

EXTREME RISK LAWS AT WORK

HOW STATES ARE USING EXTREME RISK LAWS TO PREVENT GUN VIOLENCE

Extreme risk laws empower families and law enforcement to prevent gun tragedies by enabling them to petition a court directly for an extreme risk protection order (ERPO). These laws temporarily prohibit individuals at elevated risk of harming themselves or others from purchasing or accessing firearms and require these individuals to relinquish any guns they possess while the order is in effect. In the 17 states that have enacted extreme risk laws, these orders are being used to temporarily remove guns from people in crisis, helping save lives.

MASS SHOOTINGS

Perpetrators of mass shootings often display warning signs before committing violence. Extreme risk laws provide law enforcement and family members with a tool to intervene before warning signs escalate into tragedies.



A man posted on Facebook that he wanted to commit a mass shooting at a synagogue and wrote that he was “shooting for 30 Jews.” His posts also included pictures of him with firearms, Nazi salutes, and glorifications of other mass shooters. Officers obtained an ERPO and removed an assault weapon and 11 other guns.



A car dealership employee threatened to shoot his supervisor and other employees if he was fired, and also suggested that he might shoot up a church or synagogue. Law enforcement obtained a gun violence restraining order (California’s version of an ERPO) and seized five guns, including one AR-15.

SUICIDE

More than 22,000 Americans die by gun suicide each year. Extreme risk laws have particular promise for preventing these deaths, with studies showing these laws can reduce firearm suicide rates by as much as 14%.



During a two hour standoff with police, a man repeatedly held a pistol to his head and said “I am done” and “this is how I’m going out.” He also fired shots into the air and attempted to provoke officers to shoot him. The man chose not to contest an ERPO and voluntarily surrendered his firearms for six months.



A man with access to firearms threatened to kill himself and his three-year-old son over frustrations that he wasn’t able to afford his child support payment. Officers obtained an ERPO and were able to temporarily remove 10 firearms—including assault weapons—from the man’s possession.

SCHOOL SHOOTINGS

States across the country have enacted extreme risk laws in response to school shootings. Now, these laws are helping prevent future tragedies.



ROCKVILLE, MD

A Maryland teenager threatened to shoot up his former high school and wrote that he hoped everyone at the school died. The eighteen-year-old also posted pictures on social media of himself holding semiautomatic assault-style rifles, which were owned by another resident of the apartment. Law enforcement obtained an ERPO to remove guns from his possession.



MIDDLEBURY, VT

Two middle school students were plotting to shoot another student and “anyone else” with guns obtained from a relative when they were overheard by a third student, who reported their plans. An extreme risk protection order was obtained to remove the students’ access to guns.

INTERPERSONAL VIOLENCE

Nearly 13,000 people are killed in gun homicides each year. When warning signs demonstrate a risk of gun violence, extreme risk laws empower family members and law enforcement to proactively intervene before violence occurs.



TAMPA, FL

After getting fired from his job and purchasing a gun, a man threatened to shoot his neighbors, showing them a handgun in his waistband. The man also started wearing a ballistic vest and moving all his household possessions to his yard. Officers obtained an ERPO to remove his guns.



PENDELTON, OR

After getting fired from his job, a man threatened to return to his former workplace and shoot his former boss. His sister contacted law enforcement when she saw him with a gun and learned of his plans, after which the man also threatened to shoot her. Officers obtained an ERPO and removed a .22 caliber handgun from the man’s possession.

OTHER TYPES OF VIOLENCE

Extreme risk laws have also been used to remove guns from people who have handled firearms recklessly and otherwise pose a danger to themselves or others.



SAN DIEGO, CA

After a man allegedly shot a city employee fixing a water leak, police executed a gun violence restraining order against the shooter, concerned that he would make bail and regain access to firearms. A search of the shooter’s home turned up 34 rifles, 21 hand guns, and 75,000 rounds of ammunition, all of which were seized from the shooter’s home.



CROWN POINT, IN

Police responded two days in a row to the home of a man who locked himself in a bathroom while having delusions that there were intruders in his attic. The man had a history of serious mental illness and owned multiple firearms. Officers noted that criminal charges were not appropriate in this case, but obtained an order to remove firearms since the man posed a risk to himself and others.

WE’RE ON A MISSION TO SAVE LIVES For over 25 years, the legal experts at Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence have been fighting for a safer America by researching, drafting, and defending the laws, policies, and programs proven to save lives from gun violence. Founded in the wake of a 1993 mass shooting in San Francisco, in 2016 the Law Center joined with former Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords to form a courageous new force for gun safety that stretches coast to coast.