



CREATING A SAFE ENVIRONMENT

Caregivers play vital role in protecting kids from guns

By Jane Sutter

Nicholas Naumkin was a 12-year-old middle schooler who loved acting, drawing and computer animation. But just a few days before Christmas 2010, the Saratoga County youth was accidentally shot in the eye by a classmate in the kitchen of the classmate's home. Nicholas died the next day.

The classmate had taken the pistol out of his dad's dresser drawer to play with it, according to the Times Union newspaper in Albany.

Unfortunately, these types of incidents are all too common in both New York State and nationally. Here are some sobering statistics about guns and children in the United States, as shared by the Brady Center to Prevent Gun Violence and New Yorkers Against Gun Violence:

- One out of three homes with children have guns. Many are unlocked or loaded.

- Nine children and teens are shot each day in gun accidents.
- Eighty percent of unintentional firearm deaths of children under 15 occur in a home.

Data gathered by the Associated Press and the USA Today Network found that at least 23 minors in New York state were involved in accidental shootings that resulted in injuries or death from January 2014 to October 2016. While it's definitely important for parents to talk to their children about gun safety (more about that later), the Brady Center for 16 years has promoted its awareness campaign called ASK (Asking Saves Kids). The Brady Center collaborates with the American Academy of Pediatrics on the initiative.

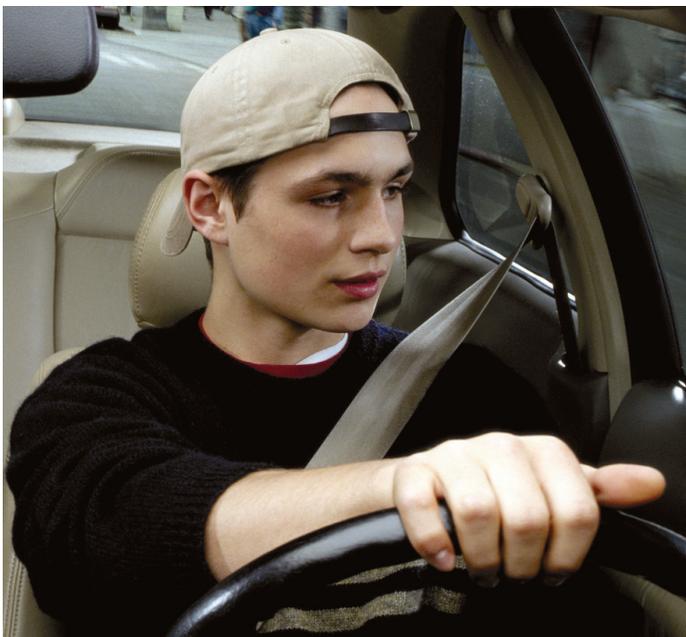
The ASK campaign, which NYAGV also promotes, encourages parents to ask if there are unlocked guns in the homes where their



children play. Gary Pudup, the Rochester representative for NYAGV and a graduate of McQuaid Jesuit High School, is well familiar with gun violence in homes. Pudup is a retired Monroe County Sheriff's deputy.

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Eight danger zones for teen-age drivers



By CDC.gov (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

Six teen-agers a day are killed in car crashes nationally. But injuries and deaths are preventable. Make sure your young driver is aware of the leading causes of teen crashes. Then use a parent-teen driving agreement to put rules in place that will help your teen stay safe.

Danger Zone #1: Driver Inexperience

Crash risk is highest in the first year a teen has their license.

What Parents Can Do:

- Provide at least 30 to 50 hours of supervised driving practice over at least six months.
- Practice on a variety of roads, at different times of day, and in varied weather and traffic conditions.
- Stress the importance of continually scanning for potential hazards including other vehicles, bicyclists, and pedestrians.

Danger Zone #2: Driving with Teen Passengers

The crash risk goes up when teens drive with other teens in the car.

What Parents Can Do:

- Limit the number of passengers your teen can have to zero or one.

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- Keep this rule for at least the first six months that your teen is driving.

Danger Zone #3: Nighttime Driving

For all ages, fatal crashes are more likely to occur at night; but the risk is higher for teens.

