Missouri Firearm Retailers:
Your Awareness Could Save a Life!

While not all suicides are preventable, you and your staff can reduce the odds that a gun bought at your store today is used in a suicide tomorrow.

Asking these simple questions may prevent a suicide:

Q  “What questions can I answer for you?”
   • Customer asks no questions and shows no knowledge of guns and no interest in learning

Q  “Do you have a certain type of firearm in mind?”
   • Customer does not care which gun s/he purchases or is unresponsive to your questions about the purchase

Q  “How will you be using your firearm?”
   • Customer gives an unconvincing response when asked what s/he intends to use the gun for

Q  “What firearm safety class are you planning on taking?”
   √ Customer shows no interest in firearm maintenance or safety
   √ Customer mentions a recent crisis such as divorce, job loss, personal setback or loss
   √ Customer makes comments that suggest finality (e.g. “I don’t need a lot of ammunition, I won’t have the gun for long.”)
   √ Customer appears anxious, avoids eye contact, is short-tempered, or distracted.

Note: None of the above clearly indicate someone is suicidal. Use extra caution if any of the above signs are present in a customer purchasing a gun.

Options for responding to a potentially suicidal buyer:

√ Trust your instincts; you are under no obligation to sell a gun to anyone
√ Notify store owner or manager if at all uncomfortable with a prospective sale
√ Suggest that a customer take some more time to think it over before purchase
√ Urge customer with little firearm experience to seek training before purchase
√ If s/he claims to be buying it for self-defense, suggest alternative method (e.g. pepper spray)
√ When you deny a sale due to concerns about suicide, notify police and nearby dealers

Ask the customer directly if s/he is suicidal; if yes, call 911 and/or offer the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)

“What else can I do?”

√ Display suicide prevention materials in your store (suicidepreventionlifeline.org)
√ Distribute firearm safety brochures to buyers about recognizing suicide warning signs and keeping firearms away from suicidal or depressed family members

Spread the word! Ask other dealers you know to request our materials

Contact Scott Perkins, Missouri Suicide Prevention Director, Department of Mental Health
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