

Means Restriction and Means Safety for Preventing Suicide

Los Angeles Summit
September 6, 2018
Anara Guard

This workshop will cover...

- What is means restriction?
- What are lethal means?
- What about means substitution?
- Successes with reducing access to various methods
- Part of a comprehensive suicide prevention strategy
- Hazard mapping exercise
- Older adults, rural populations, youth
- Questions and wrap-up

Learning from injury prevention

The three Es:

- EDUCATION
- ENVIRONMENT
- ENFORCEMENT

Combining two or three approaches is best!



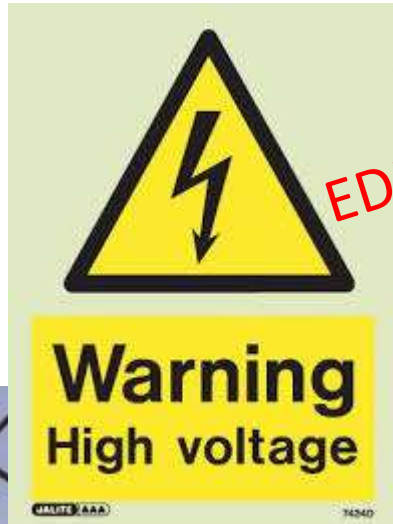
How can we restrict or reduce access to lethal means?

- Place the person in a safer environment
- Put a barrier between the person and the means
- Create time between the person and the means
- Make the means (and an attempt) less lethal

Place barriers between the person and harm



Restricting access protects everyone!



EDUCATION



NO EDUCATION
HERE

What are “lethal means”?

- Firearms
- Poisons/drugs/medications – Overdoses
- Suffocation/asphyxiation – CO, plastic bags
- Strangulation/hanging – Ropes
- Jumping – Heights
- Cutting/piercing – Sharp objects

Reducing access can make a life-saving difference

- Many attempts occur during a short-term crisis
- Removing the means may not solve the person's problems BUT...
- When means are *less available* or *less deadly*, suicide rates decline. Time for:
 - Crisis to pass
 - Intervention to occur

More wisdom from injury prevention

- *PRIMARY PREVENTION*
PREVENT the EVENT from occurring (brakes)
- *SECONDARY PREVENTION*
REDUCE the injury impact of the event (crumple zone, air bags)
- *TERTIARY PREVENTION*
MITIGATE effects of injury (rapid response, good trauma care)

Prevent the attempt (Primary prevention)

- Encourage reaching out for help (signs at “hot spots”)
- Reduce access to lethal means

EDUCATION



Reduce the impact of the event (Secondary prevention)

- Smaller amounts of dosage
- Life vest
- Bike helmet
- Bridge nets

“Won’t they substitute other means?”

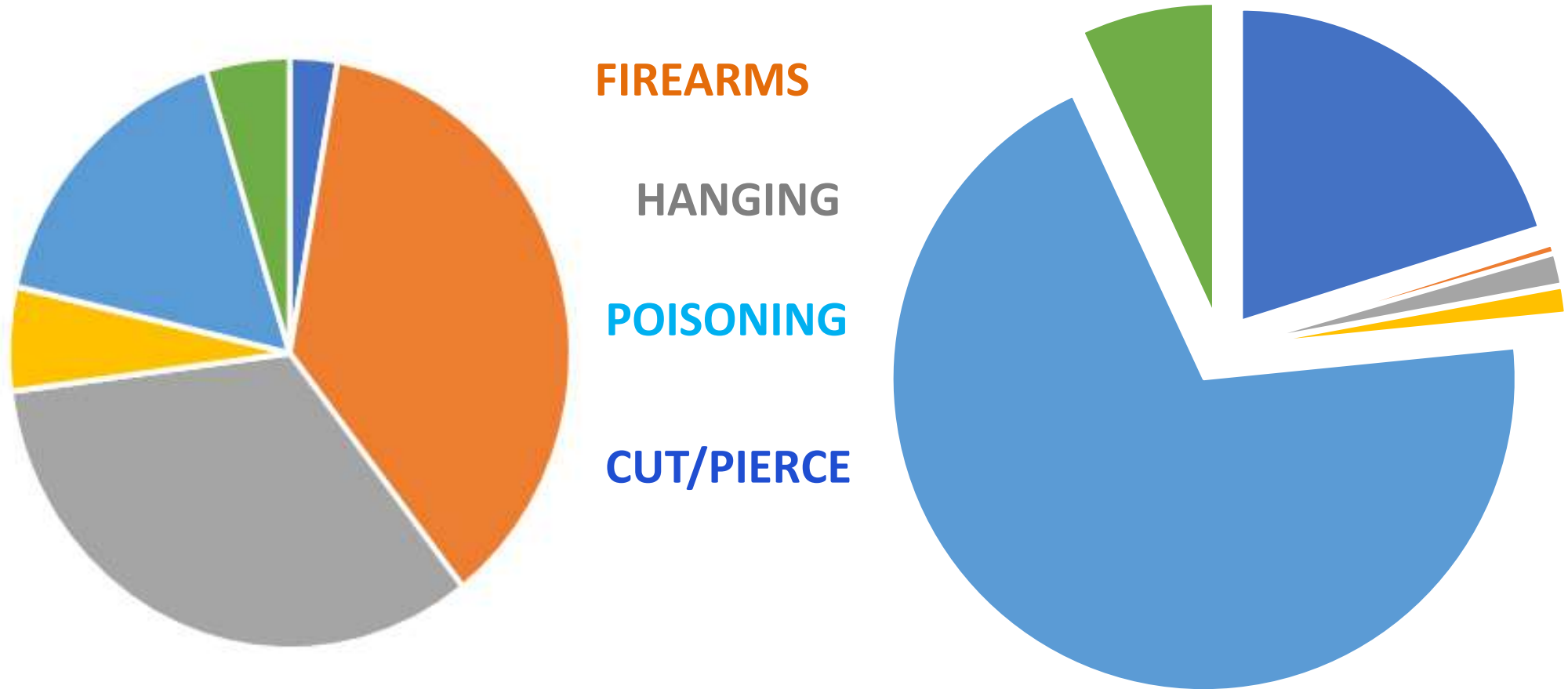
- Bern, Switzerland ^[1]
- Augusta, Maine ^[1]
- New Zealand ^[1]
- Bristol, England ^[1]
- United Kingdom ^[1]
- Sri Lanka ^[1]



- 1—Reisch 2005
- 2—Pelletier 2007
- 3—Beautrais 2001
- 4—Bennewith 2007
- 5—Kreitman 1976
- 6--Gunnell 2007

90% of suicide attempt survivors don't later die by suicide

LA County deaths & hospitalizations, 2005-14



Making firearms less accessible – ENVIRONMENT and ENFORCEMENT

Household storage^[1]

Rural Alaska: Gun cabinets reduced unlocked firearms (89% → 35%)
^[2]

Storage offsite

Storage with law enforcement and gun retailers ^[3]

Voluntary removal from the home^[4]

Court-ordered removal ^[5]

1—Shenassa 2004

2--Grossman 2012

3—Runyan 2017

4—McCourt 2017

5—Swanson 2017

Are locks and boxes enough?



ENVIRONMENT

Making firearms less accessible – EDUCATION

- Firearms storage & Gun lock giveaway programs
- Lethal means counseling by providers^[1]
- Gun shops, range owners & hunter safety instructors^[2]
 - Disseminate materials aimed at reducing suicides

1—Johnson 2011; Kruesi
1999

2—Runyan 2017

Consider culture...

- Firearm owners who stored guns unlocked and loaded less amenable to ideas of “firearm safety”^[1]
- “Means safety” more acceptable term than “means restriction” ^[2]
- Firearm dealers in NH who believe that reducing access to firearms might save a life more likely to display prevention information^[3]
- Craft and test your messages^[4]

1—Kaplan 1998

2—Stanley 2017

3—Vriniotis 2014

4—Marino 2017



CONCERNED ABOUT A FAMILY MEMBER OR FRIEND?