What Parents Can Do:

- Be aware of and follow state restrictions on junior drivers.

<https://dmv.ny.gov/driver-license/up-state-new-york-junior-driver-license-restrictions>

- Practice nighttime driving with your teen when you think they are ready, following all applicable state laws.

Danger Zone #4: Not Using Seat Belts

The simplest way to prevent car crash deaths is to buckle up.

What Parents Can Do:

- Require your teen to wear a seat belt on every trip. This simple step can reduce your teen's risk of dying or being badly injured in a crash by about half.

Danger Zone #5: Distracted Driving

Distractions increase your teen's risk of being in a crash.

What Parents Can Do:

- Don't allow activities that may take your teen's attention away from driving, such



as talking on a cell phone, texting, eating, or playing with the radio.

- Learn more about distracted driving.

https://www.cdc.gov/motorvehiclesafety/distracted_driving/index.html

Danger Zone #6: Drowsy Driving

Young drivers are at high risk for drowsy driving, which causes thousands of crashes every year. Teens are most tired and at risk when driving in the early morning or late at night.

What Parents Can Do:

Know your teen's schedule so you can be

sure he or she is well rested before getting behind the wheel.

Danger Zone #7: Reckless Driving

Research shows that teens lack the experience, judgment, and maturity to assess risky situations.

What Parents Can Do:

- Make sure your teen knows to follow the speed limit and adjust their speed to match road conditions.
- Remind your teen to maintain enough space behind the vehicle ahead to avoid a crash in case of a sudden stop.

Danger Zone #8: Impaired Driving

Even one drink will impair your teen's driving ability and increase risk of a crash.

What Parents Can Do:

- Be a good role model: never drink and drive.

• Reinforce this message with a Parent-Teen Driving Agreement.

<https://www.cdc.gov/parentsarethekey/agreement/index.html>

- Learn more about impaired driving.

https://www.cdc.gov/motorvehiclesafety/impaired_driving/index.html

- Get the stats on teen drinking and driving.

https://www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/teen_drinkinganddriving/index.html

"Because of the emotional end of this gun control debate, many people are uncomfortable asking (about guns in a home) because they don't want to get involved in an argument with their friends and neighbors and the parents of their children's playmates," Pudup says.

The ASK campaign offers a toolkit that includes four steps to help parents start a conversation with the parent of another child.

- Don't be confrontational. Present your concerns in a respectful manner. You are simply trying to make sure your child is in a safe environment.

- Work through groups. Introduce the ASK concept through a group or community effort such as a religious organization or PTA.

- Start by asking other questions. Include the question along with other things you might normally discuss before sending your child to someone's house – such as seat belts, animals or allergies.

- Use the facts. Over one-third of homes with children have a gun, many of which are left unlocked and loaded. That's why you are asking; you just want to make sure your child is safe.

The American Academy of Pediatrics suggests parents and caregivers communicate the following to youngsters:

- Let them know that risks of gun injuries may exist in places they visit and play.

- Tell them that if they see or encounter a gun in a friend's home or elsewhere, they must steer clear of it, and tell you about it.

- Talk with the parents of your child's friends, and find out if they have firearms in their home. If they do, insist that they keep them unloaded, locked up, and inaccessible to children.

- Make sure your children understand that violence on TV and in the movies is not real. They need to be told – and probably reminded again and again – that in real life, children are killed and hurt badly by guns. Although the popular media often romanticize gun use, youngsters must learn that these weapons can be extremely dangerous.

But even with parents talking to their children and teens about the danger of guns, tragic accidents still happen. Pudup says he often hears parents say that they've taught gun safety rules to their children. "So you

did, but your kid is 16 years old, and his buddy's coming over, and he wants to show off the gun to his buddy, and he ends up shooting him."

Pudup says that parents sometimes make the mistake of thinking that kids think the way adults do, but children are not miniature adults and their brains are not fully developed.

In fact, a 2014 segment by ABC Network's Nightline program showed young children being taught in school to never touch a gun. But when the kids were left alone in the classroom with real, unloaded guns where the kids could easily find them, hidden cameras showed that nearly half of the boys played with the guns, and eight out of 23 girls did, too.

