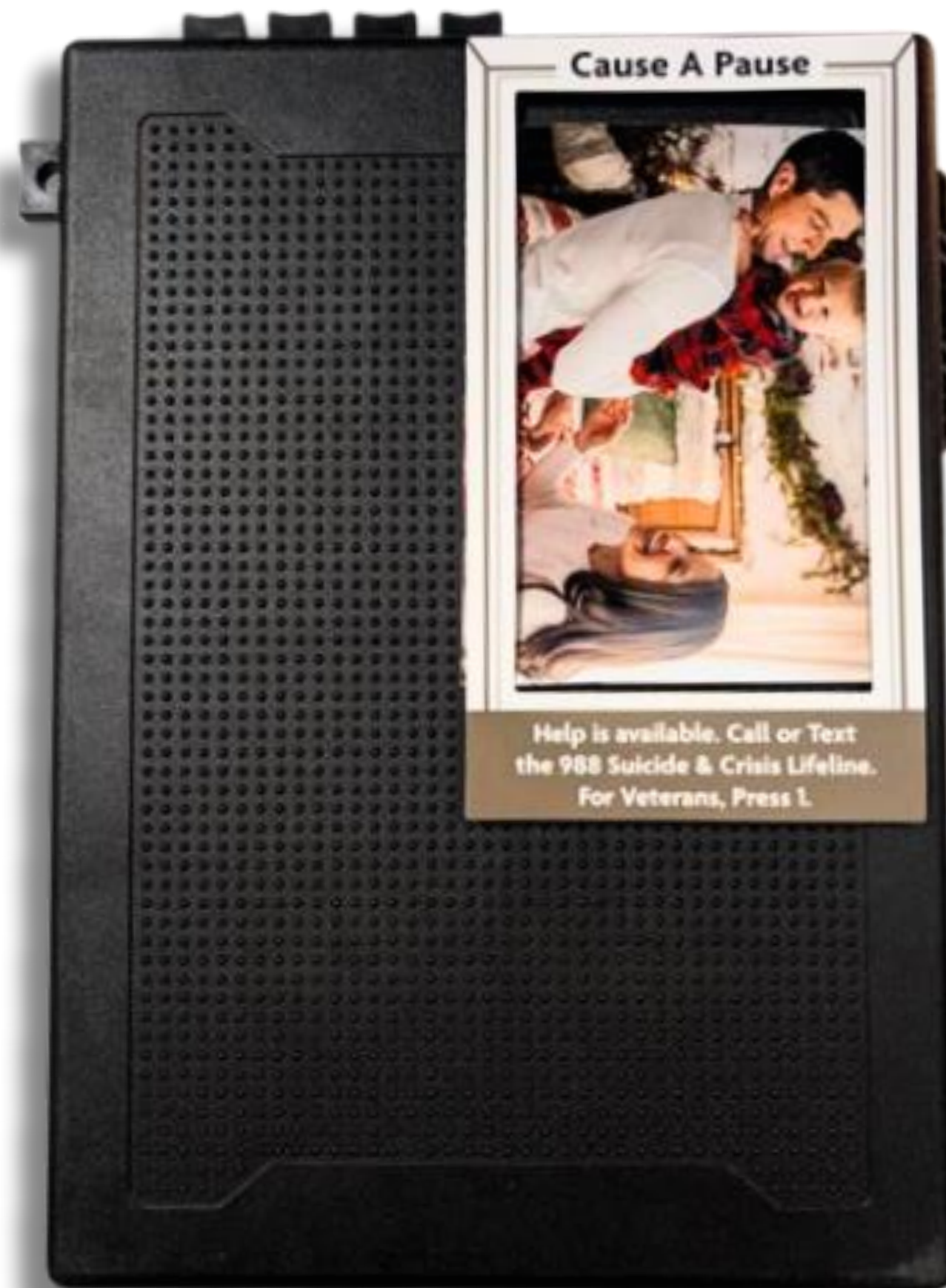




# THE SECURE & PROTECT INITIATIVE





**JARED AVILEZ**

**Community Prevention Coordinator**  
Johnson County Mental Health



**PATRICK BAINBRIDGE**

**Community Engagement & Partnership Coordinator**  
Kansas City Veterans Affairs



**MALLORY GEVERTZ**

**Community Prevention Coordinator**  
Johnson County Mental Health



**Leo Lankford III**

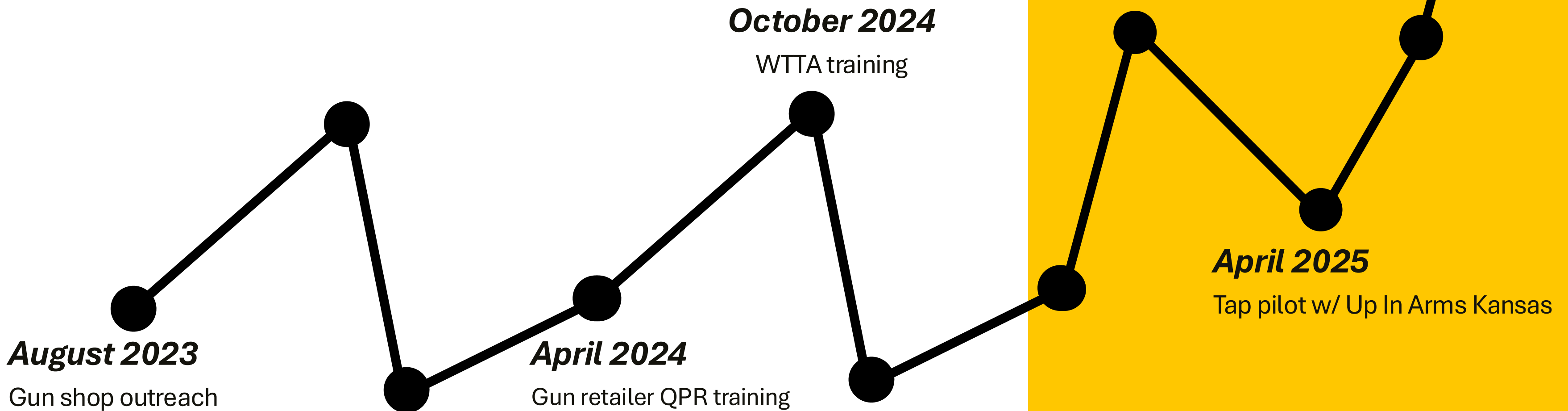
