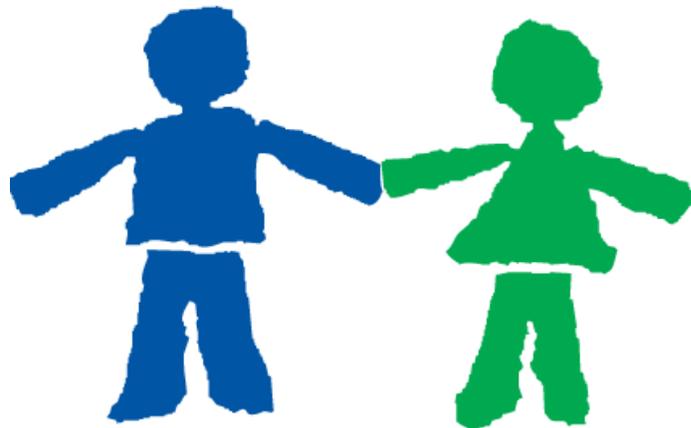


Child Fatality Task Force



***Our Children, Our Future,
Our RESPONSIBILITY***

NC Child Fatality Task Force Firearm Safety Initiative Recommendation

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Executive Director

NC Child Fatality Task Force

Public Health Leaders Conference

January 23, 2020



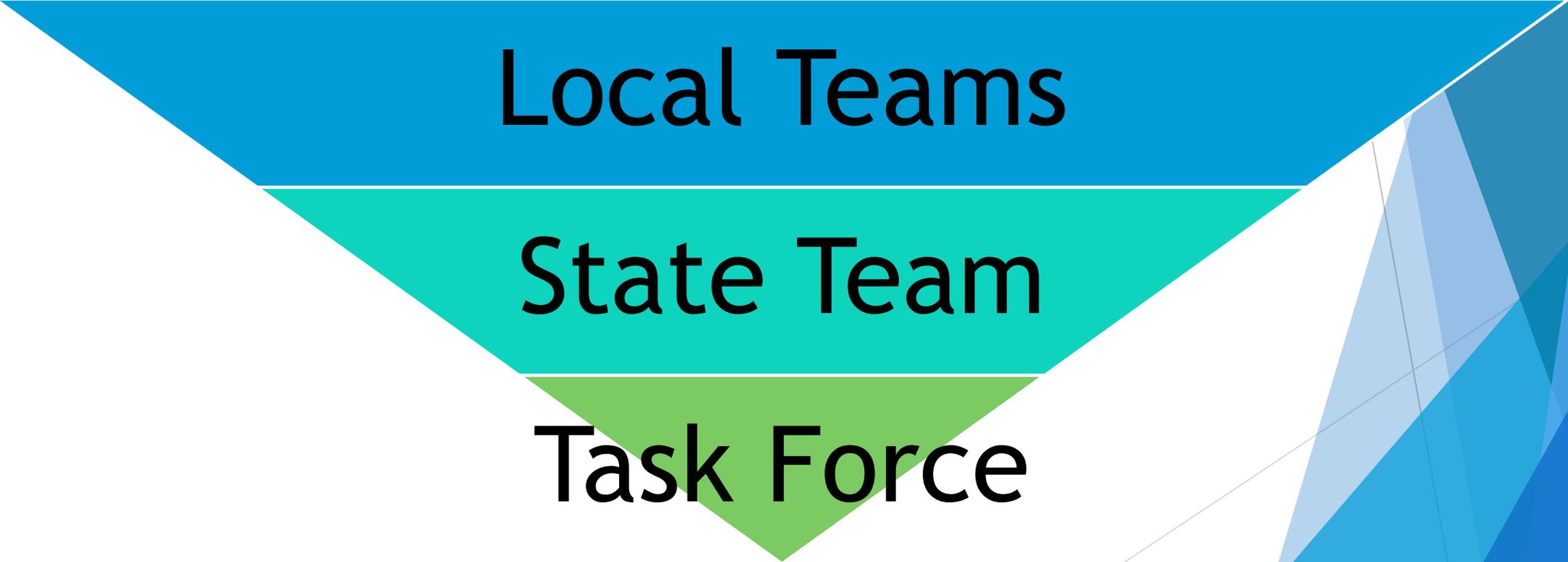
Brief Introduction to the NC Child Fatality Task Force and the Statewide Child Fatality Prevention System

