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Firearm Responsibility

The purpose of this Practice Alert is to provide staff with guidance on firearm responsibility when visiting a home. Staff will occasionally be called to a home where a resident has been identified as having firearms. Staff may be alerted of this prior to visiting the home or they may find upon visiting with the family that they have firearms stored in their home. If staff feel that their own safety is in question or the visit has become volatile, they should leave the home immediately and contact law enforcement to assist in assuring child safety.

When assessing a family, staff should discuss the level of knowledge of firearm responsibility, while also taking into account the vulnerabilities of the family such as families with young children, domestic violence, and those at risk of suicide. There may be a vast difference in knowledge of exposure to firearms among children the Children's Division serves depending on their exposure to firearms and the culture of the family. Staff should familiarize themselves with safe storage of firearm practices and should discuss safety procedures with the family when firearms have been identified as being in the home. Some safety measures to look for or suggest include:

- Trigger Locks
- Gun Cases
- Strong Boxes and Security Cases
- Locking Gun Cabinets
- Gun Safes
- Storing firearms and ammunition separately

Some questions staff could ask a family if they do have firearms in their home are:

- If you have a firearm in your home, is it stored, locked and out of the reach of children?
- Does the child know where the firearms are stored?
- What is your child's level of knowledge of firearms and the safe handling of firearms?
- Has your child attended a hunter's safety course?
- Do other homes your child visits have firearms and are they secured?

Local offices are also encouraged to seek out resources in their community to provide to the family regarding firearm responsibility. A firearms safety brochure in English and Spanish may be ordered from the E-Store at:
<https://dssapp.state.mo.us/estore/login.asp>.

Discussion of firearms may be difficult for some and if staff do not feel comfortable discussing the topic with the family, they should consult with their supervisor to discuss the best way to address the concern.

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