



NEWS RELEASE



For Immediate Release

For information contact: Shawna Rhine, Community Outreach Coordinator/Public Information Officer
Southern 7 Health Department & Head Start

Office: 618-626-2355 Cell: 618-614-9223 Southern 7 Central Office: 618-634-2297 Email: srhine@s7hd.org

(12/9/24) Southern 7 Health Department Continues Free Gun Lock Initiative (More than 600 Gun Locks Distributed in Region Since June, 2024)

In June, 2024, Southern 7 Health Department joined with the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) in an effort to promote community gun safety and prevent accidental injuries in the state by providing free gun locks to residents that request them. As of September 30, approximately 1,750 individuals have been reached and more than 600 gun locks distributed. The initiative is slated to continue through June, 2025.

It has been just over a year since IDPH provided more than 100,000 free gun locks in the statewide initiative. IDPH has partnered with local health departments and community groups across Illinois to make gun locks available at a variety of public events since the program “Together for a Safer Illinois” was initiated in June 2023.

In partnership with Illinois State Police and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, IDPH launched the initiative to prevent access to firearms by children, those who are not trained in the safe use of a weapon, or those who might use the gun to harm themselves or others. The locks include installation instructions for auto-loading pistols, revolvers, auto-loading and pump-action shotguns, bolt action rifles, modern sports rifles, and single action revolvers. The locks also come with information about the national 988 suicide and crisis lifeline.

This program, open to all community members, aims to educate gun owners on the importance of securely storing firearms to reduce the risk of accidental shootings, especially among children and teenagers. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), nearly 4.6 million American children live in homes with unsecured guns, which can lead to tragic and avoidable incidents. By offering resources, workshops, and free gun locks, the initiative seeks to encourage responsible ownership and enhance overall public safety.

For more information on the “Together for a Safer Illinois” initiative, or to request a free gun lock, contact Southern 7 Health Department at 618-634-2297, ext. 970132.

###