Charge of State Child Fatality Prevention System

[via Article 14 of NC Juvenile Code]

- ▶ **Develop a communitywide approach to child abuse and neglect;**
- ▶ **Study and understand causes of childhood death;**
- ▶ **Identify gaps in service delivery in systems designed to prevent abuse, neglect, and death; and**
- ▶ **Make and implement recommendations for laws, rules, and policies that will support the safe and healthy development of our children and prevent future child abuse, neglect, and death.**

Three main components to NC CFP System



Local Teams

State Team

Task Force

NC Child Fatality Task Force: Legislative study commission created via statute in 1991

The “policy arm” of the State’s Child Fatality Prevention System

Does NOT review individual cases

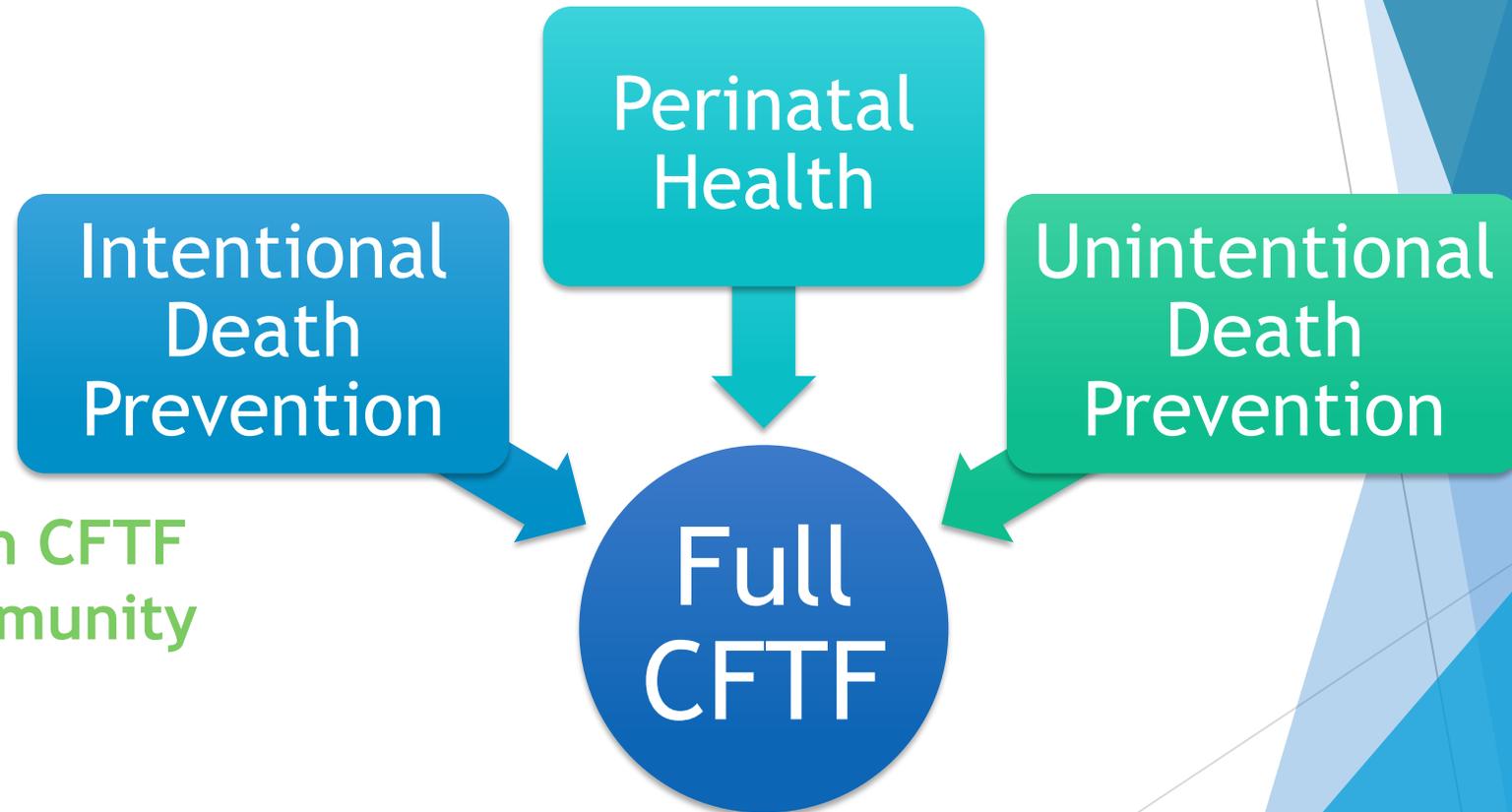
35 Members:
20 Appointed;
11 Ex Officio
(State agency & community leaders, experts in child health & safety, 10 legislators)

