment
Target Age 6-19
Gender Female & Male
Ethnicity Multiple
IOM Category Universal Selective Indicated

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Generalizability

Children seen in emergency rooms were equally divided between males and females; the average age was 14 years; ethnicity was 75% white, 24% African American, and 2% Hispanic.

Implementation Essentials

The following components are essential to program effectiveness:

- The means restriction intervention module (Kruesi, Grossman, & Hirsch, 1995), including emergency department protocols;
- Emergency department staff training; and,
- Providing a means to dispose of firearms (derived in collaboration with local law enforcement or other appropriate organizations).

Targeted Protective and Risk Factors

This intervention impacts the following risk and protective factors that have been targeted by the *National Strategy for Suicide Prevention* for the reduction of suicide in the United States.

<i>Increased Protective Factors</i>	<i>Decreased Risk Factors</i>
Restricted Access to Lethal Means	Access to Lethal Means

Program Costs

Protocols are available, for free, from the author. Training costs for emergency room personnel are variable.

Program Contact Information

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References

Kruesi, M. J. P., Grossman, J., Pennington, J. M., Woodward, P. J., Duda, D., and Hirsch, J. G. (1999). Suicide and violence prevention: Parent education in emergency department. *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, 38(3), 250-255.

Kruesi, M. J. P., Grossman, J., and Hirsch, J. G. (1995). *Five Minutes of Your Time May Mean a Lifetime to a Suicidal Adolescent*. Chicago, IL: Ronald McDonald House Charities, University of Illinois—Chicago.