

Donna's Law

Do people use the Voluntary Do Not Sell Registry and has it prevented suicides?

Suicide is the 10th leading cause of death in MO.

If you or someone you know is struggling or in crisis, help is available. Call or text [988](tel:988) or chat at 988lifeline.org

Ease of access to lethal means influences the suicide method. International data demonstrates that restrictions to lethal means can reduce overall suicide rates (e.g., barriers at jumping sites, less prescription of medicines that can be overdosed, and firearms restrictions; [Sarchiapone 2011](#)).

In 2021, the overall suicide rate in MO was 18.7 suicides per 100,000 people, 10% higher than the national average ([CDC 2023](#)). Suicide is higher in rural populations (21/100,000) than urban populations (17.4/100,000; [MO DHSS 2022](#)).

Nationally, firearms are the most common suicide method (55%), followed by suffocation and poisoning ([CDC 2023](#)). MO rates are consistent with national trends. In 2016, there were 1,121 suicides in MO, 57% of which were carried out with a firearm (**Figure 1**).

Rates of suicide were highest among the age groups ([CDC WONDER](#)):

Research Highlights

In the U.S. and MO, firearms are the most common suicide method.

Restricting access to firearms can reduce total suicides and suicides by firearm.

The impacts of a Voluntary Do Not Sell registry on suicide rates are unknown.

- 85+ (28/100,000)
- 45-54 (27.9/100,000)
- 25-34 (26.2/100,000).

Some firearm laws reduce firearm suicides.

There is an association between firearm prevalence and suicides. However, research cannot determine if firearm accessibility increases suicide or if people who intend to commit suicide are more likely to own or have access to a firearm. Health professionals recommend reducing suicide risk by removing access to firearms ([RAND 2018](#)).

According to federal law, an individual whom the court has ruled that due to mental illness, subnormal intelligence, or disease is a danger to themselves or others, lacks the mental capacity to manage their own affairs, or has been found insane by the court cannot possess a firearm ([18 USC§922](#)).

Studies of state laws regarding firearms have found that ([RAND 2023](#)):

- waiting periods to purchase a firearm reduce firearm suicides

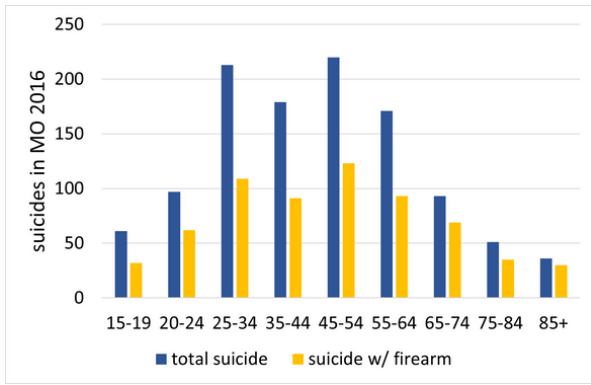


Figure 1. Total deaths by suicide and suicide by firearm in 2016 in Missouri distributed by age group. Data from [CDC WONDER](#).

- minimum age requirements to purchase a firearm reduce firearm suicides among young people
- child access prevention (CAP) laws reduce firearm suicides and total suicides among young people

CAP laws allow adults who, intentionally or carelessly, permitted a child’s unsupervised firearm access to face charges.

There is not enough evidence to determine if extreme risk protection orders, where a court can temporarily restrict an individual’s access to a firearm if they are deemed a risk to themselves or others, reduce firearm suicide ([RAND 2023](#)).

In 2020 in the Midwest, firearm suicides were lowest in IL (4.3/100,000), MN (6.3/100,000), and NE (7.2/100,000). **Table 1** lists relevant firearm laws that these states have compared to MO ([RAND 2022](#)).

There are no studies on the impact of Donna’s law.

The Voluntary Do Not Sell Firearms Act (a.k.a. Donna’s law) allows people to voluntarily add themselves to a “do-not-sell” list.

Table 1. Firearm laws relevant to suicide in MO, IL, MN, and NE. Data from [RAND 2022](#).

	MO	IL	MN	NE
Child Access Prevention Laws	●	●	●	●
Universal Background Checks	●	●	●	●
Minimum Age of 20	●	●	●	●
Waiting Periods	●	●	●	●

Registration on this list appears on a background check which prevents them from purchasing or possessing a firearm. However, if a firearm is purchased from a source that does not do a background check, there would be no way to know that this person is on the registry.

Addition and removal from the list are voluntary and removal involves a waiting period set by state law which, depending on the state, varies from one week to one month. It is intended that people with suicidal ideation will register ([Donna’s Law 2018](#)). However, anyone can register, and a reason does not need to be provided for registration or removal.

WA, UT, and VA have passed Donna’s law, but usage is low. In WA, 37 people are currently on the registry (personal communication, WA State Patrol). In UT and VA, in total 21 and 47 people, respectively, have been signed up for the registry since 2021 (personal communication, UT Dept. Public Safety, VA State Police). It is unknown if this law reduces firearm suicides.

Because these are state laws, registration does not appear on a background check in another state. Therefore, this does not prevent someone on the registry from purchasing a firearm in another state.

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