**Community Prevention Coordinator**  
Johnson County Mental Health

# OUR TEAM



# MISSION

The Secure and Protect Initiative works to build partnerships within our community to encourage responsible firearm ownership, reduce stigma, and protect lives.



**OUR JOURNEY**



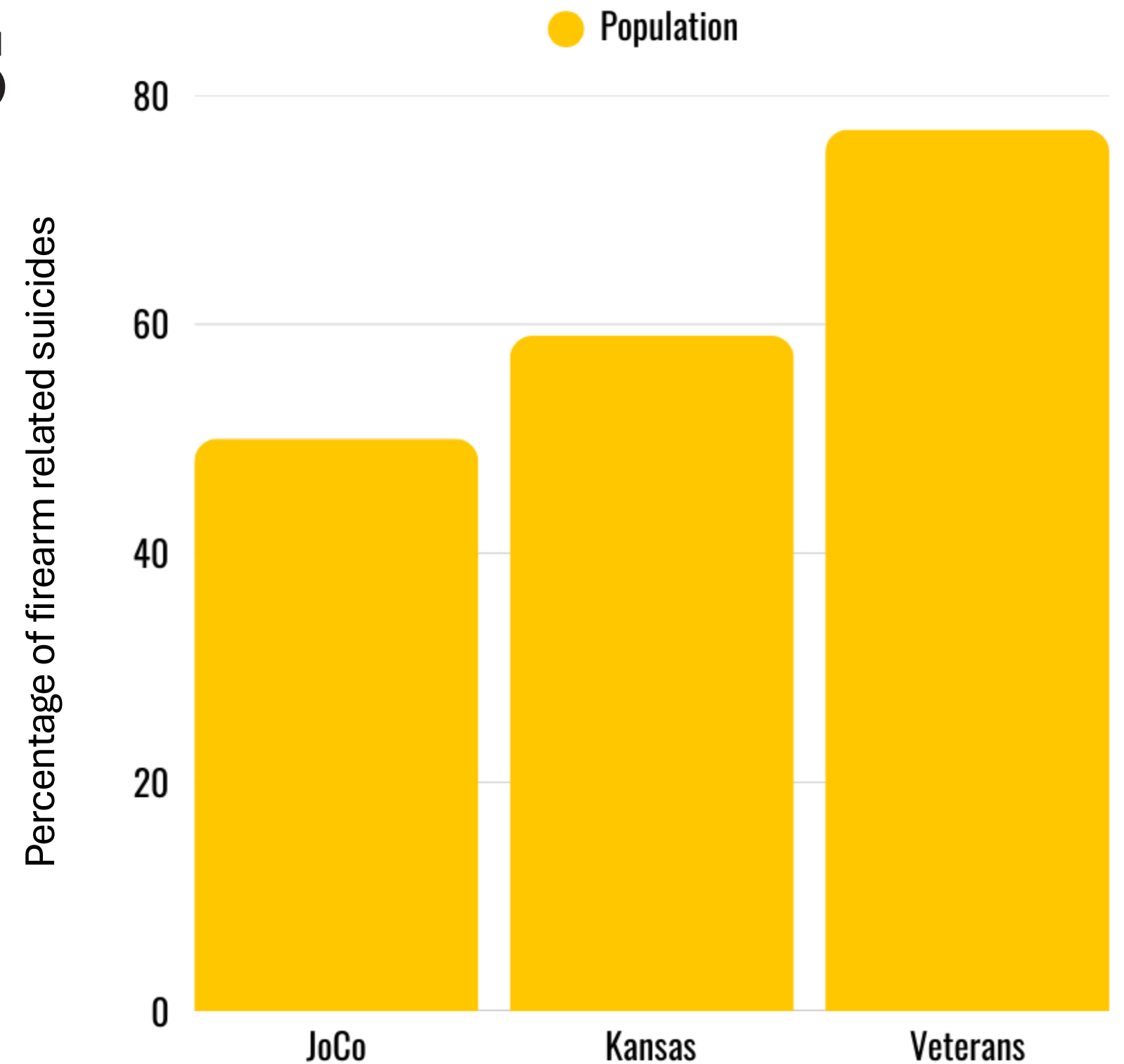
# WHY THIS MATTERS

## Firearms are the most used method of suicide in Johnson County and Kansas

- 59% of all suicide deaths in Kansas
- 50% of all suicide deaths in Johnson County