Task Force Responsibilities

- ▶ Study, analyze, and report on incidences and causes of child death
- ▶ Develop a system for multidisciplinary review of child deaths
- ▶ Receive and consider reports from State Team
- ▶ Perform other studies and evaluations as needed in order to carry out its mandate
- ▶ **Submit annual report to the Governor and General Assembly with recommendations for changes to any law, rule, or policy that it has determined will promote the safety and well-being of children**

See G.S. §7B-1403, -1412

Three Task Force Committees work to create a yearly “Action Agenda”



Committees rely on CFTF members AND community volunteers.

In 2018 and 2019 the Task Force recommended that the state launch and fund a new statewide firearm safety initiative focused on education and awareness surrounding firearm safe storage and distribution of free gun locks

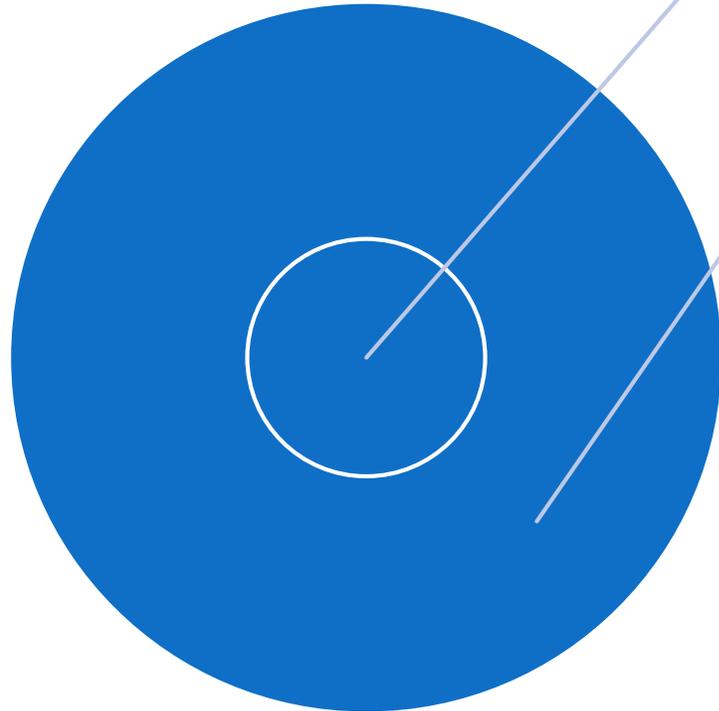
What led to Firearm Safety Initiative Recommendation?

