



NCALHD

North Carolina Association
of Local Health Directors

NCALHD Supports Efforts to Prevent Firearm Misuse, Injury and Death

The North Carolina Association of Local Health Directors (NCALHD) supports efforts to prevent injury and death by firearms throughout the lifespan. NCALHD recommends a public health approach to preventing firearm related injury and death that includes the use of best practices and coordinated community efforts from public health practitioners, healthcare providers and systems, law enforcement, mental health providers, school systems, businesses, community members and all other interested community partners. Effective interventions should consider the continuum of life and multiple sectors of the community; in doing so, systematic and long-term prevention can be achieved in firearm related injury and death.

Firearm-related injury and deaths are a major public health concern, claiming more than 36,000 lives nationally.¹ The death rate for injury by firearms rose to 11.1 deaths per 100,000 population in 2015 from 10.3 in 2014.¹ In 2016, more than 3,400 firearm-related injuries (from any intent) resulted in an Emergency Department visit in North Carolina.² Additionally, 1,388 firearm-related injuries (from any intent) resulted in hospitalization in that same year resulting in more than an estimated \$110 million in hospital charges.² The provisional data for 2016 shows 1,297 deaths due to firearm associated self-inflicted injuries (N= 775) or homicide (N= 522).³ In the same year, there were 51 firearm associated deaths to children 0-17 years.⁴ The mission of NCALHD, as public health professionals, is to intervene in population health concerns that impact the communities we serve. As such, NCALHD acknowledges and embraces that local health departments have an important role in communities by disseminating information, convening communities, facilitating discussion and implementing both prevention and intervention initiatives. NCALHD also recognizes its role in advocating for evidence-based research that may provide the foundation for policy-making at the local, state, and federal level.

The NCALHD strongly encourages and urges local communities to convene multidisciplinary groups to explore a coordinated community response to firearm misuse, injury and death. As such, the NCALHD promotes the use of programs that increase understanding of firearm-related injuries and deaths as a public health issue. Additionally, the NCALHD supports the use of evidence-based and best practice programs to address firearm injury and death. These programs should aim to prevent firearm injury and death, as well as prepare communities for firearm emergencies. NCALHD supports responsible gun ownership and use, and as such, the NCALHD supports the development and dissemination of public health messaging regarding firearm safety including use and storage of firearms. NCALHD also supports federal funding to study firearm injury and death as well as best practices for gun safety. Moreover, NCALHD supports the ability of healthcare providers in a confidential physician-patient relationship to communicate firearm safety with their patients. Lastly, NCALHD supports increased access to high-quality mental health services for at-risk children, families, and adults in order to reduce their risk of harm to self or others.

1. Murphy SL, Xu JQ, Kochanek KD, Curtin SC, Arias E. Deaths: Final data for 2015. National Vital Statistics Reports; vol 66 no 6. Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics. 2017.
2. 2016 Firearm-related Injuries in North Carolina, Injury and Violence Prevention Branch, Chronic Disease and Injury Section, Division of Public Health, North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, May 2018.
3. 2016 Provisional Firearm Deaths in North Carolina, North Carolina Violent Death Reporting System, North Carolina Injury and Violence Prevention Branch, May 2018.
4. Firearm Injuries among Children and Youth, Child Fatality Task Force Presentation, Injury and Prevention Branch, NC Division of Public Health, January 2018.