

**Extreme Risk Laws Education / “Pause to Heal”**  
**Talking Points**  
(updated 2025)

***Key Messages***

- Extreme Risk Protection Orders (known as Firearm Restraining Orders in Illinois, or more broadly as red flag laws) temporarily remove someone’s ability to possess or purchase a gun through a civil procedure where evidence is presented to a judge that an individual is at risk of harming themselves or others. If the order is granted, this puts time and space between someone experiencing a moment of crisis and a firearm to prevent a potential tragedy.
  - In 2025, 22 states and Washington D.C. currently have extreme risk laws in place to help “hit pause” and temporarily prevent a person who displays signs they intend to harm themselves or someone else from buying or possessing a firearm.
- Unfortunately, many individuals are unaware of these laws and how to use them if needed. Yet they are highly effective at preventing firearm suicide and other shootings when used.
- All campaign materials drive audiences to state-specific websites for free resources and information about Extreme Risk Protection Orders available in their state.

***Additional Messaging***

- Guiding all the work for this campaign is the fact that firearms pose a health and safety risk, and interventions like Extreme Risk Protection Orders can save lives.
  - The Pause to Heal campaign is non-judgmental, non-political and rooted in empathy and respect. At every step of the process – from research to campaign development and production – gun owners and their communities were consulted and included in the campaign.
- The “Pause to Heal” campaign launched in Illinois in 2024 as a first-of-its-kind collaboration, combining the expertise of Brady, the nation’s oldest gun violence prevention group, with the Ad Council’s unique model of using the power of communications to inspire change on pressing social issues and the Illinois Department of Public Health’s (IDPH) governmental credibility.
  - The partnership with the Illinois Department of Public Health is critically important since [the Ad Council Research Institute's 2023 National ERPO Research Study](#), funded by the Joyce Foundation, found that state and local public health departments were trusted messengers on the topic of Extreme Risk Law education.
- Data shows intervention exists in many forms for firearm injury prevention. This public education effort complements the Ad Council, Brady and IDPH’s other work around this important topic, including the successful national "[End Family Fire](#)" program developed by Brady and the Ad

Council and IDPH's work to reduce firearm injuries by distributing tens of thousands of free gun locks that help to prevent unintentional shootings, firearm suicides, and intentional shootings.

- These efforts focus on evidence-based solutions and education, promoting responsible access to guns to prevent firearm injuries and deaths.
- This campaign is not a political or partisan effort. Our goal is to raise awareness of an existing intervention available in 21 states and DC and provide education and resources to local communities.

### ***Extreme Risk Laws Information***

- Currently, 22 states and DC have extreme risk laws to temporarily prevent a person who is displaying behavioral risk factors indicating they may be at risk of violence to self or others from purchasing or possessing firearms.
  - However, many people don't know that these civil procedures even exist as a tool that can save lives in appropriate situations.
  - While awareness has increased since the campaign launch, there is still an opportunity to continue to increase the public's familiarity with these tools and how they can be used
- These civil procedures allow law enforcement (and others, depending on the state) to petition a judge in a civil court to determine if a person is an imminent danger to themselves or others and if so, to temporarily block the person from buying a firearm and require the person to temporarily surrender any firearms they already have.
- Extreme risk laws don't "punish" gun owners or take away someone's right to own a gun. Instead, they only temporarily prevent someone – when they are displaying clear signs that they intend to harm themselves or someone else - from possessing or purchasing a firearm, so that the individual can have the time and space they need to access resources and heal.
  - An order issued under extreme risk laws is temporary. Firearms are returned when the individual in crisis no longer displays the behavioral risk factors that they intend to hurt themselves or others, as determined by civil – not criminal – court proceedings.

### ***Supporting statistics***

- Extreme risk laws are effective
  - 1 gun suicide was prevented for every 10-20 Extreme Risk Protection Orders issued in Connecticut – the state with the oldest extreme risk laws in place. (Source: Johns Hopkins Research on ERPOs)
  - One study found that, between 2016 and 2018, California's extreme risk laws prevented 21 potential mass shootings, out of 159 firearm violence restraining orders that were filed.

- Another study estimated that Indiana’s extreme risk law averted one suicide for approximately every 10 orders enforced.
- Based on a 2023 Ad Council Research Institute (ACRI) study, two-thirds (65%) of respondents claimed to be aware of extreme risk laws and view these laws as a positive means to keep people safe. (Source: ACRI ERPO Research Study)
  - However, there was a lack of a comprehensive understanding of how extreme risk laws can be most beneficial, impacting long-term positive sentiment towards these laws.
- According to the Johns Hopkins 2023 National Gun Policy Survey:
  - 76% support family members leveraging an extreme risk protection order with a relative that may be at risk hurting themselves or others.
- Extreme risk laws can prevent gun violence by limiting access since gun violence (both self-inflicted and directed at others) often results from firearm access.
  - Firearm suicide death risk triples with access to a gun. (Source: ACP Journals).
  - More than 27,000 Americans died by firearm suicide in 2023, accounting for well over half of all firearm deaths.
  - 76% of school shooters access their guns from the home of a family member or friend. (Source: U.S. Secret Service National Threat Assessment Center, 2019)
- Firearms are frequently accessible, underscoring the need for firearm safety interventions like extreme risk laws.
  - 42% of U.S. adults live in a firearm-owning household. (Source: Pew Research, 2017).
  - The firearm ownership rate in Illinois was 24% in 2020 (Source: RAND, 2020).