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Contact: Dannette Fadness
dannettef@fchwmt.org
406.926.2522

Top Gun Safety Tips to Help Keep Kids Safe
Safe Kids Missoula Reminds Parents to Keep Guns Locked, Unloaded, and Out of Sight

Missoula, MT – It is estimated that about one third of households with children ages 17 and under have a gun in the home—overall 63% of Montana households have guns. Safe Kids Missoula is partnering with families and communities to help keep kids safe around guns and reduce the number of injuries and deaths caused by unintentional shootings or suicide. Hunting Season is in full swing and the holidays are right around the corner, so it is important to remind parents to model responsible behaviors around guns, have a conversation with other family members and the parents of your children’s friends about safe gun storage practices, and make sure guns are stored in a locked location, unloaded and out of the reach and sight of children. To learn more tips, visit the gun safety section on the Safe Kids website.

“We respect the decisions of parents and caregivers who choose to keep a gun in the home,” said Dannette Fadness, Safe Kids Missoula. “But too many kids have been injured or killed in gun-related incidents, so we need to take extra precautions when kids are in an environment where guns are present.”

The Missoula County Sheriff’s Office works with Project ChildSafe, an organization that provides free gun locks to families. “Securing your firearms is the best way to prevent accidents and misuse of guns,” said Sheriff T.J. McDermott. “One of our goals is to protect families from preventable tragedies that can easily be avoided with safe gun practices. Remember to treat every gun as if it were loaded, talk to your kids, and if you want more information stop by our office.”

Safe Kids Missoula and its partners encourage parents and caregivers to keep kids safe with some simple, common sense tips:

Top Tips for Parents

- **Store guns and ammunition safely.** Make sure guns are stored in a locked location, unloaded and out of the reach and sight of children. Store ammunition separately, also out of reach and sight of kids.
- **Make sure all guns are equipped with effective, child-resistant gun locks.** Keep keys and combinations hidden.
- **Model responsible behavior around guns.** Leaving guns on a nightstand, table or other place where a child can gain access may lead to injuries and fatalities.
- **Talk to your kids.** Explain how a gun your kids might see on television or in a video game is different from a gun in real life. Teach kids not to touch a gun and to immediately tell an adult if they see one.
- **An unsecured gun is a risk for teen suicide.** Know the signs of suicide and secure your guns out of reach of youth and children.
- **Talk to relatives and friends who your kids may visit.** Have a conversation with other family members and the parents of your children’s friends about safe gun storage practices.

“Approximately 85 percent of suicide attempts with a firearm end in death. In 2012-2013, 75 percent of Montana youth suicides were completed by firearm. We know that most attempts are impulsive and take place in a moment of panic. These feelings of despair naturally ease within a short time, and 90 percent do not go on to die by suicide. Preventing easy access to firearms, by keeping them locked or stored outside the home helps reduce suicides,” states Kristie Scheel, Suicide Prevention Coordinator at the Missoula City-County Health Department. For more information on suicide prevention, contact Kristie at (406) 258-3881 or the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255.

**About Safe Kids Missoula**
Safe Kids Missoula works to prevent unintentional childhood injury, the number one cause of death for children in the United States. The coalition is made up of over 30 agencies and organizations in Missoula. Safe Kids Missoula is a member of Safe Kids Worldwide, a global network of organizations dedicated to preventing unintentional injury. Safe Kids Missoula was founded in 1991 and is led by Foundation for Community Health. For more information, visit safekids.org or fchwmt.org or follow us on Facebook at https://www.facebook.com/safekidsmissoula.