ARE THEY SUICIDAL?

- Depressed, angry, impulsive?
- Going through a relationship breakup, legal trouble or other setback?
- Using drugs or alcohol more?
- Withdrawing from things they used to enjoy?
- Talking about being better off dead?
- Losing hope?
- Acting reckless?
- Feeling trapped?

SUICIDES IN SHASTA COUNTY
FAR OUTNUMBER HOMICIDES

FIREARMS ARE THE
LEADING METHOD

ATTEMPTS WITH A GUN
ARE MORE DEADLY
THAN ATTEMPTS WITH OTHER
METHODS

HOLD ON TO THEIR GUNS

- Putting time and distance between a suicidal person and a gun may save a life.
- For other ways to help, call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)



Sponsored by Shasta County Health and Human Services Agency
in conjunction with our many community partners and advisory
boards. Funding for this project is provided through the Mental
Health Services Act.

Shasta County

Took what worked
in N.H.

Tested it locally
before using

Learned what
would be
accepted

EDUCATION

More in the EMM Resource Center 2017 Toolkit

Suicide Prevention Gun Shop Activity

Customizable Files

Gun Shop Brochure (Customizable with Crop Marks)



Gun Shop Brochure (Customizable)



Print Ready Files

Activity Tip Sheet



EDUCATION

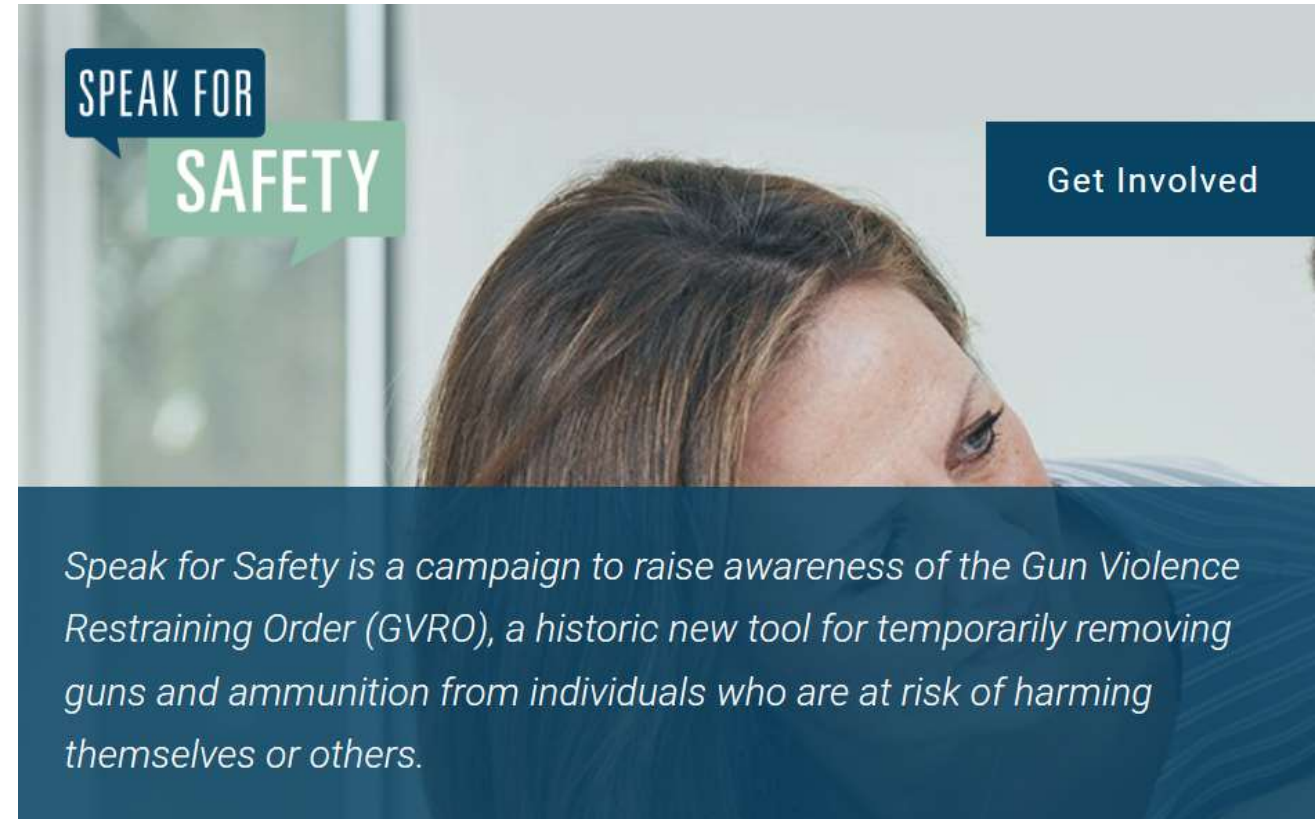
TOOLKIT

Suicide Prevention Week 2017 Toolkit

Gun Violence Restraining Orders

Family members, household members, and law enforcement can petition courts to *temporarily* remove guns and prevent purchase of new guns by individuals who pose a *significant risk of harm to themselves or others.*

ENFORCEMENT



www.SpeakforSafety.org

Research on GVROs

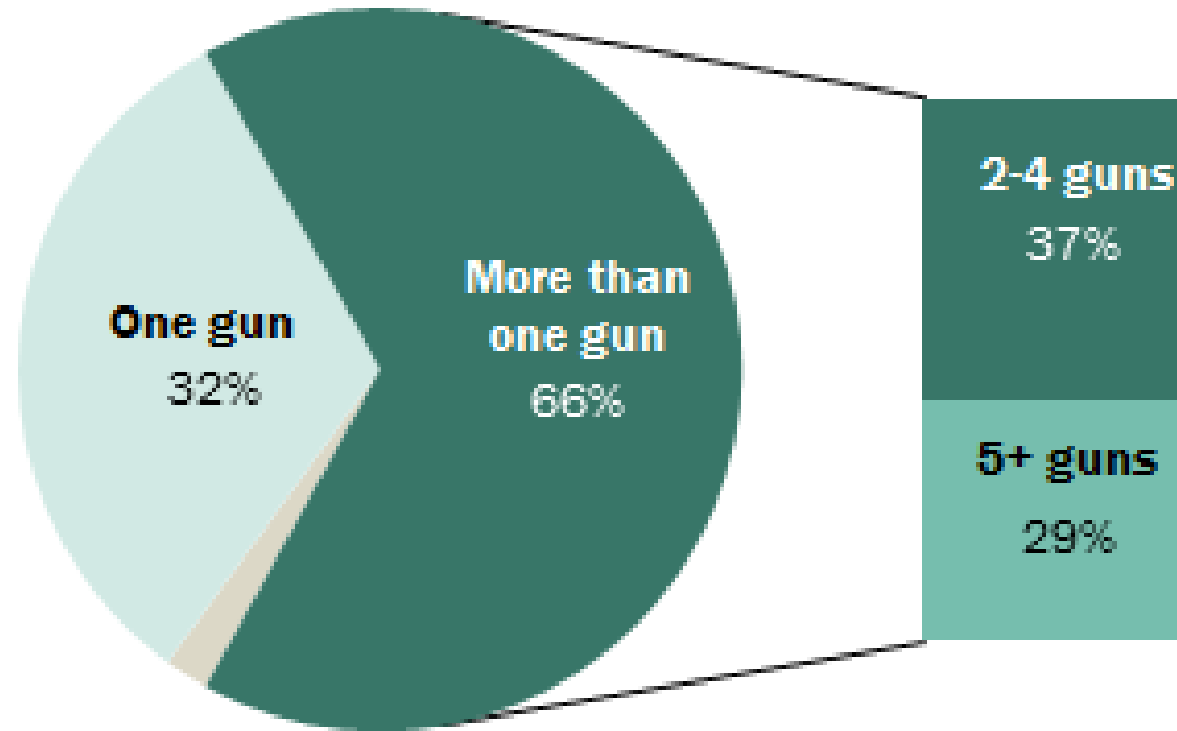
Connecticut's law: *13.7% reduction in firearm suicides*

- On average, law enforcement removed 7 guns per order.
- 1 in 3 subjects given access to mental health care and drug/alcohol counseling – often for the first time.
- For every 10 - 20 orders, *at least one suicide was prevented.*

Indiana's law: *7.5% reduction in firearm suicides in ten years.*

Most gun owners own multiple guns

% of gun owners saying they own ...



