



# NEWS RELEASE



## **For Immediate Release**

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### **(8/1/25) Southern 7 Health Department Receives Gun Safety Grant (Funds Awarded through IDPH's "Together for a Safer Illinois" Initiative)**

Southern 7 Health Department has received a grant through the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) to promote community gun safety and prevent accidental injuries in the state. This is the second year the department has been awarded funds through IDPH's "Together for a Safer Illinois" initiative.

According to EveryStat.org, in Illinois each year on average over 1,600 people die and 4,900 are wounded by gun placing the state with the 14th-highest rate of gun violence in the United States. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, nearly 4.6 million American children live in homes with unsecured guns, which can lead to tragic and avoidable incidents.

In partnership with the Illinois State Police and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, IDPH launched the "Together for a Safer Illinois" initiative in 2023 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. Through the program, more than 100,000 free gun locks have been provided to residents that 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.

"While the number of gun-related injuries and deaths are currently low in our region, Southern 7 is proud to partner with IDPH in this effort to keep it that way", said Shawna Rhine, Community Outreach Coordinator. "The health and safety of our communities is the highest priority in public health. This includes preventing unnecessary injuries and deaths associated with firearms."

In the past year, Southern 7 Health Department has shared gun safety information with approximately 1,750 individuals, and provided more than 600 gun locks. The initiative is slated to continue through June, 2026.

Southern 7 Health Department is a public health department that serves communities of the seven southernmost counties in Illinois focusing on disease prevention, promoting of healthy lifestyles, and ensuring access to healthcare services for the region.

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.

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