

# ONE THING YOU CAN DO.

## Florida

When someone you love is showing warning signs that they might try to harm themselves, it can feel like there is nothing you can do in such a high-stakes and emotional situation.

**But there is one thing you *can do*: you can request a risk protection order to temporarily remove guns from the situation and help keep your loved one safe.**

In a moment of crisis, access to a gun can be the difference between life and death. If you're seeing signs that someone you love is considering harming themselves, you can seek a risk protection order to temporarily suspend their access to firearms, which are the most lethal form of suicide - until the crisis passes.

# Access to a gun can be the difference between life and death in a moment of crisis. Keep your loved one safe with a risk protection order.

## What does Florida's risk protection order do?

A risk protection order is a court order that temporarily restricts a person's access to guns when they pose a risk to themselves or others.

Risk protection orders are designed to help law enforcement and concerned family members intervene quickly in dangerous situations.

## Who can request a risk protection order in Florida?

Under Florida law, only a law enforcement officer or agency may file a petition for a risk protection order.

## What can I do to seek a risk protection order?

If you are concerned that someone you know is at risk of harming them self or others, your first step should be to contact a member of law enforcement and discuss your concerns with them. Law enforcement can then investigate your concerns and request the risk protection order from the court.

## What happens after a risk protection order has been requested?

Once the court receives a request (called a "petition") for a risk protection order, the court will notify the person and schedule a court hearing about whether the order should be issued.

If, at the hearing, a court finds that a person poses a significant danger of causing injury to themselves or others by having access to firearms or ammunition, the judge can issue a court order that requires the person's firearms to be held by law enforcement for as long as the order is in effect. Under certain circumstances, the person may choose to transfer their guns being held by law enforcement to a third party who is legally allowed to hold them.

Also, the person will not be able to purchase new firearms while the order is in effect.

## How long does a risk protection order last?

A final risk protection order lasts for a period of up to one year. At the end of the year, law enforcement may ask the court to renew the order. The order can only be extended after a court hearing.

## I'm afraid to wait until a court hearing is scheduled. What if the person is in immediate danger of harming themselves or someone else?

Concern for the safety of the person, or of the public may demand that action be taken before the scheduled hearing date, to prevent immediate danger.

To protect a person or public safety during this time, a judge may issue a **temporary risk protection order** that restricts a person's access to firearms before the person has been notified of the petition, and before a full hearing is held.

## How long do temporary orders last?

A temporary order only lasts until the court hearing on a final risk protection order.

Because temporary orders only stay in place for a short period of time – up to 14 days – these orders balance the urgent need for public safety with the due process rights of all involved.

## Will a risk protection order go on someone's criminal record?

No. A risk protection order is a civil court order. Its sole purpose is to remove firearms from a person who is at high risk of causing harm to themselves or to others. The court's decision to issue the order does not cause the person to have a criminal record.

**If you have immediate safety concerns, call 911 for emergency assistance.**

If you believe that a loved one is a risk to their own safety, you may wish to encourage them to seek expert help. The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is a national network of local crisis centers that provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, seven days a week at:

**[www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org)  
1-800-273-TALK (8255)  
text HOME to 741741**