- ▶ Recommendation from State Child Fatality Prevention Team (repeated more than one year) to study the issue of youth access to firearms and safe storage; firearms in the context of youth suicide was a particular issue of concern.
- ▶ Data presented on firearm-related deaths and injuries to children & youth
- ▶ Data presented on safe storage of firearms
- ▶ Study and input from a diverse **group of stakeholders and experts**; recommendation by UD Committee

WHO provided input? Representation from . . .

- ▶ NC Child Fatality Task Force
- ▶ Safe Kids NC
- ▶ Injury & Violence Prevention Branch, Division of Public Health
- ▶ Pediatrician with expertise in child safety
- ▶ North Carolinians Against Gun Violence
- ▶ National Rifle Association
- ▶ NC Child Fatality Prevention Team
- ▶ Juvenile Justice Health Services
- ▶ Department of Public Instruction
- ▶ City Police Chief
- ▶ NC Coalition Against Domestic Violence
- ▶ Hunter educator
- ▶ NC Wildlife Officer
- ▶ Academic researcher
- ▶ NC Department of Justice
- ▶ UNC Injury Prevention Research Center
- ▶ Durham Gun Team

Identified Priorities for Education and Awareness Efforts: audience & behavior



Target audience: All gun owners

Target behavior: Use of a gun lock (for guns not locked away)

Identified Priorities for Education and Awareness Efforts: target strategies

- ▶ **Creating and distributing a community mobilization toolkit for local community groups that encompasses multiple prevention strategies.**
 - ❖ **PSA-type video for distribution through channels such as social media campaigns, with potential for broader use**
 - ❖ **Information and materials to support community mobilization efforts.**
- ▶ **Acquisition and distribution of free or discounted gun locks**
- ▶ **Incorporation into prevention strategies of information related to current NC laws on safe storage**

Recommended Components* of Initiative

- ▶ State-level development of a firearm safety website
- ▶ State-level development of a firearm safety toolkit to be used in communities for locally tailored initiatives
- ▶ **State-coordinated outreach to local communities to implement initiative**

*Initiatives don't just happen because they can; they happen because **SOMEONE MAKES THEM HAPPEN***

- ▶ Formation of an ongoing Firearm Safety Stakeholder Group with diverse representation.

*These recommended components were accompanied by explanations from the Stakeholder Group as to specific minimum elements or other information concerning the recommendations. See final report from Firearm Safety Stakeholder Group: <https://www.ncleg.net/DocumentSites/Committees/NCCFTF/Presentations/2017-2018/Firearm%20Safety%20Stakeholder%20Group%20Report%201-17-18.pdf>.

