**Tip Sheet for Counseling Students and Families on Means Restriction**

Means Restriction: *Highly lethal, commonly used suicide methods are made less accessible or less lethal. Means should not be easily accessible as crisis is hard to predict. Evidence shows people do not typically switch means when one becomes unavailable or limited – rather, means restriction allows the person time to think (which can be essential for youth, who are prone to making impulsive decisions).*

*Direct discussion needs to be had with student and/or family members when a student identifies suicidal thoughts and behaviors that implicate the possibility of using lethal means - you need to engage in order to prevent.*

1. **Explain and Answer.**
   * **Why are you asking about means?**
     + *Risk of suicide can escalate rapidly. Means (methods to complete suicide) should not be easily accessible because crisis is difficult to predict.*
   * **What will the results of a means restriction assessment determine?**
     + *Individual’s access to means may need to change and a safety plan be created.*
   * **Who will have access to this information?**
     + *Talk to the student about sharing the information with their family members, friends, or relevant staff members, when appropriate. You do not need their express permission to do so, but informing the student and even encouraging them to be involved in the conversation can be beneficial if they are old enough; however, the student should not be present when discussing specific plans for management of suicidal means as we do not want them to have that information. After talking with immediate family members, speak with the family regarding the possibility of talking with other relevant people in the student’s life to consult on means restriction. If the student is 18 or older, you may question the limits of confidentiality – however, keep in mind your responsibility is to keep the student safe.*
2. **Ask!**
   * Ask individuals what means they would consider using or accessing during a suicidal crisis.
   * Regardless, the individual should **always** be asked whether they have access to a firearm.
3. **Collaborate.**
   * Involve the individual in every step, to the greatest extent appropriate given the situation.
   * Ask the individual what they are actually willing to do, if appropriate.
4. **What to Restrict and How:**
   * Remove all firearms from the home – ask a friend or family to store them.
   * Store bullets separately and don’t store a loaded gun. Semi-automatic guns may still be loaded even when the magazine is removed as a bullet may still remain in the cartridge.
   * Get a gun safe (can contact local police about safe gun storage, or cable gun locks) and ensure student does not have access to the keys.
   * If you carry a gun for self-protection, ensure that the gun remains under your control at all times.
   * Fill prescriptions in small quantities, and destroy unused and outdated medications. See Medication Drop Box Information Sheet for specific locations to safely return unwanted medications.
   * Store all medications and poisons in a secure place – consider medication monitoring/counting pills.
   * Monitor alcohol and drug use – these substances are dangerous and can increase impulsivity.
   * Assess student’s safety to drive and if their keys need to be held by a friend or family member (if method includes carbon monoxide poisoning or a car crash).
   * Be aware of risks for hanging – many items can be used for hanging or suffocation.
   * Be thoughtful of the individual’s proximity to high building or risk of jumping.