The percentage is even higher among Veterans

- 77% of Veterans who die by suicide in Kansas use a firearm



# The Impact on Veterans



- In 2022, firearms were involved in 73.5% of Veteran suicides, compared to 52% among non-Veteran adults (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2024).
- One in four female Veterans are gun owners. Female Veterans are more likely to live in a home with firearms and die by suicide compared to their non-Veteran counterparts (Cleveland et al., 2017).
- Firearm ownership is common among Veterans—nearly half of Veterans reside in a household with a firearm (Cleveland et al., 2017).
- One-third of Veteran firearm owners store at least one firearm loaded and unlocked (Simonetti et al., 2018).



# OUR APPROACH

**Gun owners may not seek help during mental health struggles due to stigma and misconceptions about mental health**

- 70% of gun owners surveyed cited fear of losing their firearms as the top concern preventing them from seeking mental health services

## **SECURE & PROTECT**

1. *Responsibly secure your firearms*
2. *Protect yourself, your family, and your mind*



# VA Priority Areas & CDC Strategies are Complementary

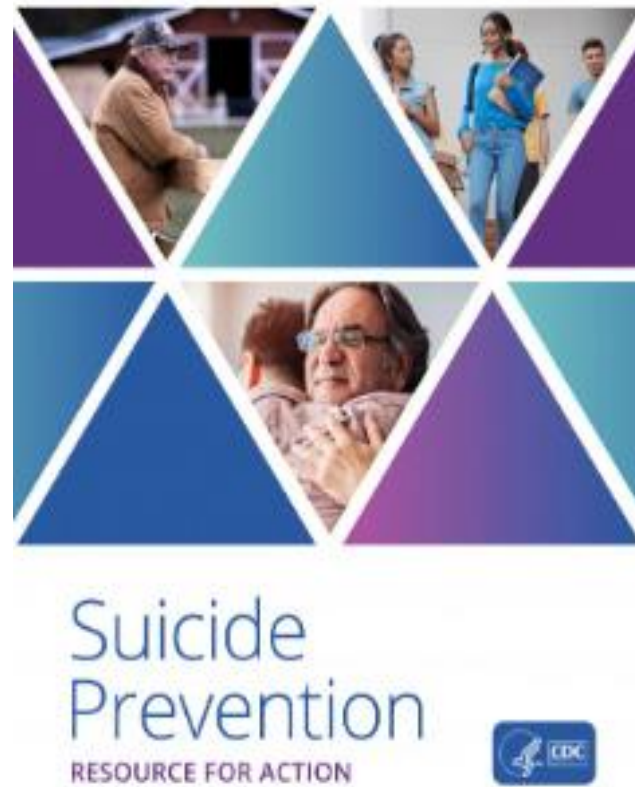


Image source: (CDC, 2023)



## Identify Service Members, Veterans, and their Families and Screen for Suicide Risk

- Improve Access and Delivery of Suicide Care
- Identify and Support People at Risk



## Promote Connectedness and Improve Care Transitions

- Improve Access and Delivery of Suicide Care
- Promote Healthy Connections
- Teach Coping and Problem-Solving Skills
- Lessen Harms and Prevent Future Risk