Note: Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer shown but not labeled.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted March 13-27 and April 4-18, 2017.

"America's Complex Relationship With Guns"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

GVRO Facts

- Not the same as a 5150
- Does not depend on the person's mental state, only on the fact that they threaten violence to themselves or others AND that they possess firearms
- Does not require them to seek counseling, but it may be recommended
- A civil procedure, not a criminal one
- After a court hearing, orders can last from **21 days to one year** and can be renewed

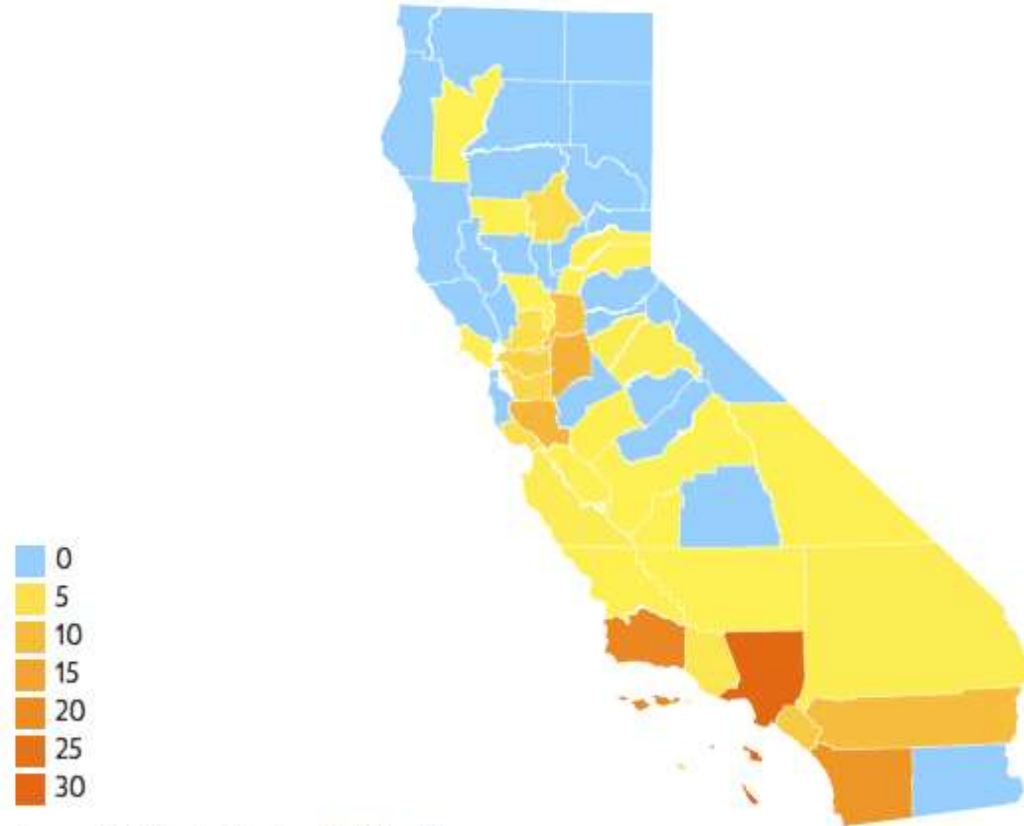
Where are GVRs being issued?

At least 186 orders have been issued between 2016-2017.

Most orders have been in Southern California counties (Los Angeles and San Diego).

WHERE THE GUN VIOLENCE RESTRAINING ORDERS WERE ISSUED

Gun violence restraining orders were issued in 32 counties in the first two years of their existence in California. Number issued by county in 2016 and 2017:



Source: Calif. Dept. of Justice • [Get the data](#)

Families or Households Can Petition:

If you think there is strong likelihood that a family member, roommate, or household member would harm themselves or others, you can petition your Superior Court for a GVRO.

You may also contact your local sheriff or police department to inform them of an unsafe situation.

Example of a scenario where a GVRO would be appropriate:

My son has been struggling at college and has alienated himself from his friends. Lately he has been posting violent content online and going to a shooting range. He owns a number of guns, and I am worried that he's going through a crisis and needs help.

Who Else Can Get Involved?

While only law enforcement, family members, and household members may petition for a GVRO right now--

mental health and health care professionals can talk to a patient, family, or law enforcement if a patient's firearm usage becomes unsafe.

Tarasoff law also allows for a psychotherapist to warn or advise family members or law enforcement of a patient's dangerous intentions.

Lawyers and others can also get involved. See www.SpeakforSafety.org for details.

Firearm resources

- AFSP. After a suicide: A guide for firearms retailers and range owners. 2018
- Consortium for Risk-based Firearm Policy. Breaking Through Barriers: The emerging role of healthcare provider training programs in firearm suicide prevention. 2017
- Allchin, Chaplin, Horowitz. Limiting access to lethal means: Applying the social-ecological model for firearm suicide prevention. *Injury Prevention* 2018

Reducing poisonings



Opioid pain relievers...

- Deaths from opioid pain relievers increased **fivefold** between 1999 and 2010 for women; deaths among men increased 3.6 times.
- More women have died each year since 2007 from drug overdoses than from motor vehicle–related injuries

Successes with toxic substances

- Sri Lanka^[1] Pesticides regulations →
 - 21% decline in suicides
 - 50% decrease in pesticide suicides

ENFORCEMENT
EDUCATION

ENVIRONMENT

- United Kingdom: Coal gas reformulated → 30% decline in suicides^[2]
- Rural China: Locking pesticides and rat poison reduced suicides among women

ENVIRONMENT

1—Gunnell 2007
2—Kreitman 1976

Why can't you buy children's chewable aspirin in larger quantity??



Changing packaging reduces deaths

- UK: Blister-wrapping paracetamol →
 - 43% decrease in deaths
 - less severe overdoses
 - fewer hospitalizations^[1]
- Pharmacists are limited in how much they can sell at once and must provide informational brochures. **EDUCATION**
- US: iron pills packaging → 33% decline in calls to poison centers and almost zero deaths



ENFORCEMENT

ENVIRONMENT

1—Hawkins 2007; Hawton 2001

Pharmacy resources

- www.pharmacistspreventing suicides.com
- Know the Signs pharmacy bags
- Washington State pharmacy training
www.wsparx.org/page/SuicideTraining
- San Diego pharmacist training
www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/29366695
- Naloxone (Narcan) distribution
- AB2859 will require pharmacies to offer safe storage products

Reducing jumps

STAIRWELL "B"
FLOOR 4
NO ROOF ACCESS
EXIT LEVEL
FLOOR 1

ENVIRONMENT



Barriers prevent attempts

- Toronto: Bloor Street Viaduct Bridge^[1]
- Switzerland: hospital window guards^[2]
- Hong Kong: Doors in subway stations → 60% decrease^[3]
- Maine: 14 deaths before; 0 after^[4]
- Montreal: Bridge barrier → no substitution elsewhere^[5]
- Australia: Removal of a bridge barrier: 3 → 15 deaths^[6]
- UK: Deaths declined 50%; no increase at other sites^[7]
- Switzerland: Safety net → decrease in all local jumps^[8]