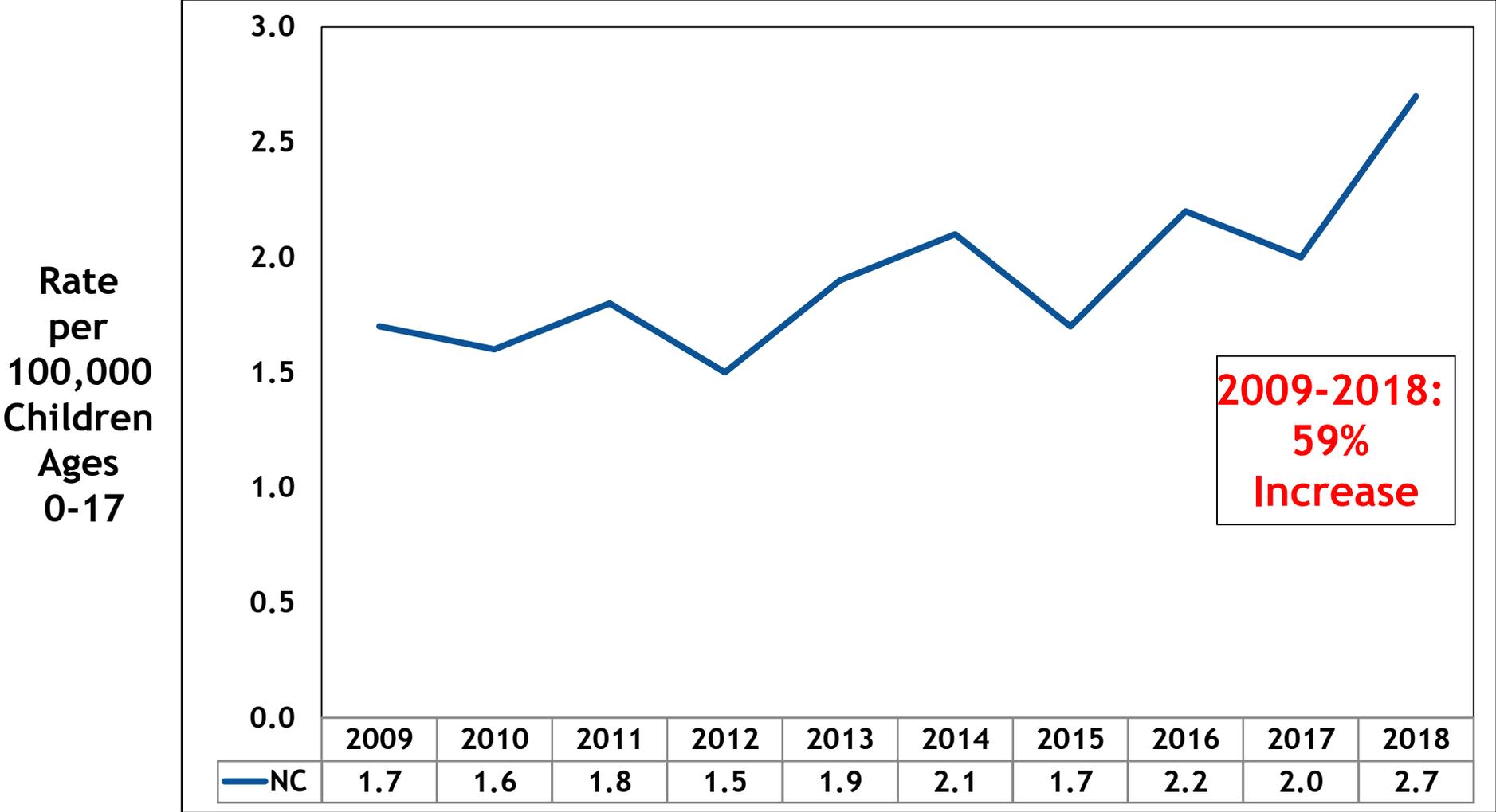
Examples of existing organizations and efforts that could be accessed and/or duplicated to carry out the preceding recommendations

- ▶ **Project ChildSafe:** Provides free safety kits with gun locks to Law Enforcement Agencies, plus many downloadable and shareable resources to support education and awareness efforts.
- ▶ **Durham Gun Safety Team:** Operated out of Durham County Dept. of Public Health, stakeholders come together once a month and members provide audience-tailored education and counseling on gun safety, as well as gun locks.
- ▶ **Means Matter Campaign:** focuses on suicide and has educational resources including summary data, a “Means Matter” booklet, a power point presentation, sample brochures from states’ firearm safety campaigns, and more.
- ▶ **New Hampshire Firearm Safety Coalition and the NH Gun Shop Project,** currently being replicated in 20 states. Affiliated with Means Matter (above), it provides materials for firearm retailers and range owners on ways to help prevent suicide, including encouraging them to display and distribute suicide prevention materials.