## Increase Lethal Means Safety and Safety Planning

- Improve Access and Delivery of Suicide Care
- Create Protective Environments

# Most Suicide Crises are Brief Time from Decision to Action < 1 hour

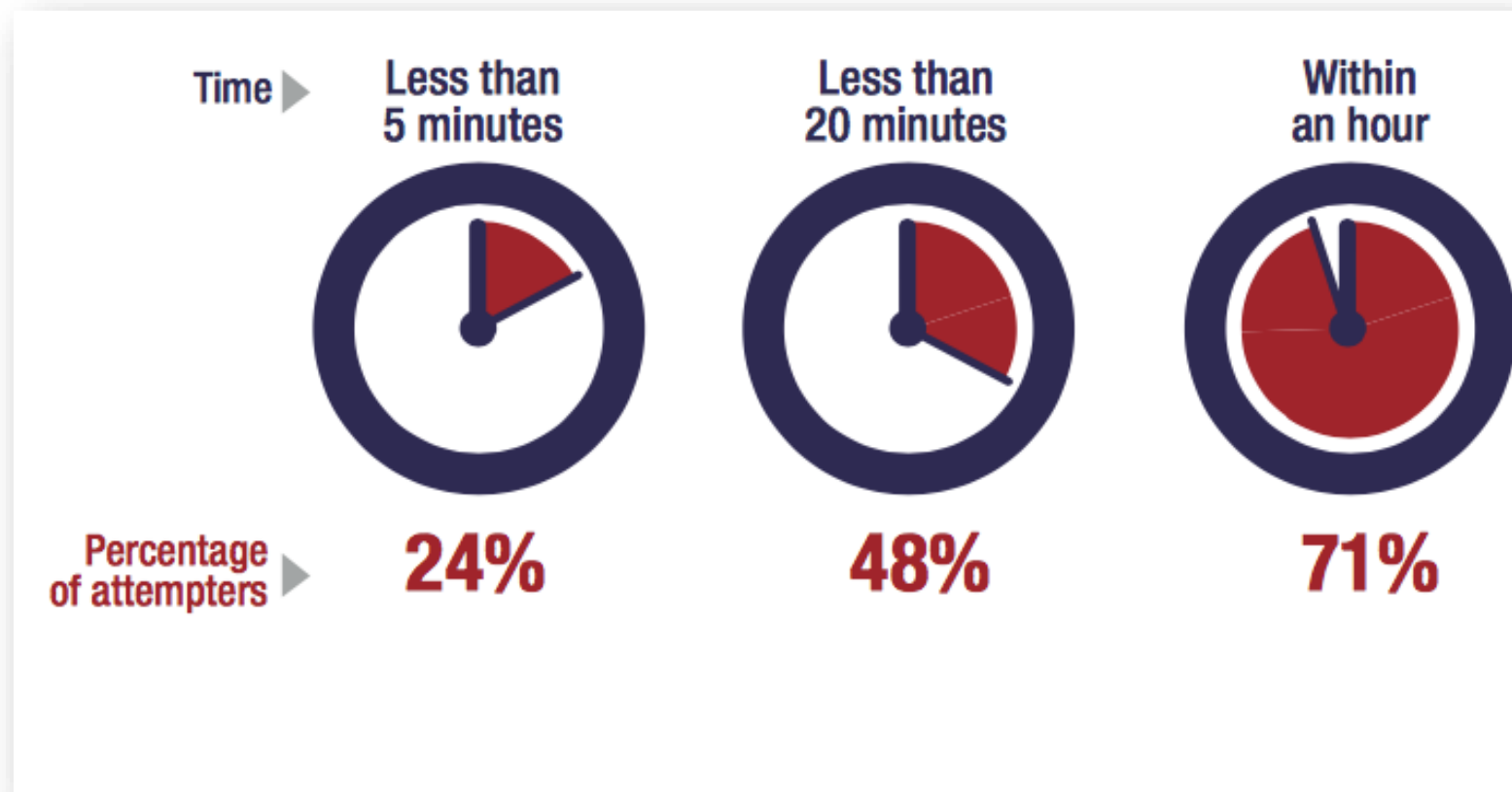


Image Source: Simon et al., 2001

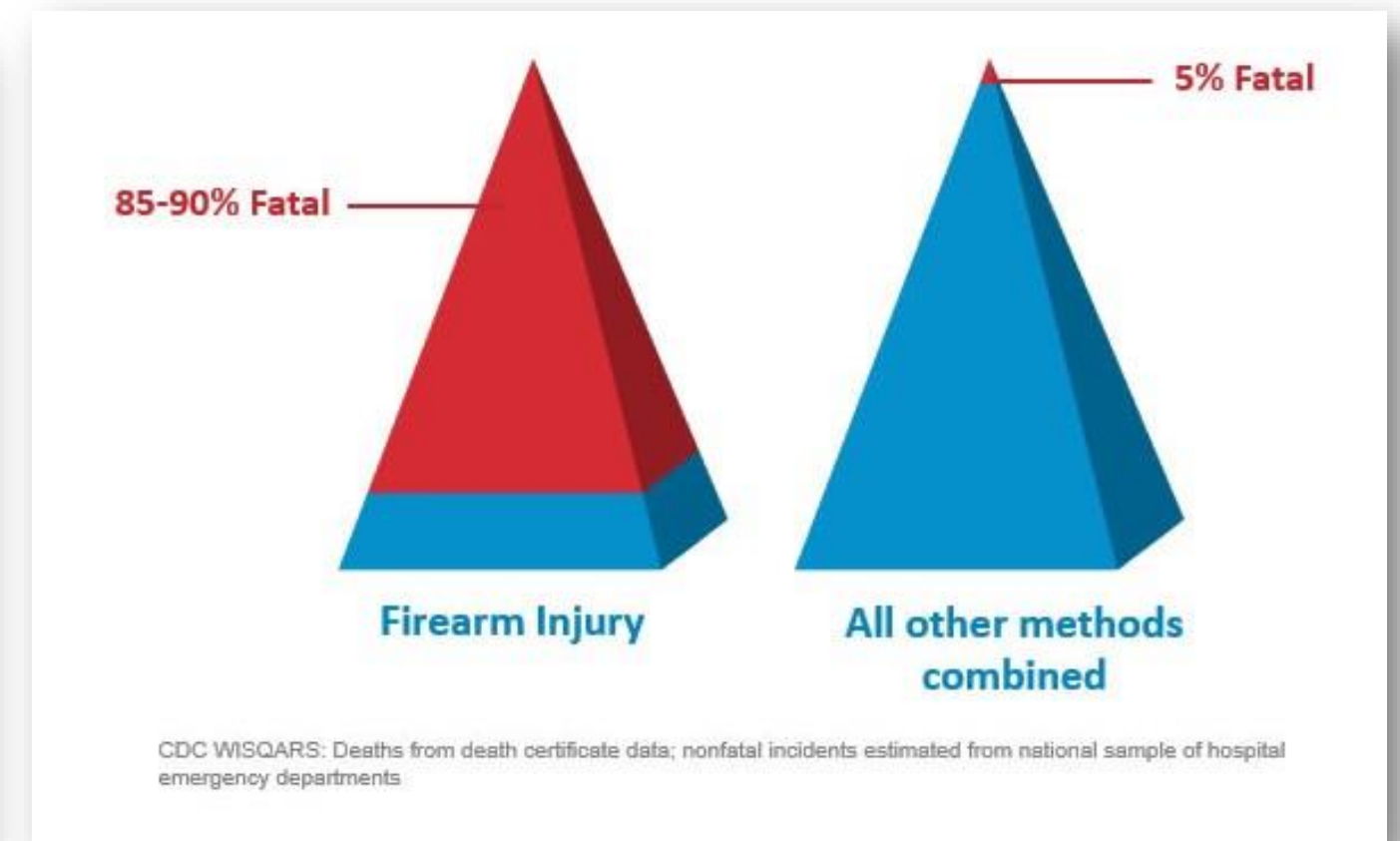


Image Source: CDC WISQARS and US Dept. of Veterans Affairs



# What is Lethal Means Safety?

- In the context of suicide prevention, safe storage of lethal means is any action that builds in time and space between a person with thoughts of suicide and a suicide method.
- Effective lethal means safety education and counseling is collaborative and Veteran-centered. It respects the important role that firearms and medications may play in Veterans' lives and is consistent with their values and priorities.

## Best Practice Safe Storage for Firearms

- Store ammunition out of the home
- Store guns and ammunition separately
- Unload and lock the firearm
- Give the lock key to someone else





**WHAT ARE WE DOING**

# OUTREACH & RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

- Quarterly visits
- Providing mental health resources and materials
- Offering trainings and support





# Training & Education

- Offering training on suicide prevention and firearm culture to community professionals and organizations
- Training on responsible storage options and how to offer and use devices

WTTA



JOHNSON COUNTY  
SUICIDE PREVENTION COALITION

## Guns and Mental Health

Join us for an exclusive one-hour training session hosted by **Walk the Talk America** (WTTA), tailored for Johnson County, Kansas.

This event bridges the gap between gun culture and mental health culture, providing valuable insights and fostering understanding.

**Tuesday, October 22 • 10:30 CT**

**Registration now open!**



Jake Wiskerchen



Mike Sodini

# Gun Safe Distribution

- Distributing gun safes to co-responders, law enforcement, clinicians and firearm retailers
- Gun Vault vs Stopbox

**“Clients and families have been astonished to get such a nice piece of equipment for FREE! Not only are the safes high quality, but they are also user friendly and easy to store. It’s even better that they have a locking mechanism to use for anti-theft or as an additional safety measure. It’s been so nice to have something “extra” to offer to people who don’t want the guns out of the home but know that locking them up is the second-best choice!” – Jordyn, Co-Responder**