1—Sinyor 2017

2—Mohl 2012

3—Law 2009

4—Pelletier 2007

5—Perron 2013

6—Beautrais 2001

7—Bennewith 2007

8—Reisch 2005

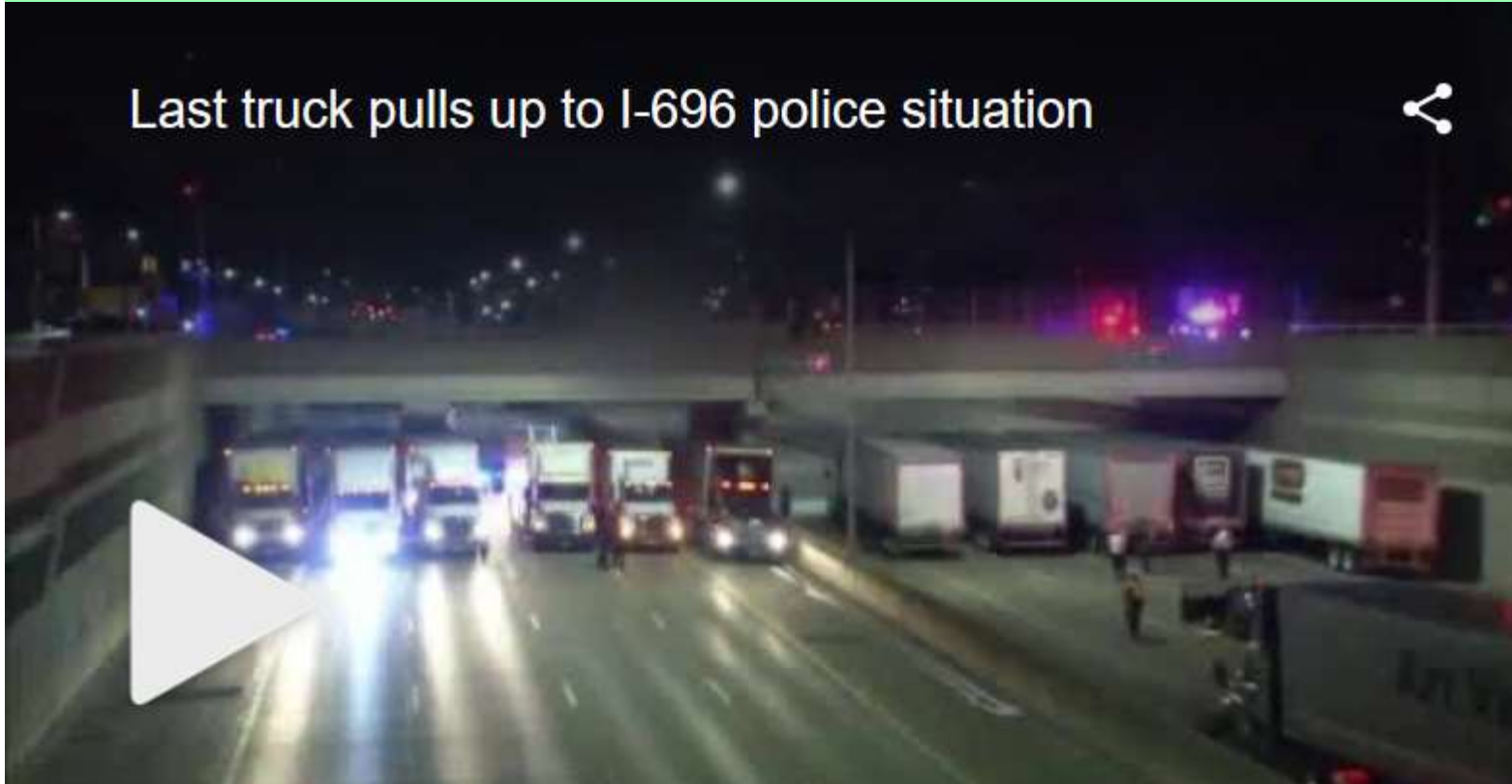
Offer help when you can

- **Beer deliverymen talk man out of jumping off bridge — by offering him a 12-pack of beer**
- For the next hour, even after police arrived, Anderson talked to the man. He asked him his name, where he grew up, whether he had kids...kept asking the man questions



13 semis line Detroit freeway to help man considering suicide

Last truck pulls up to I-696 police situation



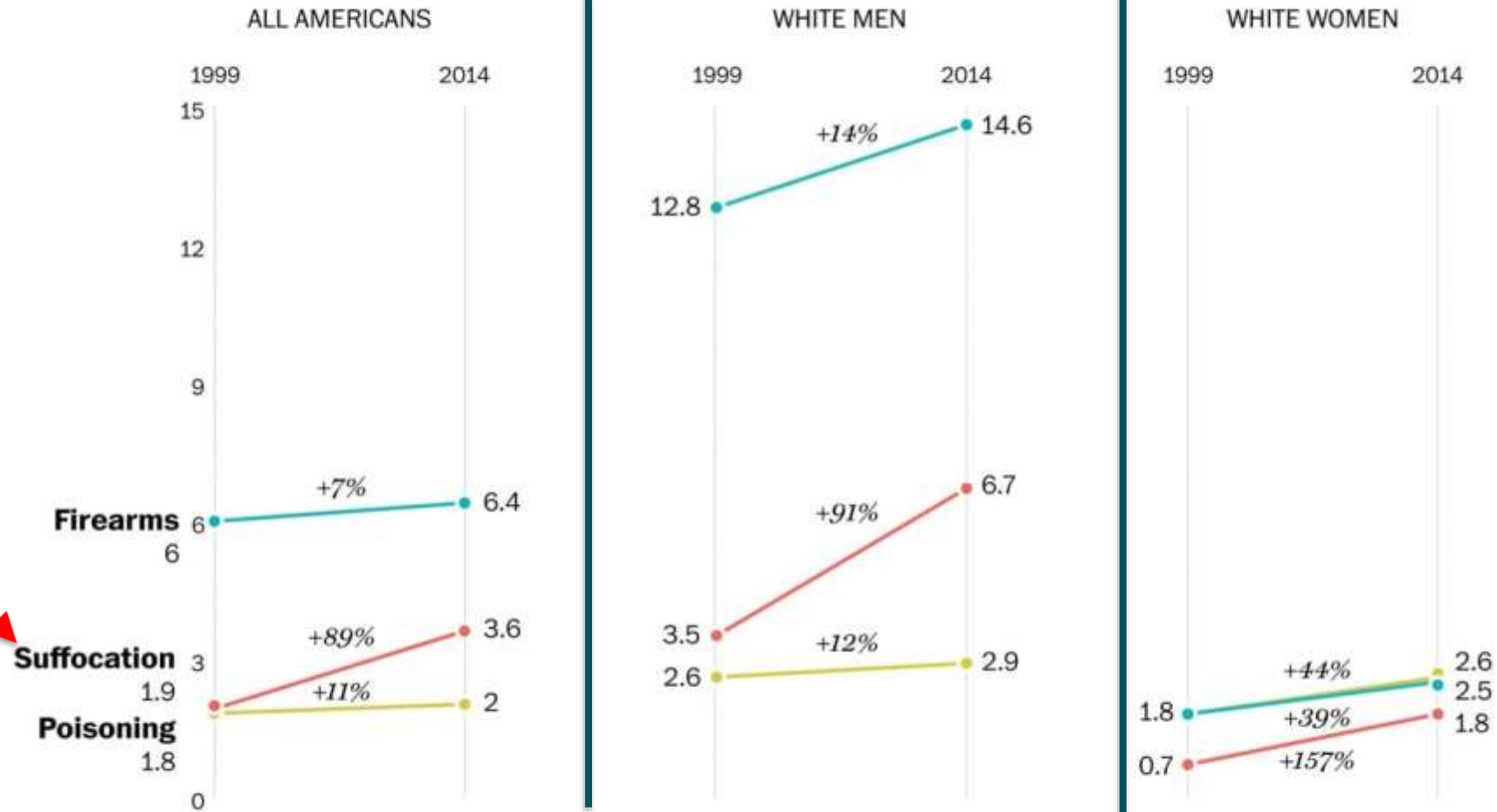
OAK PARK, Mich. (WJBK) - If you or a loved one is feeling distressed, call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. The crisis center provides free and confidential emotional support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to civilians and veterans. Call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255. Or text to 741-741

[CLICK HERE](#) for the warning signs and risk factors of suicide. Call 1-800-273-TALK for free and confidential emotional support.