2019 saw action on this issue from both General Assembly and Governor

- ▶ **HB 508 was introduced on 3/27/19** and would require and fund the launching of a statewide firearm safe storage awareness initiative by DHHS to educate the public about the importance of the safe storage of firearms and to facilitate the distribution of gun locks; it addresses the development of toolkits and providing outreach and technical assistance to help communities launch local safe storage initiatives.
- ▶ **The full text of HB 508 was included in the budget bill, HB 966**, funded for \$90K year 1, \$70K year 2 both nonrecurring. **BUT, this budget bill has NOT become law.**
- ▶ **On August 12th, 2019, Governor Cooper signed a gun safety Executive Directive**, and among the actions to be taken is one that orders DHHS to “develop a public education campaign that educates firearm owners and prospective owners on the importance of safe firearm storage.”

NC Resident Firearm-related Mortality Rates, Children Ages 0 to 17: 2009-2018



* Firearm deaths included the following ICD-codes : Unintentional W32-W34; Suicide X72-X74 , Homicide X93-X95, U014

In 2018 there were **62 firearm-related deaths** to North Carolina children and youth (age 17 and younger), most of which were homicides and suicides (26 were suicides and 4 were accidental).*

In the ten-year period of 2008 to 2017, North Carolina **lost more than 425 children and youth** (age 17 and younger) to firearm-related injuries.**

In a given year in NC there are four to five times as many firearm-related emergency department visits and hospitalizations (combined) for children and youth as there are deaths.***

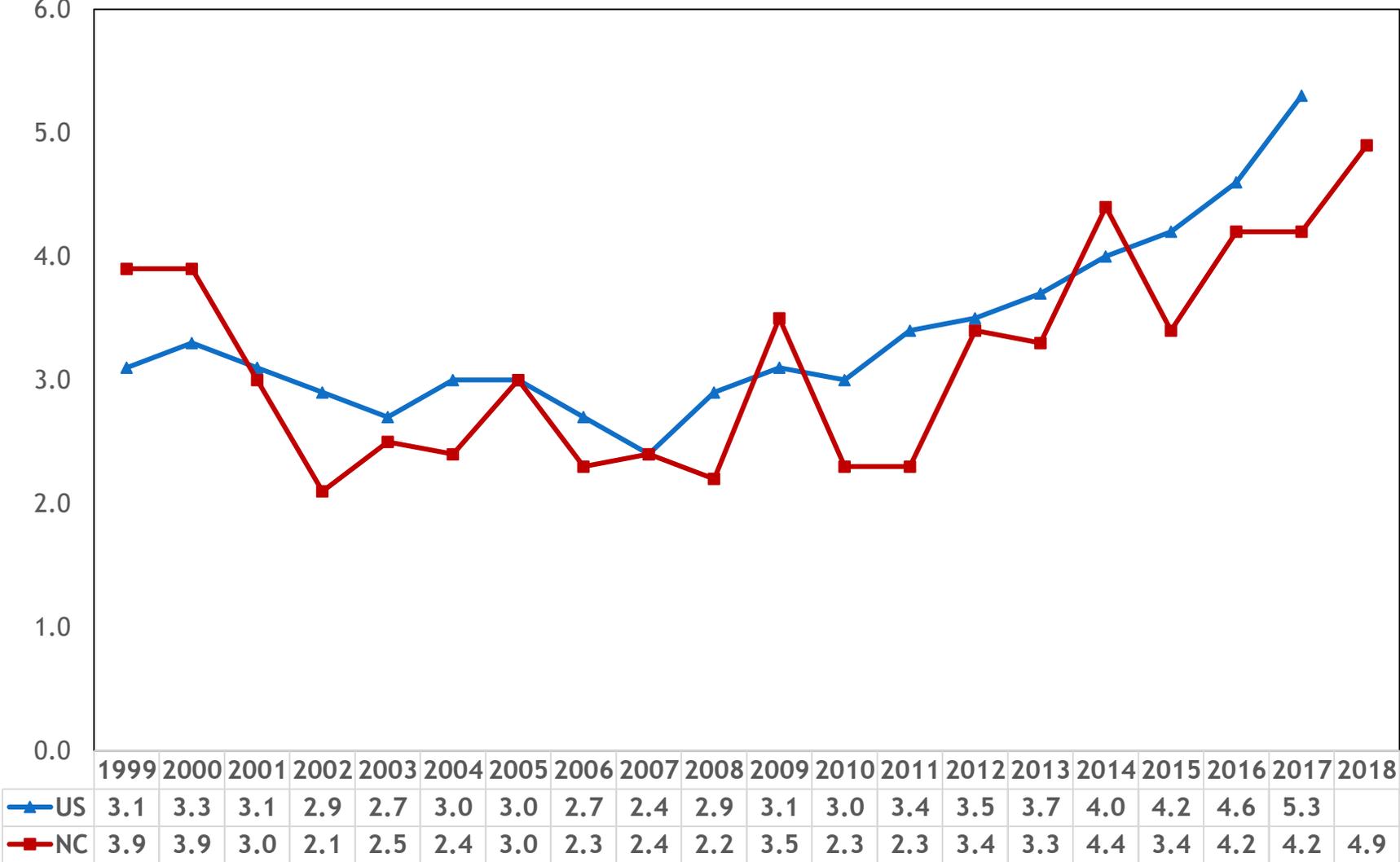
In North Carolina, firearms are used in almost half of youth suicides and more than half of youth homicides.

