



OSF HealthCare joins national gun safety movement to address firearms as leading cause of death in children

Health care systems across the country band together to encourage parents to ask about gun access and safety measures.

For immediate release

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(Peoria, Ill. | October 19, 2022) – Guns are the leading cause of death for kids. Every day, 13 children die from guns. To help address this crisis and encourage parents to take action by asking about gun safety, OSF HealthCare has joined more than 170 other health care organizations representing thousands of hospitals and health systems in a nationwide public awareness and education campaign.

“It’s important for health care systems like OSF HealthCare to engage in preventive medicine,” said Kurt Bloomstrand, MD, EMS medical director for East Central Illinois EMS and an emergency medicine physician for OSF HealthCare Heart of Mary Medical Center in Urbana, Illinois. “The ‘Doesn’t Kill to Ask’ campaign equips parents and patients with the necessary tools and resources to help navigate difficult situations regarding guns. If we can better educate our patients on how to safely handle guns in the home, we can save lives.”

The campaign includes broadcast, print and digital ads and a website highlighting the fact that access to unlocked guns can lead to death, suicide and gun violence, making it more likely that children die from guns than cancer or automobile accidents. The website provides tips on how to have a conversation with other parents about the importance of safely storing firearms, and encourages parents and caregivers to normalize this conversation.

The increase in gun violence has impacted health care systems across the country, especially the medical professionals who treat patients affected by gun violence.

“Situations dealing with gun violence require extra resources and stress to the health care providers caring for them,” said Dr. Bloomstrand. “This is especially true when it impacts the youth of the communities we serve. Every day eight kids are shot by accident, which is eight kids too many. These are preventable deaths. We can do better in our communities to promote gun safety and training. By holding each other accountable and by asking simple questions regarding gun safety, we can save a life. It most definitely ‘Doesn’t Kill to Ask.’ ”

To learn more, visit HospitalsUnited.com.

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About Hospitals United

Impetus for this and other public service campaigns comes from over 100 healthcare marketing and communications executives representing the nation's most prominent health systems, children's hospitals, and hospital and health associations. Meeting regularly for a decade, they share knowledge, experience, best practices and resources, knowing they can accomplish more together. Founded and led by national healthcare leader Rhoda Weiss, Ph.D., the expanded coalition is partnering with Northwell Health, its Senior Vice President Ramon Soto and its Gun Violence Prevention Learning Collaborative for Hospitals and Health Systems for this effort. Many participants are also forming regional coalitions to offer messages of prevention and safety, hope and healing.

About OSF HealthCare

OSF HealthCare is an integrated health system owned and operated by The Sisters of the Third Order of St. Francis, headquartered in Peoria, Illinois. OSF HealthCare employs nearly 24,000 Mission Partners in 150 locations, including 15 hospitals – 10 acute care, five critical access – with 2,089 licensed beds, and two colleges of nursing throughout Illinois and Michigan. The OSF HealthCare physician network employs more than 1,500 primary care, specialist and advanced practice providers. OSF HealthCare, through OSF Home Care Services, operates an extensive network of home health and hospice services. It also owns Pointcore, Inc., comprised of health care-related businesses and OSF HealthCare Foundation, the philanthropic arm for the organization. More at [osfhealthcare.org](https://www.osfhealthcare.org).