

# Child Care Safety: Children Should NOT have Access to Guns in Child Care

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**In Brief:** Children in child care should not have access to guns.

## Background:

In Virginia, 35.1% of households have at least one gun.<sup>1</sup> Two-thirds of gun owners say they own more than one gun, including 29% who own five or more guns.<sup>2</sup>

For those individuals who operate a child care program out of their home, safe gun storage is essential so that children cannot have access to weapons that could be used to unintentionally cause serious injury or death.

In 44 states, firearms in home-based child care programs are either prohibited or access is controlled (e.g. safe storage requirements apply).

## Child Care Laws in Virginia

In Virginia, child care laws are complicated. Providers who want to operate a child care program out of their home do not need a license until 5 unrelated children are in the home.

For providers who care for fewer than 5 children in a home, they can become voluntarily registered, which requires compliance with a few health and safety rules.

There is a firearm safe storage regulation that applies to licensed child care home providers. There is no safe storage regulation for those who are voluntarily registered as home providers.

**Child Care Aware of Virginia recommends the safety of children,** that the General Assembly pass legislation to

require safe firearm storage for all regulated home-based child care providers.

It's not about owning guns. It's about being responsible for safe gun storage for those who operate a child care program so that children will not have access to potentially dangerous weapons. Specifically,

- Firearms should be stored unloaded, locked, with ammunition stored separately in a manner out of the reach of children.

## Cole's Story

Cole was a quiet, loving, polite boy who at 4 years-old, was cautious and protective of his younger sisters. When his parents, Kyrin and Josh Falcetti, needed child care, they did what most parents do. They asked friends and family for recommendations. A friend recommended his fiancé as great with kids. Kyrin and Josh felt their children would be safe because the child care provider was recommended through a friend.



4 year-old Cole died of a self-inflicted gun shot wound in a child care home.

On May 15, 2017, Cole died as a result of a self-inflicted gun shot wound in the home of his child care provider. The provider had placed Cole in her personal master bedroom (where a weapon was) for his nap. It is unclear whether the loaded weapon was on the nightstand table or in a drawer, but what is known is that it was loaded and within reach of a young child. No child in child care should have access to a gun.

<sup>1</sup> [Gun Owners as a Percentage of Each State's Population](https://www.usacarry.com/), Source: USA Carry.com. <https://www.usacarry.com/>

<sup>2</sup> Pew Research Center, June 2017. <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2017/06/22/the-demographics-of-gun-ownership/>