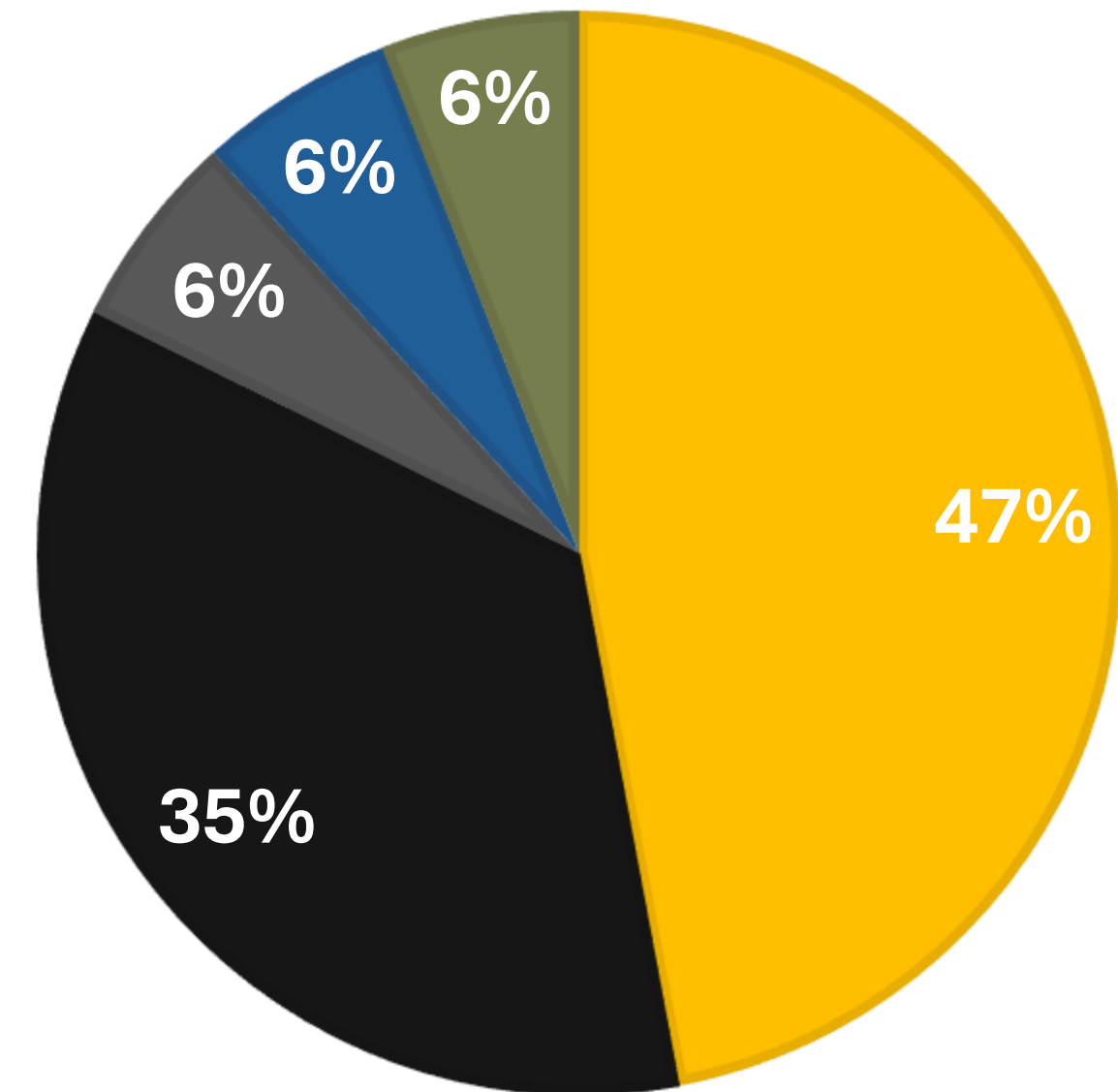


*Overland Park Crisis Action Team*

# Gun Safe Distribution Summary

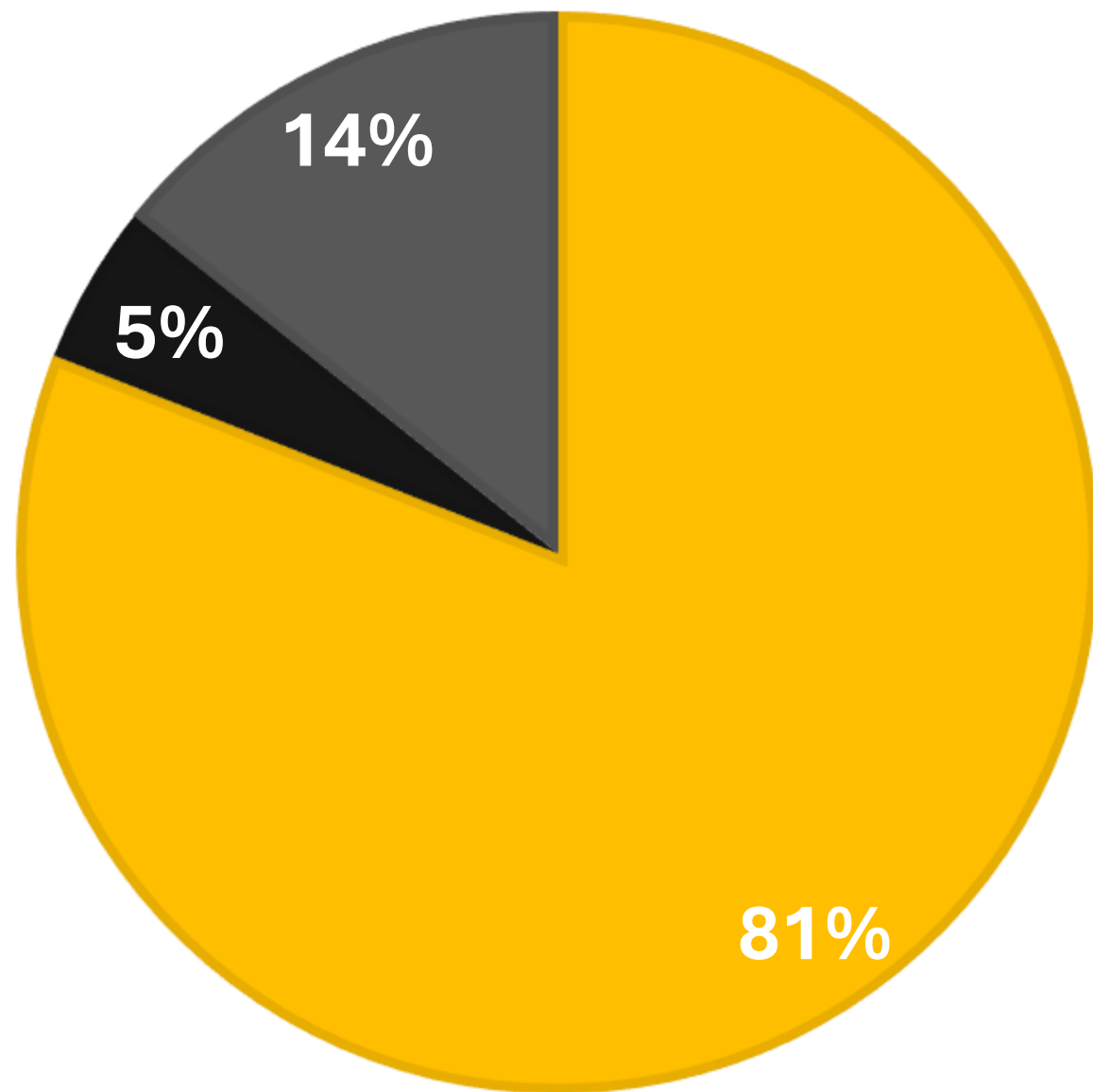
## WHAT WAS THE REASON FOR THE DISTRIBUTION?

