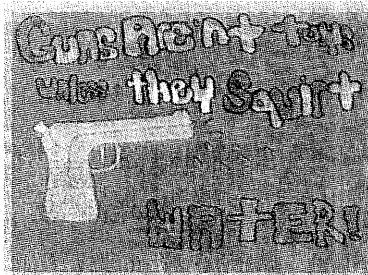


# Gun Safety a Serious Matter

By Sherri Bevan Walsh  
Summit County Prosecutor

Headlines paint a gruesome picture: in April 2008, a three-year-old girl shoots herself in the head after discovering her parents' handgun; July 2008, a four-year old boy accidentally shoots himself with a 9 mm handgun at his own birthday party; in September 2008, a mother warns her two-year-old son about the dangers of playing with guns literally moments before he accidentally shoots himself.

Statistics are even more



Safety Kids Calendar Rule #4 "Never Play With Guns!"

First Place Winner Brianna Dobies-Thomas, 8th grade Goodyear Middle School

startling: in 2003, 2,827 children and teens died prematurely as a result of gun violence according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control. A child as young as three has the finger strength to pull a trigger. Some of those children hadn't even started kindergarten yet - some 56 preschoolers. And certain populations are more at risk for death from handguns: almost 90 percent of children and teens killed by guns that year were boys, and the firearm death rate for black males ages 15 to 19 is more than four times that of white males the same age.

Provisions in Ohio State law make it a criminal offense to fail to secure firearms or accidentally providing firearms to those under 18 years of age. Parents can be prosecuted in shootings involving children who had access to guns and injured someone - including themselves - as a result. So it is imperative that adults take gun safety seriously.

## Rules for Children

As part of the annual Safety

Kids program, my office talks to children about 12 rules for staying safe and holds a poster contest for middle school age children. Gun safety is a topic covered in the Safety Kids program. Many schools have gun safety programs to remind children of the threat guns pose. The safety rules are worth reiterating if you have small children in the home or if you are part of the one third of U.S. households that have guns in the home. Even if you don't have one in your home, your children could come across one at a neighbor or friend's house.

The four rules for gun safety for children are:

1. Stop
2. Don't touch
3. Remove yourself from the area
4. Tell an adult

Convey to your children these important rules often as part of any regular safety conversations you have with them.

## Rules for Adults

Many families have guns in their homes if hunting is part of the family recreational past-time or just for personal safety reasons. If you have a gun in your home, it is critical that it be kept out of sight and reach of children. To ensure the safety of your family, follow these five essentials for safe gun keeping:

1. Store guns where they are not accessible to unauthorized persons
2. Store guns without ammunition
3. Keep guns locked in a cabinet or other safe place and out of reach of kids, and store the keys in a different area than your household keys, out of reach of kids
4. Lock ammunition in a separate place, apart from guns

If you find or have a gun and want to dispose of it, call your local police department (do not call 9-1-1 or an emergency line). An officer can dispose of the firearm properly.

Protect your children against

harming themselves or others with an unsecured firearm. Keeping guns out of the wrong hands, especially those of children, is important. As a gun owner, it is the right and only choice to make.

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