

COVID-19 AND GUNS
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The COVID-19 pandemic has been an anxious time for many of us. Stay-at-home orders have created an unexpected isolation. There is an increased tension within homes over child care and education. Fear of exposure to the virus, serious health concerns for our families, and the uncertainty of our current and future economic welfare have contributed to a high level of stress. These same factors, along with a spike in weapons and ammunition sales across the state¹, are unfortunately leading to an increased potential for gun violence.

Unintentional Shootings: In the U.S., "...unintentional shootings by children increased 43 percent in March and April compared to average gun deaths during the same two months over the last three years, according to data analyzed by the advocacy group Everytown for Gun Safety."² With schools closed, kids are spending more time at home, which increases the risk that they may find unsecured guns. Although Michigan does not have legislation regulating safe storage of firearms and ammunition, the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends storing guns unloaded and locked, with ammunition kept in a separate location.

Domestic Violence: Recent contacts made to the Michigan Coalition to End Domestic and Sexual Violence more than doubled in March and April compared to this same time last year.³ Unfortunately, if an abuser has access to a firearm, it is five times more likely that the victim will be killed. Domestic violence assaults involving a gun are 12 times more likely to result in death than those involving other weapons or bodily force.⁴

Suicides: As reported by *Bridge Magazine*, "A recent study by a large Kent County mental health provider forecasts a 32% rise in Michigan suicides this year due to COVID-19."⁵ The combination of unemployment, social isolation, and a potential decrease in funding for mental health facilities may lead to a rise in mental health issues. To counter these concerns, the state has established a website—*Stay Home, Stay Well* (Michigan.gov/Staywell)—offering connections to mental health support specialists.

1. "Guns and viruses: Why Michigan gun and ammo sales are exploding," Bridge, March 19, 2020.

<https://www.bridgemi.com/economy/guns-and-viruses-why-michigan-gun-and-ammo-sales-are-exploding>

2. "Alarming" spike in deadly unintentional shootings by kids as gun sales soar during lockdowns." Erin Donaghue, CBS News, May 8, 2020.

<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/unintentional-shootings-guns-kids-sales-coronavirus-lockdowns/>

3. "Stay home, don't stay safe. Domestic violence calls up amid Michigan lockdown," Bridge, April 19, 2020.

lockdown," Bridge, April 19, 2020.