- Suicidal Ideation
- Safety Concern
- Domestic Violence Concern
- Youth Present in Home
- Other



## WAS A GUN SAFE DISTRIBUTED?

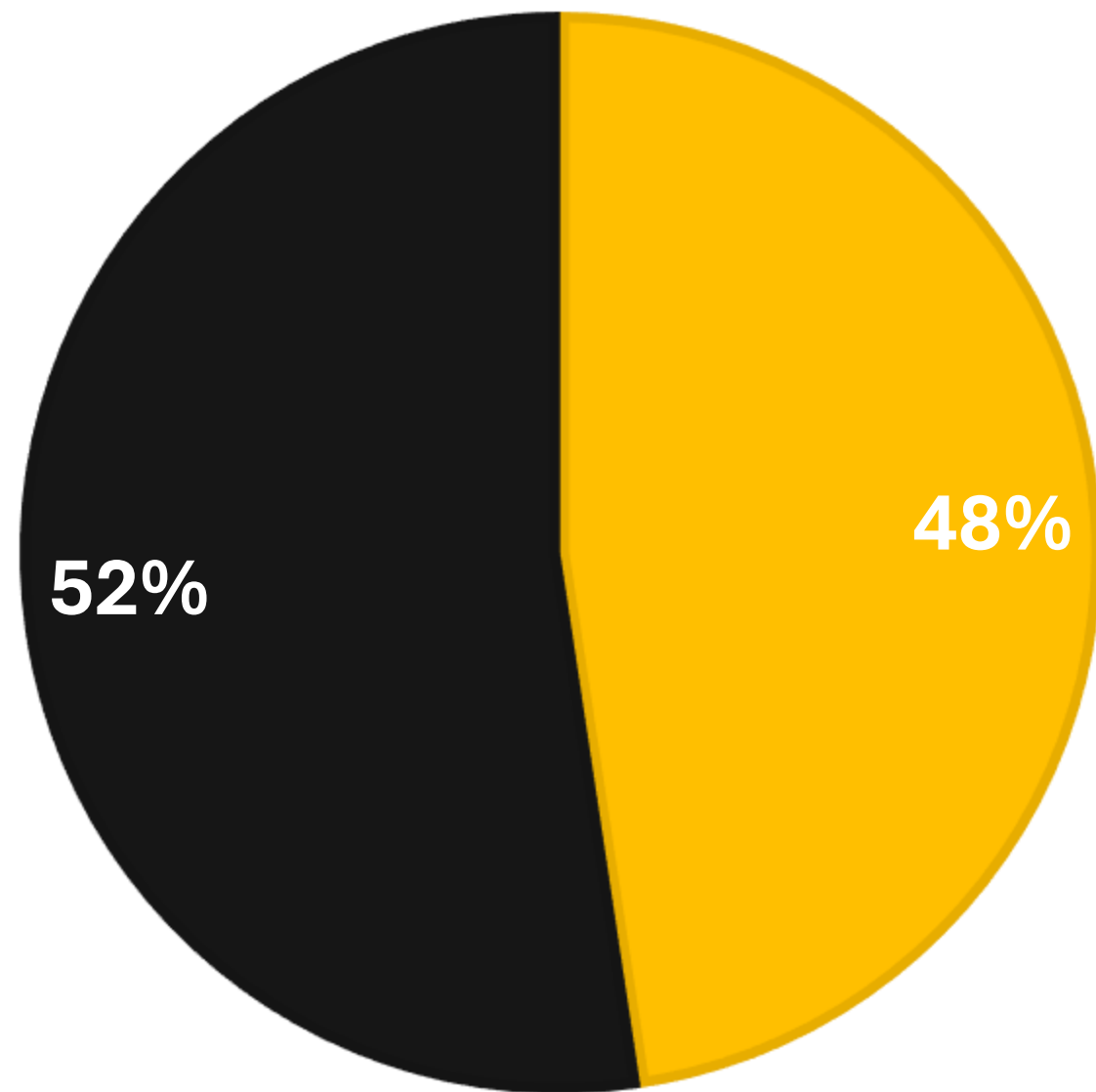
- yes
- no
- declined



# Gun Safe Distribution Summary

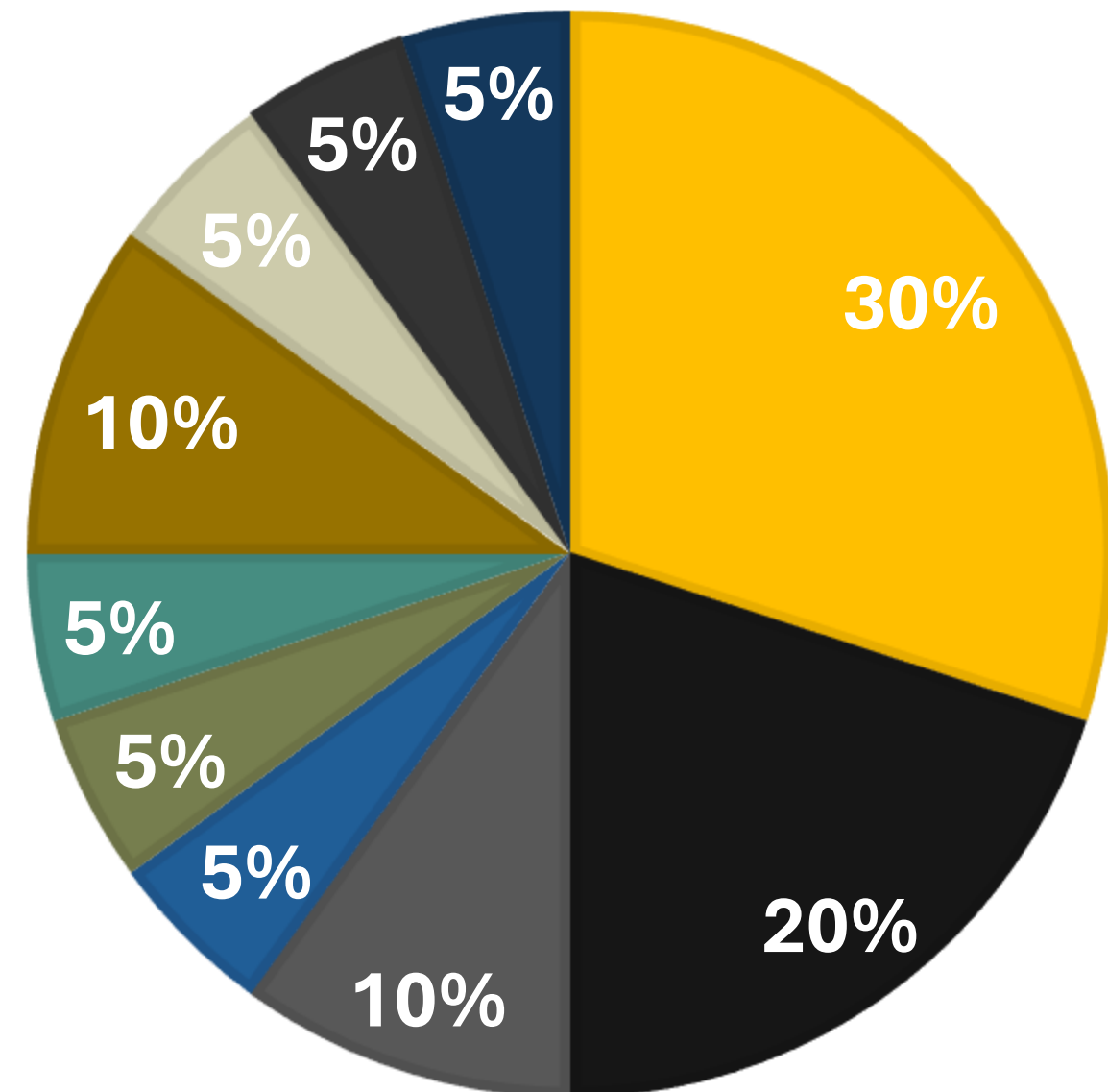
## ARE THERE CHILDREN IN THE HOME?

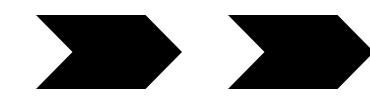
■ yes ■ no



## LOCATION?

■ 66061 Olathe ■ 66062 Olathe ■ 66213 OP ■ 66223 OP  
■ 66212 OP ■ 66203 Shawnee ■ 66216 Lenexa ■ 66219 Lenexa  
■ 66018 DeSoto ■ 66021 Edergton





# Gun Safe Distribution Feedback

- *“She was very appreciative of the safe. She wanted to purchase one but just couldn’t afford it right now.”*
- *“He received the gun safe after his brother committed suicide and he was retrieving that firearm.”*
- *“Clt experiencing medical issues that were causing psychosis. Due to medical conditions not fully under control and could arise again, clt’s wife requested gun locks and a gun safe due to having 2 children under the age of 4 in the home.”*
- *“Veteran with PTSD wouldn’t provide info on how he is securing his firearm but advised it was “safe”. “*

# Voluntary Out-of-Home Storage

Piloting voluntary firearm storage through local gun shops  
as part of [The Armory Project](#)

## Things to consider:

- Storage
- Quarterly check in
- Training
- Costs associated





# Funding

**Kansas Community Suicide Prevention Grant funded by Kansas Department of Aging and Disability Services (KDADS)**

- Gun Safes
- Materials: posters, targets, 988 cards, magnets, etc.
- TAP support (not required to facilitate the program)



# LOOKING AHEAD

**01** Expanding Programs & Partnerships

**02** Education & Training

**03** TAP Civil Immunity  
Legislation



*Olathe Police Department*



# CONTACT US



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**913.715.7886**

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**[Secure & Protect Initiative | Johnson County Kansas](#)**

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**THANK**

**YOU**

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