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## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Ramsey County promotes safe firearm storage, harm prevention**

*Free gun locks available Countywide to prevent accidental shootings, domestic violence*

Saint Paul, MN – Ramsey County leaders stepped forward to bolster an important message with residents who have firearms in their homes: Safe Gun Storage Saves Lives. Launched back in 2016, the [Ramsey County Gun Safety Initiative](#) began as a partnership between the Ramsey Attorney’s Office, Sheriff’s Office and Public Health Department to educate families about the need for safe gun storage through access to free gun locks across the County via community-based partners.

“It just takes a moment of curiosity with an improperly stored firearm within reach of a child for tragedy to strike and too often this turns into a case in our office,” said Ramsey County Attorney John Choi. “This summer, with kids home from school, parents who have firearms in their home have an important responsibility to take a few minutes to lock and secure their firearms to prevent these heartbreaking incidents from happening.”

Each year, our community confronts tragic interactions with firearms that can easily be mitigated or avoided altogether. Whether the goal is preventing accidental shootings, suicide or [domestic violence](#), the Gun Safety Initiative is designed to encourage all gun owners to not only lock and secure firearms in their home, but to also educate each member of the family about the importance of gun safety and responsible gun ownership. With school out for the summer and children spending more time at home, the [Gun Lock Distribution](#) sites offers residents the chance to pick up a free gun lock at a community-based location no questions asked.

“When we experience domestic violence in our community, access to a loaded firearm is too often part of the tragedy our first responders face head-on,” said Ramsey County Board Chair Trista Martinson. “We need to be very honest with ourselves about the link between these two realities and how our community can do better to stem the tide.”

Nationwide there are weekly, preventable shootings in which children access unsecured guns and pull the trigger, shooting themselves, other children, a parent or family member, resulting in nearly 500 deaths per year nationwide according to the Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Violence Solutions. Almost 40 percent of adults live in a household where firearms are present, with nearly 50 percent of gun-owning households leaving firearms loaded and unlocked according to the Pew Research Center. In 2021, gun deaths among children and teens rose 50% in 2 years.