* Data source: NC State Center for Health Statistics, NC Division of Public Health.

** Data source: North Carolina Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, NC Division of Public Health

*** Data source: Injury and Violence Prevention Branch, NC Division of Public Health.

NC Resident Suicide Mortality Rates, Ages 10 to 17: 1999-2018



Source: NC State Center for Health Statistics

How is safe storage related to suicide?

- ▶ Access to firearms is a known risk factor for suicide.
- ▶ Many suicide attempts are hastily decided upon during a short-term crisis, with only minutes of deliberation prior to an attempt.
- ▶ Firearms have a fatality rate of over 82%, which is much higher than other common methods of suicide.
- ▶ Firearms used in youth suicide usually belong to a parent.

How does safe firearm storage relate to school safety?

- ▶ April 2018 Wall Street Journal report: examined nearly three decades of American mass school shootings finding that the killers in these shootings mostly used guns owned by family.
- ▶ 2004 federal government report: 68% of school shootings were by shooters acquiring gun from own home or home of relatives.

Sources: Hobbs, Tawnell D. (April 5, 2018). "Most Guns Used in School Shootings Come From Home," Wall Street Journal; The Final Report and Findings of the Safe School Initiative: Implications for the Prevention of School Attacks in the United States, by the United States Secret Service and United States Department of Education, July 2004.

What kind of law does North Carolina have related to safe storage?

North Carolina has a **Child Access Prevention Law** that imposes criminal liability *after the fact* on adults who negligently allow children access to firearms.*

This is different from . . .

Laws that require people to safely store firearms and ammunition when they are not in use (e.g., requiring guns to be stored in a locked container or gun safe or disabled with a gun lock).

*See law for much more detail - North Carolina's Law: N.C.G.S. 14-315.1

The importance of education and awareness about safe storage of firearms: it's common sense safety that saves lives & prevents injuries, like . . .

- ▶ Car seats and seat belts
- ▶ Toddler-proof outlet protectors
- ▶ Fences around pools
- ▶ Graduated drivers licenses
- ▶ Life jackets for boaters
- ▶ Safe sleep practices for infants
- ▶ Bike helmets
- ▶ Safe storage of medications

We know this is needed because. . .

Over 50% of NC gun owners do not keep their guns secured

Over 60% of NC gun owners who are parents do not keep their guns secured

Firearms are the lethal means used in almost half of youth suicides and over half of youth homicides

What's Next?

- ▶ Legislation addressing firearm safety initiative is still pending (HB 966)
- ▶ Task Force will determine whether to recommend again for 2020
- ▶ DHHS (DPH Injury and Violence Prevention) is working in response to Executive Directive
- ▶ ANY community may launch a local initiative on its own!

Questions?

