

Safer Homes, Suicide Aware Report to the Washington Legislature, January-June 2018

Over the last six years, the WA state legislature has passed several new laws to tackle the public health problem of suicide. Fueled by legislators concerns about the rising number of suicides including Veteran and youth suicides in particular, WA is the only state in the nation to require all health care providers, including behavioral health care providers, physicians, nurses, occupational and physical therapists, chiropractors, and more to receive suicide prevention training. WA also wrote its first state plan for suicide prevention and has on its near term horizon to increase the capacity for suicide prevention across its state agencies.

The mission of Forefront Suicide Prevention (or Forefront for short) is to reduce suicide by empowering individuals and communities to take sustainable action, championing systemic change, and restoring hope. Forefront is a Center of Excellence housed at the University of Washington with multiple faculty unifying behind this mission and a common goal to reduce suicides in WA. We are a catalyst for change and a critical partner in our state's efforts to incubate, build capacity and scale programs and initiatives and to further research and evaluation that will save lives. The reach of Forefront's programs stretches from Seattle to include both Eastern and Western Washington, fulfilling our commitment to serve the entire state.

One of the legislature's prime achievements in suicide prevention was to fund the development of the Safer Homes, Suicide Aware campaign. Safer Homes, Suicide Aware is a set of core messages and strategies designed to raise awareness about suicide motivating behavior changes to lock and limit access to firearms and medications. To develop and implement the Safer Homes, Suicide Aware campaign, Forefront has brought to the table 43 partners across the state including: the WA State Department of Veterans Affairs, the Seattle Policy Department, the Second Amendment Foundation (co-chair), Seattle Children's Hospital, the Alliance for Gun Responsibility, the National Rifle Association and the WA State Department of Health.

The level of appreciation for Safer Homes within firearms communities has been uniformly strong. Clearly, these messages are resonating. Our ability to provide good-quality locking devices for both medications and firearms is key.

Safer Homes, Suicide Aware ends its initial year of implementation showing significant development, innovation and feasibility in several respects (see attached presentation).

- Collateral materials with key messaging in the form of postcards, posters, stickers, website, social media page, etc. were developed;
- Trainings that integrate Safer Homes messaging and the importance of having conversations with customers/ patients about locking and limiting access to medications and firearms was developed for firearms retailers, pharmacists and medical professionals;
- The feasibility of the Safer Homes conversation tested in gun shows and sporting events across the state;
- A dozen large firearms retailers utilizing materials;
- Potential audiences for Safer Homes uniformly welcomed the campaign. These audiences range from gun show participants, to firearm retailers, health care providers.

- This spring, the Boeing Foundation invited Forefront Suicide Prevention to apply for a grant for an expansion of Safer Homes explicitly to focus on veterans.
- Forefront Suicide Prevention hired a new part-time Safer Homes staffer who is a firearms safety instructor, member of the Marines Reserve, and a member of the Safer Homes Firearms Task Force. This new employee starts work in July.
- Another vehicle for Safer Homes, the #stickit2suicide social media campaign shows enormous potential to add one more stream of messaging for a broad population of Washington residents. The stickers are affixed to mirrors or stall doors in publicly used restrooms. Department of Health Secretary John Wiesman this spring signed a letter of support for this campaign. This letter, laminated and carried by volunteers, is a significant help in gaining support from business managers and owners.

The focal points for the 2019-2021 biennium include:

- 1) Building close partnerships with 2-3 healthcare organizations to pilot embedding Safer Homes brief interventions into their protocols and procedures. It is clear that health care systems have enormous potential to carry the Safer Homes message to a majority of Washington residents.
- 2) Increasing the frequency of Safer Homes events to more gun shows and competitive shooting events;
- 3) Extending the reach of our messaging in health care, community, pharmacy and firearm retailer settings.
- 4) Evaluation of the campaign’s strategies to determine if there is an impact on behavior change and an increase in knowledge about locking and limiting access to medications and firearms.

SIGNIFICANT SAFER HOMES EVENTS JANUARY-JUNE 2018	
January 2018, Big Sky, Montana	<p>Safer Homes for Pharmacists in Montana</p> <p>In partnership with the Washington State Pharmacy Association, Forefront Suicide Prevention director Dr. Jennifer Stuber presented Safer Homes, Suicide Aware training to approximately 100 Montana pharmacists in Big Sky, MT. Accompanied by distribution of print materials, the training focused on suicide prevention recognition and medications-related means safety information, including awareness of particularly lethal medications, and counseling on locked storage of medications, and limited dose availability.</p>

January, Seattle	<p>New Potential Partner: Grandmothers Against Gun Violence Forefront staff presented on Safer Homes, Suicide Aware to a meeting of the Seattle Chapter of Grandmothers Against Gun Violence, presenting print materials to approximately 45 attendees. The session included information on suicide prevention and distribution of materials on medications and firearms locked storage, as well as discussion on strategies to limit access to these means in a suicidal crisis.</p>
February 2018 MILESTONE 1	<p>Facebook boosts Safer Homes advertising: In early February, Facebook donated \$5,000 in advertising dollars; this allowed Forefront to target the firearms owning public in WA to receive Safer Homes ads. The overall audience reach was 1,440 with 216 likes by March 31.</p>
February, Monroe	<p>Monroe: Trial of the updated Safer Homes Framework Forefront staff and volunteers tabled for a half-day at the Monroe Gun Show, in a trial of our updated framework of a one-page survey plus motivational interviewing. This framework focuses on gathering information about firearms owners’ patterns of storage, experience with suicide, and basic demographic information. This tool also guides the volunteers in offering tailored recommendations for storage plus selected facts about suicide and firearms. Filling out the survey and having a Safer Homes conversation is required to be able to receive free locking devices for medications and firearms (one each), along with print materials. Twenty-four conversations were held. The firearms locking devices given out in the Safer Homes, Suicide Aware campaign are lock boxes and Firearms Safety Locking Lifejackets. After the tabling Forefront staff and volunteers shot video footage for a Safer Homes training video. This was Safer Homes’ second gun show.</p>
March 2018, Spokane	<p>Growing new Volunteers in Spokane Partnering with Failsafe for Life Spokane, a non-profit suicide prevention group, Forefront staff conducted a SAFER training, including motivational interviewing, to 12 volunteers in preparation for taking the Safer Homes, Suicide Aware campaign to the Spokane Gun Show in early April.</p>
March, Ocean Shores, WA	<p>Offering Safer Homes to EMTs Forefront staff tabled at the 2018 West Region EMT Conference at Ocean Shores, WA. Approximately 30 conversations occurred with attending EMTs, building awareness of suicide, suicide prevention and the effectiveness of means safety with medications and firearms. Materials were handed out.</p>

