

OFFICE OF THE RAMSEY COUNTY ATTORNEY

John J. Choi, County Attorney

360 Wabasha Street North, Suite 100, Saint Paul, MN 55102-1432
Telephone 651-266-3322 Fax 651-266-3015



NEWS RELEASE

May 21, 2025

Contact: Dennis Gerhardstein, 651 421-0365

Ramsey County promotes safe firearm storage, harm prevention

Free gun locks available Countywide to prevent accidental shootings, suicide prevention

Saint Paul, MN – Ramsey County leaders stood together to reinforce an important message to 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 County Attorney’s Office, the Sheriff’s Office, and Saint Paul – Ramsey County Public Health. The goal is to educate families about the importance of safe gun storage by providing access to free gun locks through community-based partners across the county.

“One simple act—locking up your gun—can mean the difference between life and death,” said Ramsey County Attorney John Choi. “Whether it’s a curious child or someone in crisis, a moment of preparation can prevent a lifetime of heartbreak. If you keep a firearm at home, secure it. It’s that simple, and that important.”

Each year, our community confronts tragic interactions with firearms that can be prevented. Whether the goal is preventing accidental shootings, suicide, or [domestic violence](#), the Gun Safety Initiative encourages all gun owners to lock and secure firearms in the home and educate every member of the family about the importance of gun safety and responsible ownership. With school out for the summer and children spending more time at home, [Gun Lock Distribution](#) sites offer residents the opportunity to pick up a free gun lock—no questions asked—at convenient, community-based locations.

“The health and safety of children and families is the foundation of community well-being,” said Amy Caron, Saint Paul – Ramsey County Public Health Director. “A gun lock can mean the difference between life and death if a child or teen gains access to an unsecured firearm.”

Firearm suicide remains a leading cause of death in Minnesota and nationwide. Data from the Minnesota Department of Health shows that firearms were used in 51% of suicide deaths in 2024. Nationally, half of all youth suicides and 84% of youth homicides involved firearms. In 2020, firearm injury became the leading cause of death for American children and adolescents. In fact, Nearly one child gains access to a loaded firearm and unintentionally shoots themselves or someone else every day in America—an average of 350 children a year. Proper firearm storage—including the use of gun locks—is a proven strategy to save lives.

“Research shows that the first few minutes of an emotional or mental health crisis can determine the outcome,” said Ramsey County Commissioner Tara Jebens-Singh. “Gun locks create critical distance and time between firearms and individuals struggling with suicidal thoughts.”

“Restricting access to lethal means prevents suicide,” said Sue Abderholden, Executive Director of NAMI Minnesota. “If you or someone you know is struggling with mental health, call or text 988 for help and hope.”

Suicide Prevention Resources:[Ramsey County’s Crisis and Mental Health Services](#)

Help is available during a crisis, to get an assessment, or to access ongoing mental health or chemical health services. Ramsey County offers Mental Health Urgent Care—recently expanded to serve youth and teens as well as adults.

[988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline](#)

Whether you're facing mental health struggles, emotional distress, alcohol or drug use concerns, or just need someone to talk to, our caring counselors are here for you.

[Suicide Prevention Resource List](#)

Comprehensive mental health resource list for all Minnesotans.

Note: Contact Dennis Gerhardstein for additional information.