



October 24, 2023

Dear Suffern Central School District Parents and Caregivers,

Providing our students and staff with a safe and healthy educational environment remains our top priority. We are all aware of recent incidents of gun violence and threats across the nation and in our community. In several of these incidents, a child gained access to a lawfully purchased gun from their home or the residence of a family member.

According to research published recently in the New England Journal of Medicine, firearm-related injuries now outpace motor vehicle accidents as the leading cause of childhood mortality in the United States.

To further our efforts to safeguard students against firearms, we are reminding parents and guardians of the legal obligations to protect minors from negligent gun storage. If you own a firearm, please make certain the gun is stored safely and that all family members know the rules about handling guns:

- Keep the gun unloaded and locked up in a cabinet, safe, gun vault or storage case
- Lock ammunition in a location separate from the gun
- Consider using a gun lock (a small lock that makes the gun unable to fire)
- Hide the keys (or passcode) to the locked storage

Proper gun storage is a critical lesson for all age groups. Young children are curious and can't fully understand the dangers of a firearm. In fact, most teenagers and preteens who die by suicide use a gun from their home or from the home of a relative or friend. Children should *never* have access to a gun and ammunition without a responsible adult present.

The Be SMART campaign was launched to raise awareness that secure gun storage - storing guns locked, unloaded, and separate from ammunition - can save lives. Please review these important safety resources and tips [here](#). According to Be SMART, it's not about the gun; it's about whether it's secured.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue.

Christopher D'Ambrese  
District Superintendent  
Rockland BOCES

Marc Baiocco, Ed, D.  
Superintendent of Schools  
Clarkstown Central School District

Clarence Ellis, Ed, D.  
Superintendent of Schools  
East Ramapo Central School District

Lisa Brady Ed, D.  
Interim Superintendent of Schools  
Nanuet Union Free School District

Kris Felicello, Ed, D.  
Superintendent of Schools  
North Rockland Central School District

Ms. Susan Yom  
Superintendent of Schools  
Nyack Union Free School District

Marco Pochintesta, Ed, D.  
Superintendent of Schools  
Pearl River Union Free School  
District

Brian Culot, Ed, D.  
Superintendent of Schools  
South Orangetown Central School District

Erik Gundersen, Ed, D.  
Superintendent of Schools  
Suffern Central School District

Deborah P. Gatti  
President  
Rockland County School Boards Association