Hanging/suffocation

Suicide rate increases

Rates of deaths per 100,000 people have gone up for major types of suicides.



National Suicide Prevention Lifeline www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org 800-273-8255

Source: Centers for Disease Control, National Center for Health Statistics

THE WASHINGTON POST

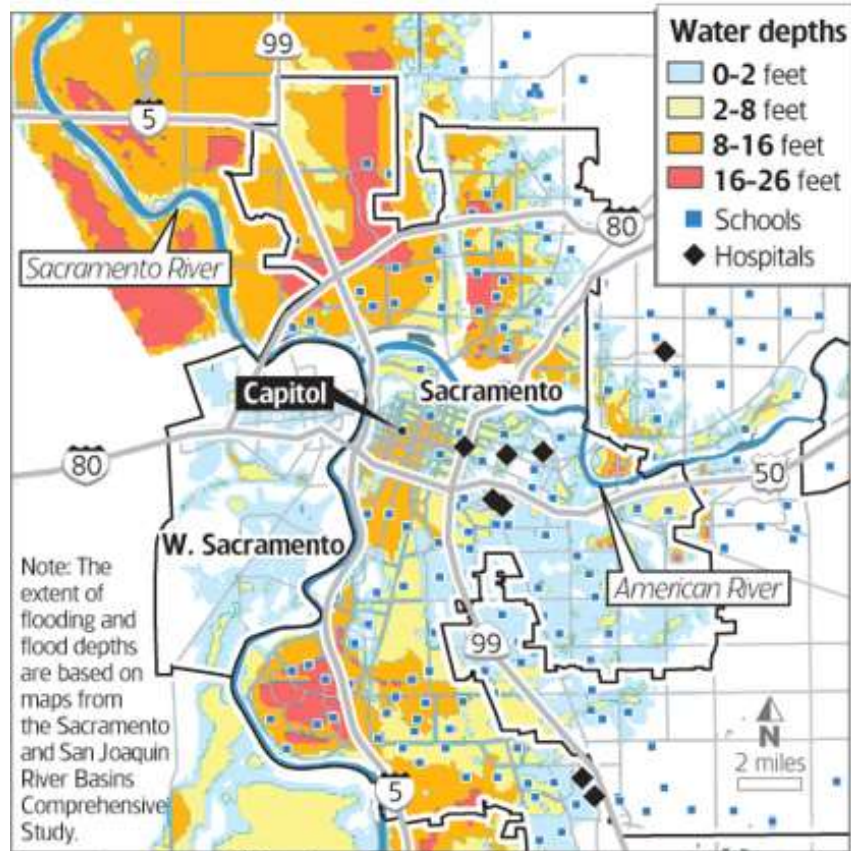
Hanging/suffocation

- More difficult to remove all possible means
- Institutional guidelines and policies
- Cultural considerations
- Important NOT to promote its availability
- Pro-suicide websites make it sound easy and painless

Hazard mapping

If the levees broke

Where the water would go, and how deep it would get, if multiple levee breaks occurred under a 200-year flooding situation in our region:

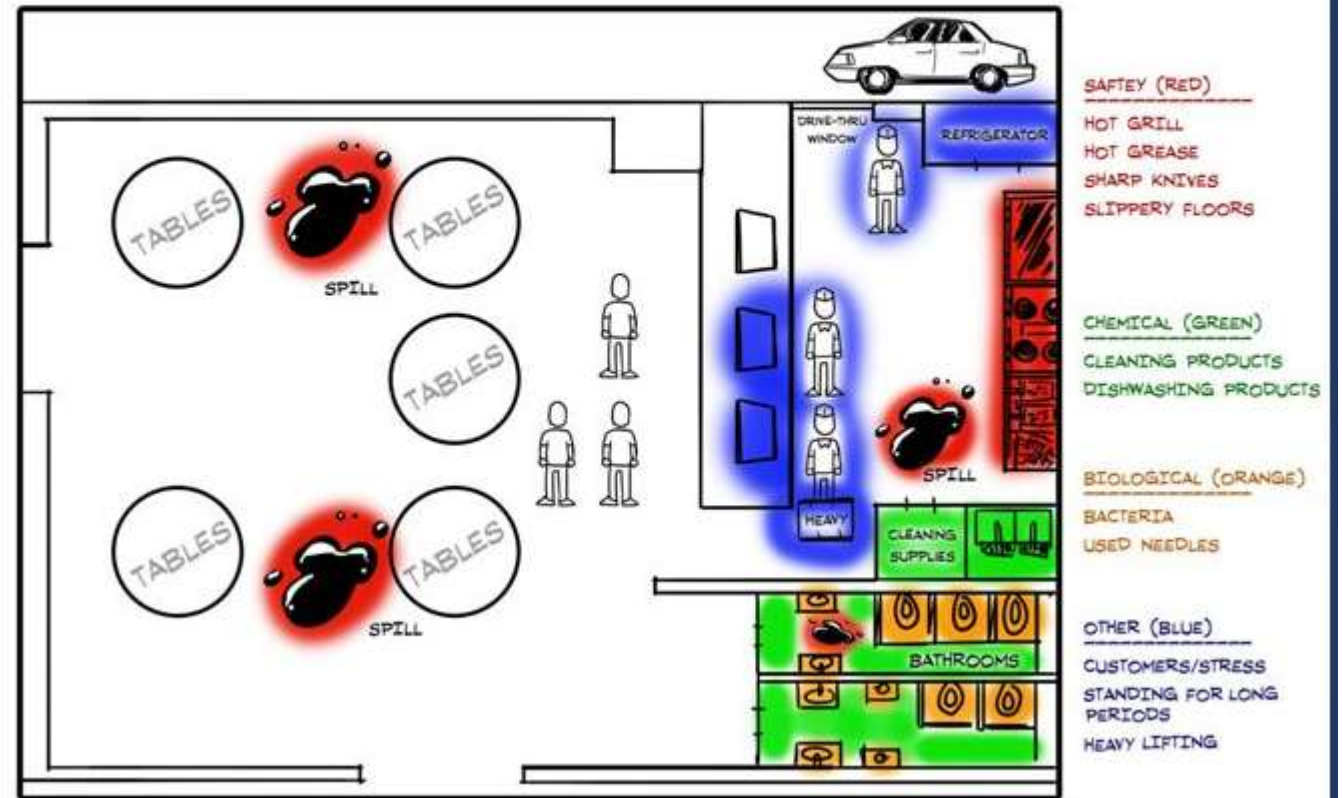


Source: Department of Water Resources, Bee research

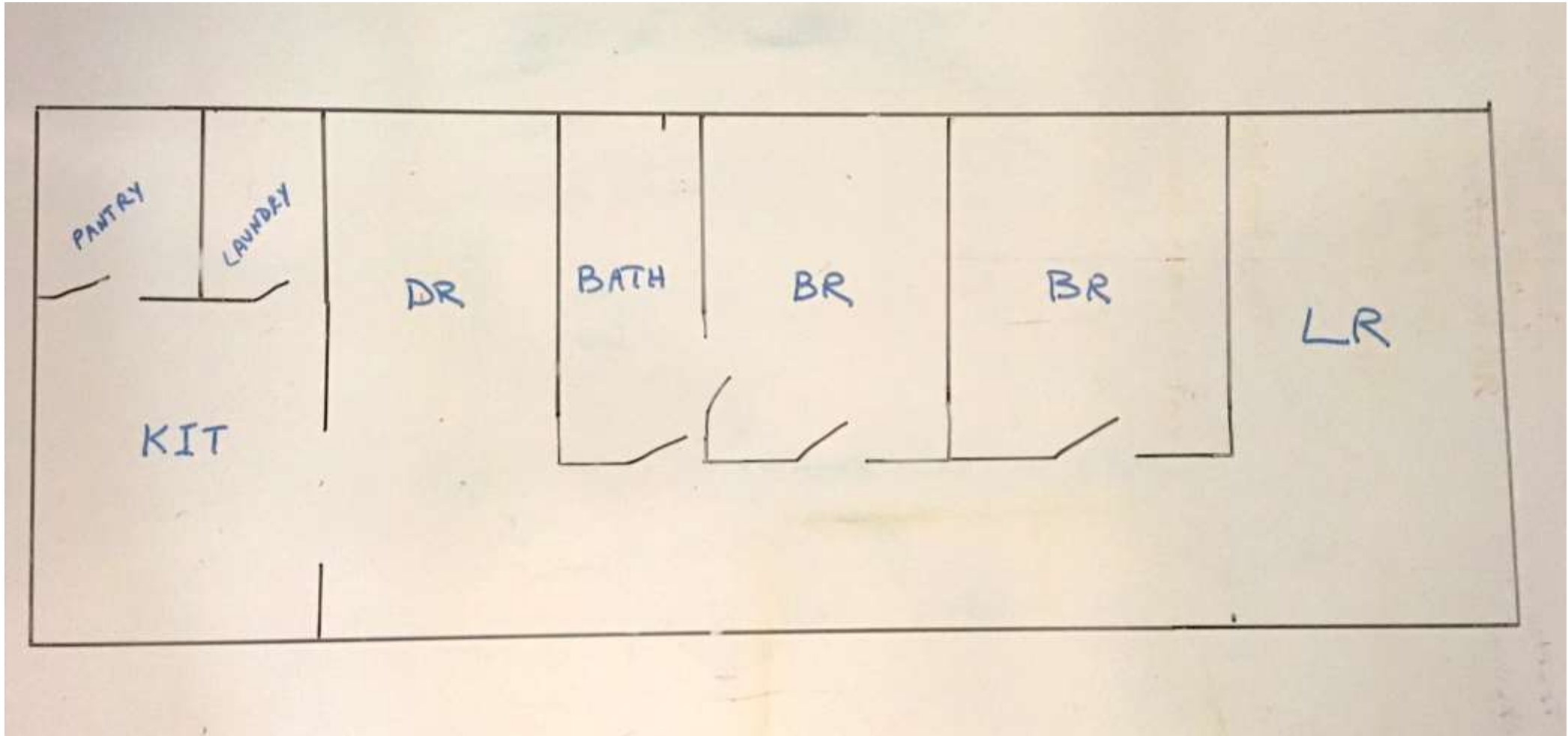
Sacramento Bee

SAMPLE HAZARD DRAWING

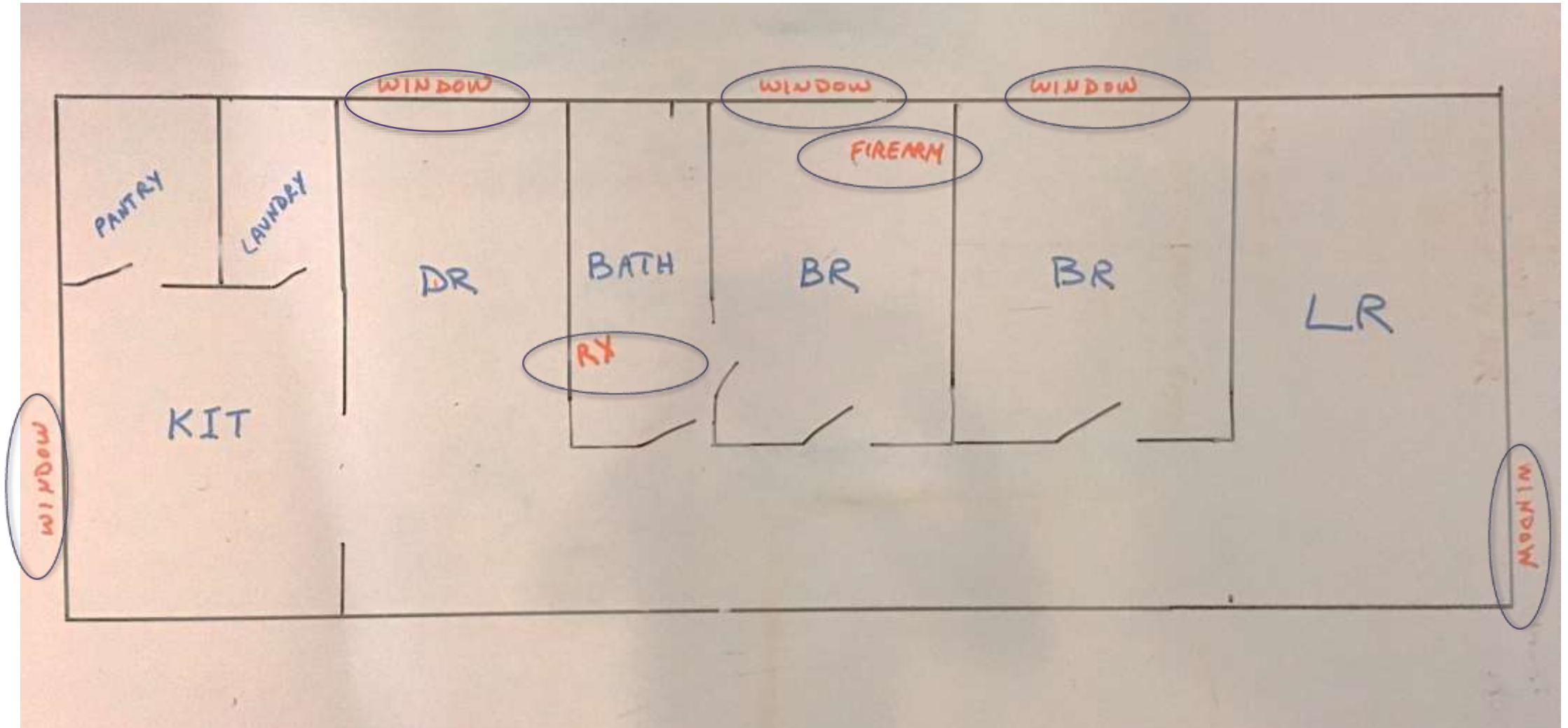
FAST FOOD RESTAURANT



2nd floor apartment of an 89-year-old widower



Where are the hazards?



Not all hazards are of equal concern



Example: Local hospital with a psych unit

- Are medications locked?
- Is there roof access?
- What about the parking structure?
- Do windows open to allow egress?
- Are sharp objects accessible?
- Are hanging points/items available?

What about the broader community?

