

## Where We Stand:

NAMI believes that gun violence is a public health crisis that endangers the life, safety and mental health of people throughout the U.S. NAMI supports public policies and laws that create waiting periods for purchasing firearms to reduce impulsive acts of gun violence and self-harm.

## Why We Care:

Gun violence is a public health crisis, endangering the lives, safety and mental health of communities across the country. In 2020, firearm-related deaths rose to the [highest number on record](#) and became the [leading cause of death](#) for children and adolescents in the U.S. Self-inflicted gun violence is a significant concern, with suicide accounting for more than [half](#) of all gun-related deaths (over 24,000) in 2020. This contributes to the ongoing suicide crisis in this country, with suicide a leading cause of death. Firearms are the most [common method used](#) in suicide, with nearly [90%](#) of suicide attempts with a gun resulting in death.

While someone can experience suicidal ideation over a long period of time, a suicidal crisis often escalates quickly. For example, [research has shown](#) that the acute period of heightened risk for suicidal behavior is often only minutes or hours long. This is why limiting access to means of suicide can [play a significant role](#) in prevention, especially when focused on such lethal means as a firearm.

Purchase waiting periods are policies that require a certain period of time to pass between when someone purchases a firearm and when they can take possession of the firearm. These policies are intended to prevent impulsive acts of gun violence, including firearm suicides, and create a “cooling off” period during a crisis.

While research on self-inflicted gun violence is [limited](#), there is evidence that waiting period laws could reduce gun-related suicides [7-11%](#).

**NAMI supports public policies and laws that create waiting periods for purchasing firearms to reduce impulsive acts of gun violence and self-harm.**

Currently, federal law does not require a waiting period between purchase and possession, as long as the firearm is purchased from a federally licensed dealer. A [number](#) of states have purchase waiting period laws that vary in the required time between purchase and possession and whether the waiting period applies to all firearms or just certain classes of weapons or handguns.

Suicides are preventable, and a comprehensive public health approach to firearm safety can help reduce the number of tragedies we see each year. Delaying access to such a lethal means of suicide through purchase waiting periods should be part of that strategy to reduce and prevent suicides.

To learn more about NAMI’s work on this issue, visit [www.nami.org/Advocacy/Policy-Priorities](http://www.nami.org/Advocacy/Policy-Priorities)