Pudup emphasizes that it's important for gun owners to keep their guns unloaded and locked up, with the ammunition locked in a separate place. A major focus for NYAGV is to get a statewide law passed that requires gun owners to keep the gun locked up or have a lock on it, unless the gun is on or near the owner. The state Assembly has passed

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Creating a Safe Environment Newsletter

is published quarterly by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Rochester with the aim of helping all of us keep children and vulnerable adults safe at home, at church and in all places in our community.

Comments can be directed to:
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of Safe Environment Education
and Compliance,
585-328-3228, ext. 1255
or krinefierd@dor.org.

Victims of sexual abuse by any employee of the Church should always report to the civil authorities.

To report a case of possible sexual abuse and to receive help and guidance from the Roman Catholic Diocese of Rochester, contact the diocesan Victims' Assistance Coordinator:

Deborah Housel
(585) 328-3228, ext. 1555;
toll-free 1-800-388-7177,
ext. 1555
or dhousel@dor.org.

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such legislation, called "Nicholas's Law," named for Nicholas Naumkin, but the state Senate has not.

Several municipalities in New York state already have similar laws, including Rochester and Buffalo. "Our goal is to educate people to the point where they think if I buy a gun or I own a gun, I have to buy a safe and I have to keep this locked up," Pudup says. "Not because the government is telling me to, not for any other reason than it's the

smart thing to do to keep people safe."

Pudup likens the proposed state law to the seatbelt law, which most people obey whether they agree with it. The pain that Nicholas Naumkin's parents feel about his tragic death will never go away. But his mother, Oksana Naumkin, told the Times Union, "If I could save just one life with this story of what happened to us, I'd be happy."

Jane Sutter is a Rochester-area freelance writer.

LINKS TO LEARN MORE

ASK Campaign

Printed materials and social media tools

<http://askingsaveskids.org/>

Talk About Guns Campaign

Printable PDF of 15 Truths about Kids and Guns

<http://talkaboutguns.org/15-truths/15Truths.pdf>

NYAGV Factsheets, research reports:

<http://nyagv.org/resources/>

Kids Health Safety Tips

<http://kidshealth.org/en/parents/gunsafety.html>

ONLINE SAFETY RESOURCES

CHILDREN & TEENS' SAFETY SITES:

Webonauts Internet Academy:

<http://pbskids.org/webonauts/>
PBS Kids game that helps younger children understand the basics of Internet behavior and safety.

NSTeens: <http://www.nsteens.org/>

A program of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children that has interactive games and videos on a variety of Internet safety topics.

FOR PARENTS:

Common Sense Media

<https://www.commonsensemedia.org/parent-concerns>

A comprehensive and frequently updated site that is packed with resources. Dedicated to improving the lives of kids and families by providing information and education

Family Online Safety Institute:

<http://www.fosi.org/>

iKeepSafe: <http://www.ikeepsafe.org/>
Resources for parents, educators, kids and parishes on navigating mobile and social media technologies

Faith and Safety: <http://www.faithandsafety.org>

Safety in a digital world, a joint project of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and Greek Orthodox Church in America

LOCAL RESOURCES AND CONTACT INFORMATION

Bivona Child Advocacy Center

(Monroe, Wayne counties)
www.BivonaCAC.org / 585-935-7800

Chemung County Child Advocacy Center:

607-737-8479 / www.chemungcounty.com

Child Advocacy Center of Cayuga County:

315-253-9795 / www.cacofcayugacounty.org

Finger Lakes Child Advocacy Program

(Ontario County):
www.cacfingerlakes.org / 315-548-3232

Darkness to Light organization: www.d2l.org

Steuben County:

Southern Tier Children's Advocacy Center:

www.sthcs.org / 716-372-8532

NYS State Central Registry

(Child Abuse Reporting Hotline):
1-800-342-3720

NYS Child Advocacy Resource and Consultation Center (CARCC)

866-313-3013

Tompkins County Advocacy Center:

www.theadvocacycenter.org
607-277-3203

Wyoming County Sexual Abuse Response Team: 585-786-8846

Yates County Child Abuse Review Team:

315-531-3417, Ext. 6