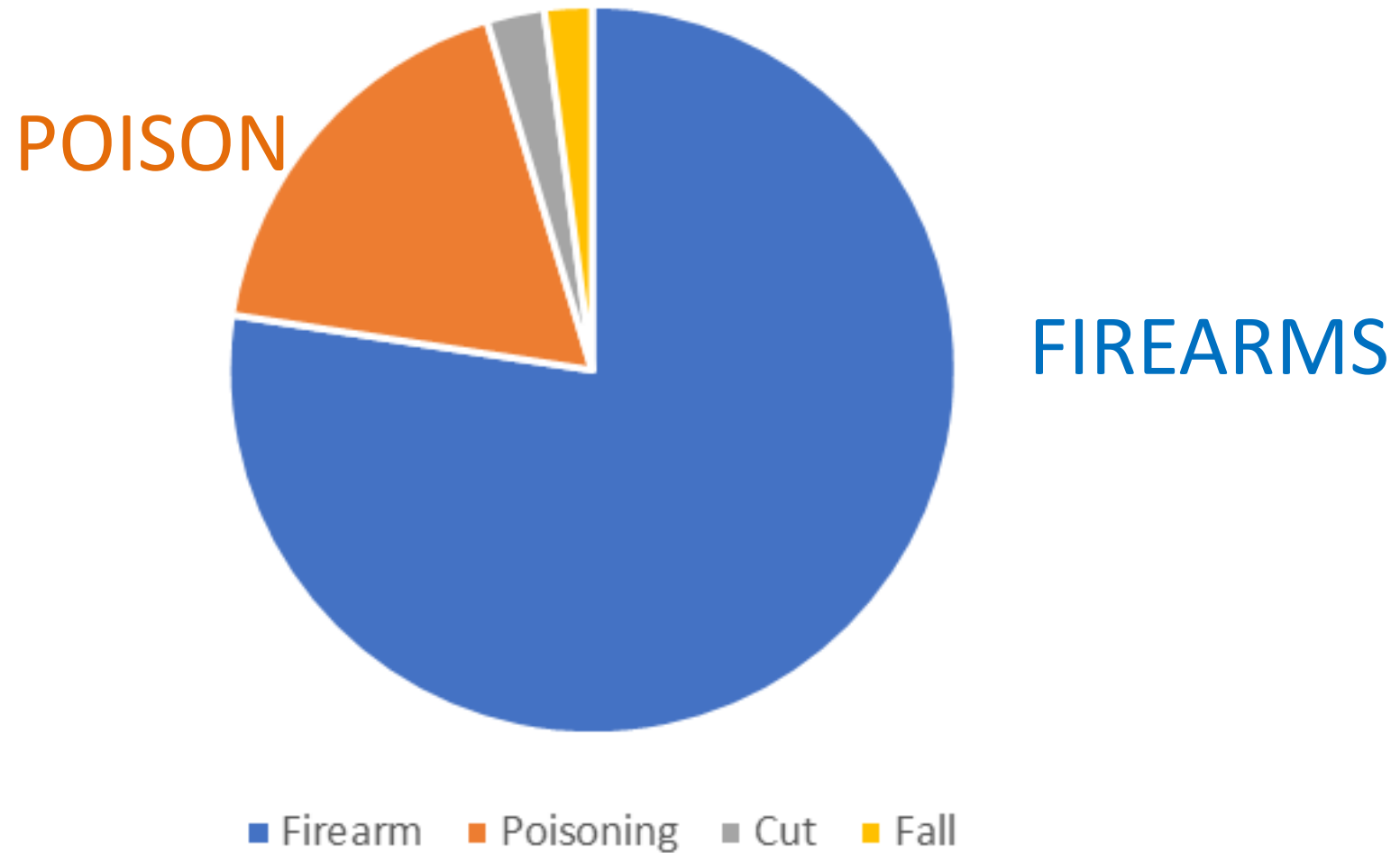
- Are medications locked?
- Is there roof access?
- What about the parking structure?
- Do windows open to allow egress?
- Are sharp objects accessible?
- Are hanging points/items available?
- **AND: Is there a nearby bridge? Highway overpass?
Railway?**

Hazard mapping exercise

- In the home
- Goal is not to identify EVERY possible hazard
 - Which are most lethal? most likely? Most accessible?
- Think of the toddler-proofing approach: on all fours – from the POV of the vulnerable person
- Draw a map or make a list. Discuss with your neighbor!
- What strategies can you implement or encourage in that home to reduce access to those items?

Older adults

2016 Suicide deaths age 60+



Older adults

- Higher rates of firearm ownership than younger groups
- More isolated with fewer visitors. Less opportunity for home hazards to be identified?
- Frailer health means more likely to die from the attempt.
- In a survey of older adults^[1] 62% said they would be comfortable with their doctors asking them about firearms IF they had depression, suicidality or cognitive impairment.

1—Betz 2015

Older adult resources

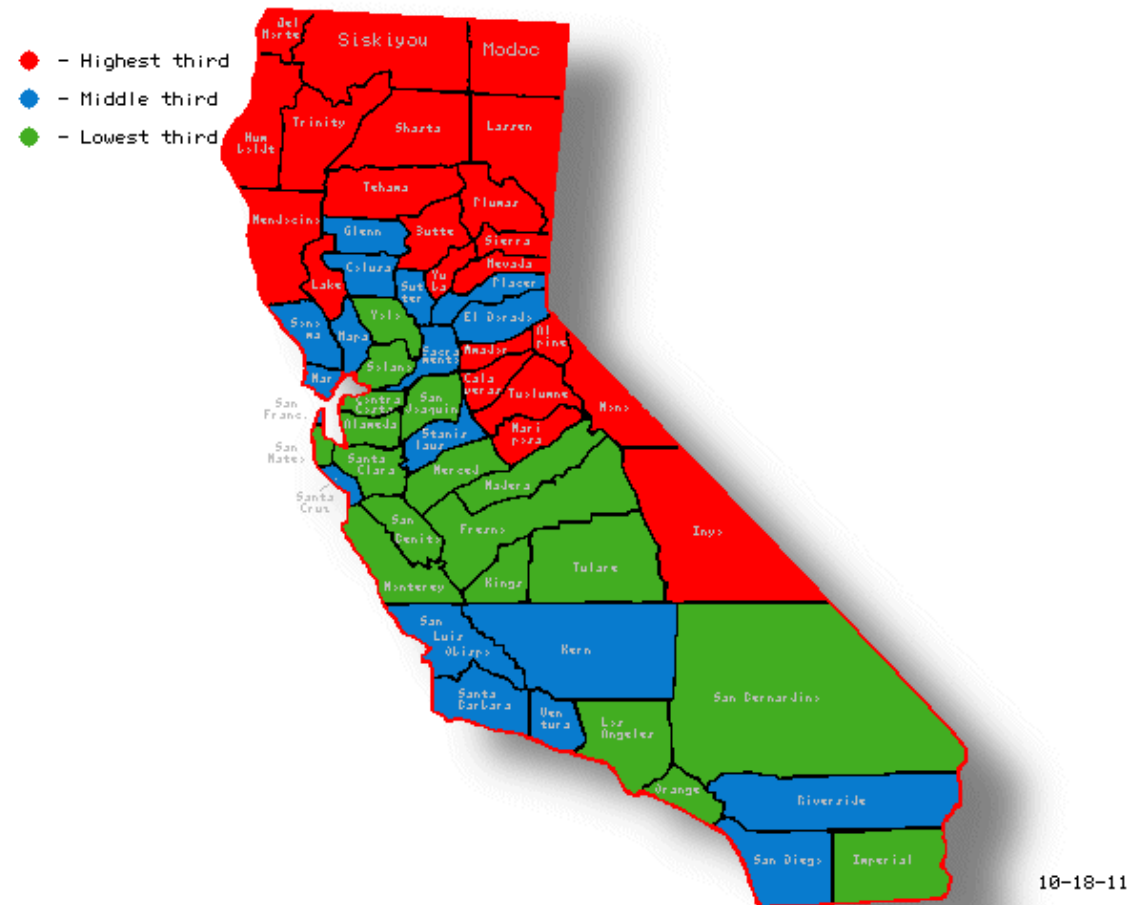
- 2016 Suicide Prevention Week Toolkit (at the Each Mind Matters Resource Center)
- Friendship Line (24-hours) 1-800-971-0016
- Promoting Emotional Health and Preventing Suicide: A Toolkit for Senior Living Communities (at SAMHSA's website)
- Treatment of depression in older adults Evidence-based Practices Kit (at SAMHSA's website)
- Info on GVRO for eldercare (at [Speak for Safety.org](http://SpeakforSafety.org))

Rural residents

- Higher rates of firearm ownership than urban populations
- Older population
- More isolated with less opportunity for others to identify home hazards?
- Longer times and distance to reach care – both preventative and emergency response
- Can be more affected by drought and other “natural” disasters

California's **northern and rural counties** have the highest suicide rates.