<p>April 2018, Spokane WA</p> <p>MILESTONE 2</p>	<p>Spokane Gun Show, Safer Homes’ Most Successful Event Forefront staff with Spokane volunteers interacted with more than 250 firearms owners at the combined Spokane Gun Show & Flea Market. These owners received free locking devices for medications and firearms - and many of them conveyed appreciation for the program. The conversations were based on the one-page survey and motivational interviewing. Also included was a raffle for a high-tech firearms storage device. This raffle creates an opening to educate firearms owners about the value of newer locking equipment that will keep their home defense firearm locked and safe, while also affording them the ability to protect themselves and their families. Given the prevalence of “nightstand storage” on a home defense weapon, Safer Homes must work hard to develop and articulate incentives for behavior change.</p> <p>QUOTE: <i>“Tell your volunteers to talk with every single person they can. This is just that important.”</i> Wes Knodel, gun show manager</p>
<p>April - Washington D.C.</p> <p>MILESTONE 3</p>	<p>Major US Suicide Prevention Conference Learns About Safer Homes Dr. Jennifer Stuber, staff and collaborators presented on Safer Homes in multiple sessions at the 51st Annual Conference of the American Association of Suicide Prevention held in Washington, D.C. Means safety was one of the major themes of this year’s conference.</p>
<p>April - Wenatchee</p> <p>MILESTONE 4</p>	<p>Major Partnership with Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Forefront Suicide Prevention staff partnered with the Washington State Dept. of Fish & Wildlife to present on Safer Homes at their tri-annual in-service day in Wenatchee, WA, attended by approximately 350 volunteer Hunter Education Safety instructors. This presentation familiarized these firearms instructors with Safer Homes, Suicide Aware. Additionally, while tabling, 70 of attendees received free locking devices for medications and firearms. One outcome of this event is an order from the Washington State Dept. of Fish & Wildlife’s Hunter Safety Education Program for 2,000 sets of Safer Homes, Suicide Aware free print materials (postcards, stickers, LEARN cards) to be distributed to the safety instructors for dispersal to their students and their parents. Most of the are teens or young adults.</p> <p>QUOTE: <i>“I am an NRA handgun instructor. I usually present the handgun section to our Hunter Education students. But I have never thought about suicide prevention as part of firearm safety... You opened the eyes of a lot of people at that conference, and there was a lot of discussion afterwards among the instructors. If we save even one life, it will be worth it.”</i> Lawrence Moody</p>

<p>June, West Seattle</p>	<p>A New Family Safety Program - Reaching Younger Parents Forefront staff took Safer Homes to the annual West Seattle Free Kids Fishing Derby at the invitation of a West Seattle hunter safety education trainer. The expected turn-out of nearly 1,000 people was dramatically lower, however approximately 20 interactions took place. Additionally this was a valuable opportunity to see how an audience of young parents reacted to Safer Homes, which we framed as a new family safety program. In this context more parents expressed interest in locking up medications than firearms.</p>
<p>June, Washington Behavioral Healthcare Conference in Kennewick, WA</p>	<p>Forefront’s Dr. Stuber presented on Safer Homes Suicide Aware at the 2018 Washington Behavioral Health Conference in Kennewick, WA, with approximately 100 therapists in attendance at the session.</p> <p>QUOTE: <i>"Safer Homes offers very practical information I can use with my clients everyday."</i></p> <p><i>"Thanks for helping me see I need to have conversations about medications and guns."</i> — Attendees at the WA Behavioral Health Conference</p>
<p>Coming soon</p>	<p>Lock Box Requests from Behavioral Health Professionals</p> <p>Requests have begun to come in from behavioral health professionals across Washington who want to help their clients stay safe. In the coming fiscal year, discussion and decisions about how to handle this demands will need to be made.</p> <p>Quote: <i>"I'm interested in lock boxes for guns and medication. When working with teens who are suicidal, its difficult for teens and/or parents to lock these items up due to funding. I love your message about making it more difficult to access these means to hurt themselves. Anything to help promoted safety for these families is amazing. I'm so glad I found this program."</i> Maecheil Ritter, MSW, MHP, Wenatchee</p>

<p>Coming soon</p>	<p>Events in July & August on the Books</p> <p>Safer Homes will attend the Everett Gun Show, with newly trained Seattle-area volunteer July 28, 29</p> <p>Jenn Stuber will present at the Providers that Serve Conference in in Wenatchee, focusing on providers who work with Veterans in community-based settings.</p> <p>Forefront staff will train Walla Walla volunteers in early August, in order to have capacity for the Walla Walla National Night Out, an event of more than 2,000 individuals. Organizers named Safer Homes as the theme of this award-winning event</p>
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