

The Question to Ask on June 21 and Every Day

Parenting has never been an easy assignment. Meaningful and joyful, yes. Easy, no. We can all agree that parents need all the help they can get to keep their kids safe and healthy in an increasingly complicated world.

Every day across America nine children and teens are shot in unintentional shootings. The majority of these instances go unnoticed, they do not make the headlines or captivate our attention.

Thousands of kids and teens are killed and injured by gun violence every year.

Many of these youth deaths and injuries occur because parents, relatives or friends leave guns accessible to kids. They are the unintentional shootings and suicides looked upon as isolated tragedies, rather than viewed together as the preventable public health crisis that they actually represent.

Every day as parents, we make very rational choices regarding our kid's safety—we buckle their seatbelts, make them wear bicycle helmets, and limit their TV time. But when it comes to gun safety, we are often not taking the same logical approach with our loved ones.

One out of three homes with children has guns, many left unlocked or loaded. Yet, nationally, more than half of parents say it has never occurred to them to ask about the presence of guns where their children play. As parents, we can help protect those we love by asking the right questions about gun safety. This is the simple idea behind the Asking Saves Kids (ASK) Campaign.

ASK encourages parents to simply ask if there are unlocked guns in the homes where their children play (such as at friends' or family members' homes). Just as it has become common to hear parents asking about nut allergies or how the children will be supervised, parents can take an important step to ensure the safety of their children simply by asking, "Is there an unlocked gun in your home?"

If the answer is no, then we have one less thing to worry about. If the answer is yes, make sure all guns are stored unloaded and locked, ideally in a gun safe, with ammunition stored separately.

As parents, we have a responsibility to keep our kids safe. We need to be aware of the risks associated with a gun in the home. We need to ASK about guns in the home where our children play, and if a home has a gun, ensure it is stored locked, unloaded and separate from ammunition. If we can do that, we can make our families safer and prevent many of the firearm-related tragedies that occur every day.

On Sunday, June 21, 2015, organizations and individuals around the country will celebrate National ASK Day. Held annually on the first day of summer, a season when children spend more time in other homes, ASK Day reminds parents about the importance of ASKing if there are unlocked guns in the homes where their children play. You can participate in ASK Day by pledging to ASK and encouraging your friends and family to do the same!

To pledge to ASK and learn about more ways to get involved in ASK, please visit: www.askingsaveskids.org.

Word count: 500+