- Rates are based on the place where the person lived, not the place of occurrence.
- Counties with the highest percentages of white population tend to have the highest suicide rates.



Source: Death statistical master files, California Department of Public Health.

<http://EpiCenter.cdph.ca.gov>

Rural resources

- **After rural suicide:** A guide for coordinated community response <https://www.cibhs.org/pod/after-rural-suicide>
- Rural and Remote Mental Health Australia
www.rrmh.com.au/
- Suicide Prevention **Toolkit for Rural Primary Care Practices**
www.sprc.org
- Centers for Disease Control **Preventing Suicide in Rural America** policy brief
www.cdc.gov/ruralhealth/suicide/policybrief.html

Youth

- More impulsive in their attempts
- Often disclose their intent to someone (primarily family and peers) – almost 30% in Santa Clara County
- May not know how lethal a method is, but that doesn't mean their attempt isn't "serious"
- Often know where the key to a gun safe is kept or what the combination is

Youth Resources

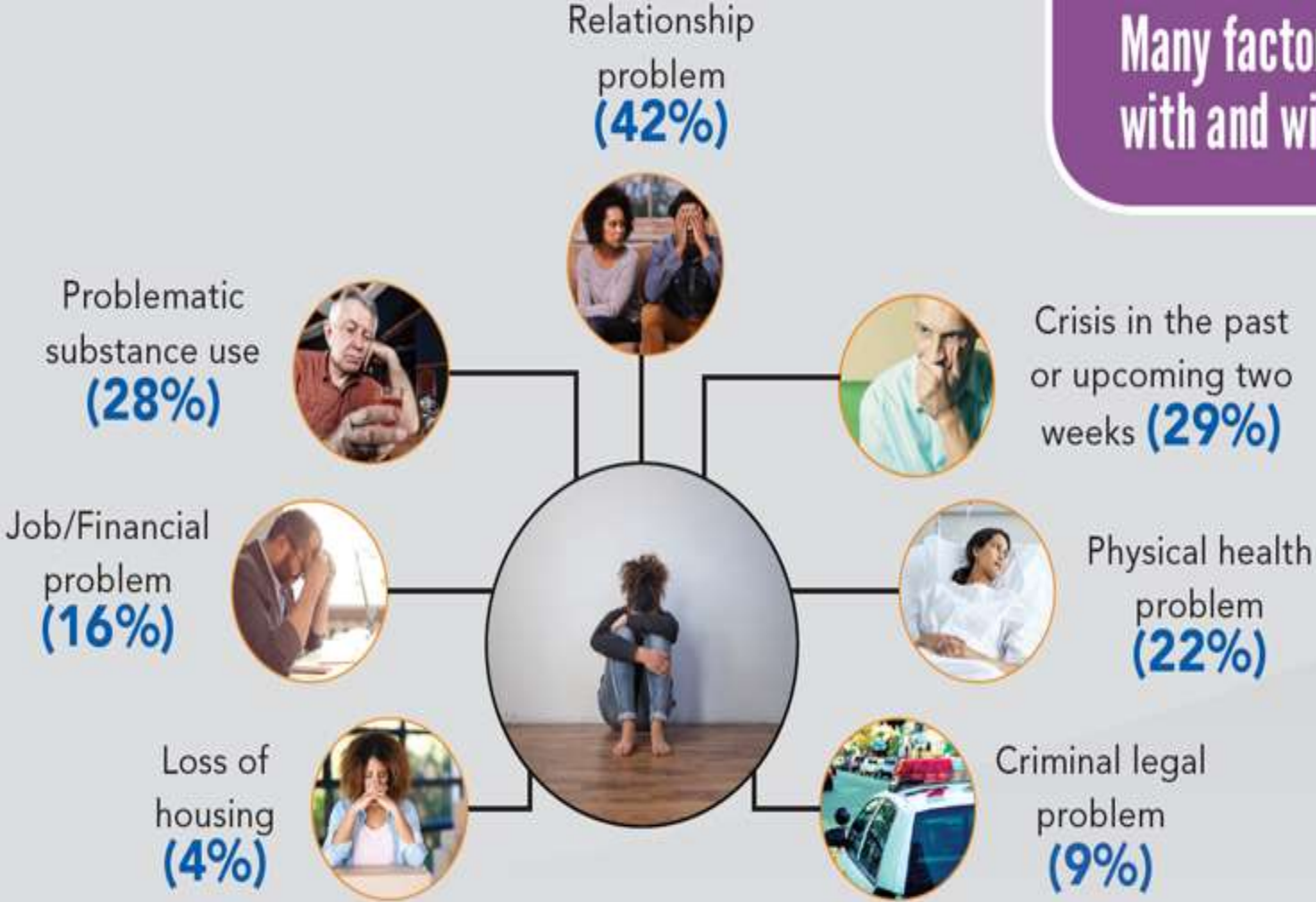
- **Crisis Text Line** www.crisistextline.org 741741
- **Directing Change** Program & Film Contest
www.directingchange.org
- **What I Wish My Parents Knew:** a step by step guide to implement a suicide prevention and mental health parent event – at the Each Mind Matters Resource Center

Reminders

- Remove the item...
- Add a barrier...
- Reduce the item's lethality...
- Integrate means reduction with safe messaging...
- Incorporate it into an overall suicide prevention strategy using *Education, Environment* and *Enforcement*

More than a mental health solution is needed

Many factors contribute to suicide among those with and without known mental health conditions.



Note: Persons who died by suicide may have had multiple circumstances. Data on mental health conditions and other factors are from coroner/medical examiner and law enforcement reports. It is possible that mental health conditions or other circumstances could have been present and not diagnosed, known, or reported.

SOURCE: CDC's National Violent Death Reporting System, data from 27 states participating in 2015.

Reducing means as part of your comprehensive strategy



A comprehensive strategy...

- Addresses media contagion
- Encourages help-seeking
- Trains people to help
- Looks at the evidence
- Examines data
- Changes the culture
- Makes policy changes as needed

Additional resources

- Firearm and medication storage posters
- Gun Violence Restraining Order info www.SpeakforSafety.org
- How GVROs can help keep communities safe video
- Info on means reduction www.MeansMatter.org
- CALM – Counseling on Access to Lethal Means. Online training
- Gun Shop Activity from the EMM 2017 SP Week Toolkit:
<http://emmresourcecenter.org/resources/suicide-prevention-week-2017-toolkit>

To recap...

- Educate (public or specific audiences)
- Change the environment or the item itself
- Reduce immediate access to the item
- Temporarily remove the item
- Be sensitive to culture

Predictive analytics...



- Last year, 50,000+ cholera cases in ONE WEEK in Yemen.
- Rainfall forecasts + data on population density + access to clean water + seasonal temperature → prediction of most likely outbreaks up to four weeks in advance.
- UNICEF distributes hygiene kits & chlorine tablets (*environment*) and coordinates local health *education* campaigns.
- This year: 2500 cases.

What if we could do this for suicide prevention???

THANK YOU!

Anara Guard

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