SAFE: A four step process for addressing teen suicide in practice

**SCREEN**
Screen for suicide at every youth encounter using a validated screening tool:
- Include suicide prevention information in your anticipatory guidance and in your EMR
- Some recommended tools to screen for adolescent mental health concerns are:
  - Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9 For Teens) is a free resource to screen, monitor, and measure depression severity
  - Ask Suicide-Screening Questions (ASQ) Toolkit is a free resource for medical settings to help identify youth 10-21 years of age at risk for suicide
- Refer to the Flow Chart on page 2 for how to talk with caregivers if a teen screens positive

**ADVISE**
Advise all families to use a barrier to store potentially lethal means safely: Safe storage should be incorporated into the normal safety discussion of a well-child visit
- **Firearms** – Every 3 hours a teenager in the US takes his or her life using a firearm
- **Medications** – Both prescription and over-the-counter medications can result in overdose deaths
- **Alcohol** – Alcohol causes more than 4,300 deaths among US teens each year

**FAMILY DISCUSSION**
- Be openminded in your questioning.
  - Instead of asking “Do you have a firearm in the home?” ask “If there is a firearm in the home, is it kept locked and away from children?”
    - If yes, that is great. Families should still be encouraged to talk to their children about firearm safety in case they encounter an unsecured firearm in another setting.
    - If no, this is an opportunity for education about Store It Safe.
  - Urge all firearm storage and keys to be stored separately in a location unknown to the teen. Encourage families to store firearms and ammunition separately.

**EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT REFERRALS**
If you have immediate concerns send youth to your local emergency department.

Provide resources and referrals for families who need help:
- Connect with community partners and local resources for suicide prevention
- If you have further questions, refer families to resources:
  - Suicide Prevention Resource Center - www.sprc.org
  - Suicide Prevention Lifeline - www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org
  - Suicide Prevention Lifeline - Call 1-800-273-8255
  - Crisis Text Line - Text HOME to 741741

Almost 50% of US homes have a firearm

1/3 of high school students in a large metropolitan area have reported they have a firearm or easy access to a firearm

Suicide is the second leading cause of death in 10-19 year olds

Suicide in teens can be triggered by a seemingly small stressor and happen quickly

At any given time 1 in 5 teens are depressed

Firearms are the leading cause of death by suicide

Barriers to lethal means are effective in reducing suicides
“Store It Safe”
Anticipatory Guidance for 12 – 21 Year Olds
provided by the Partnership for the Safety of Children Around Firearms

Sample: SAFE Flow Chart

Patient checks in for WCV

SCREEN: Depression screening is administered at every visit using tools such as the PHQ-9

Patient screens positive for depression

Assess for lethality using tools such as the CSSR (Columbia Suicidal Severity Rating) or Ask Suicide-Screening Questions (ASQ) Toolkit

EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT REFERRALS: If there are immediate lethality concerns send adolescents to your local emergency department

If mild or no immediate lethality concerns, use system resources to educate teen and family and refer them to the following resources:

- Suicide Prevention Resource Center - www.sprc.org
- Suicide Prevention Lifeline - www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org
- Suicide Prevention Lifeline - Call 1-800-273-8255

If moderate risk, use system resources to develop treatment plan or refer families to mental health specialist. Treatment plans may include:

- Counseling
- Psychotherapy
- Medication

Provide phone or in-person follow-up

PHQ-9 Depression Severity Guide
0-4: None
5-9: Mild
10-14: Moderate
15-19: Moderately Severe
20-27: Severe

ADVISE: Recommend safe storage! Barriers to lethal means are effective in reducing suicides and unintentional injuries

FAMILY DISCUSSION: Provide Ohio AAP parent and teen handouts at every visit

Store It Safe is a unique partnership of healthcare providers, firearm experts, and community organizations established to keep children safe from unintentional firearm deaths and teens safe from suicide by firearms. Young children are curious and will touch anything, while teens are still learning to control impulses. Our goal is to inform families of risks so they can keep their children safe.

Questions?
• Resources from Ohio AAP for families can be found at: www.ohioaap.org/storeitsafe
• The Ohio AAP is one partner, but suicide prevention will be more effective if physicians, communities, organizations, and families work together; find a local suicide prevention coalition at: www.ohiospf.org/coalitions