



## CITY OF SALEM SCHOOL DIVISION

### **Subject: Annual Safety Notice — Safe Storage of Medications and Firearms**

Dear Salem City Schools Families,

Virginia has enacted a new law requiring school divisions to notify families each year about the safe storage of prescription medications and firearms in the home. This requirement, created by Senate Bill 109 and House Bill 201 during the 2026 General Assembly session, amends § 22.1-79.3 of the Code of Virginia and took effect July 1, 2026. This is the first year Salem City Schools is providing this notice under the new law, and we will continue to share it annually within 30 days of the start of each school year going forward.

### **Safely Store Prescription Drugs**

Prescription drugs should be stored securely and out of the sight and reach of children and adolescents. When possible:

- Keep prescription medications in a locked location that children cannot access.
- Do not leave medications unattended in purses, backpacks, vehicles, countertops, or other easily accessible locations.
- Keep medications in their original, labeled containers.
- Dispose of unused or expired medications safely through an authorized medication take-back program or other appropriate disposal method.

Virginia law defines "prescription drug" in Va. Code § 54.1-3401.

### **Safely Store Firearms**

Virginia law places responsibility on firearm owners and others who possess firearms to take appropriate precautions to prevent children from accessing them. Under Va. Code § 18.2-56.2, a person who recklessly leaves a loaded firearm where it could endanger a child under 14 may be subject to criminal penalties when the firearm is not properly secured and the statutory requirements are met.

Families are strongly encouraged to:

- Store every firearm unloaded when it is not in use.
- Secure firearms in a locked safe, lockbox, or other secure storage device.
- Store ammunition separately from firearms when practicable.
- Keep firearm keys, combinations, and access codes inaccessible to children and adolescents.
- Use an appropriate locking device, such as a cable lock or trigger lock, consistent with the manufacturer's instructions.
- Never assume a child will not find or handle a firearm.
- Ask about firearm storage before allowing your child to visit another home.

### **Firearms, Accidents, Injuries, and Suicide**

Firearms can cause fatal or life-altering injuries when accidentally discharged or accessed by someone not authorized to use them. Firearms are also involved in youth suicides and other self-

inflicted injuries. Safe firearm storage can help reduce the likelihood that a young person will gain access to a firearm during a crisis or moment of impulsive behavior.

Firearms are the leading cause of death among Virginia children and adolescents ages 1-17. Between 2019 and 2023, nearly 1 in 3 deaths among Virginia children and teens in that age range involved a firearm. Of these deaths, 19.5% were firearm homicides and 11.8% were firearm suicides.<sup>1</sup>

### **If You Are Concerned About Your Child**

If you are concerned that your child may be experiencing a mental health crisis, having thoughts of suicide, or presenting a danger to themselves or others, seek help promptly. Consider:

- Talking openly and calmly with your child about their safety and well-being.
- Contacting your child's pediatrician, mental health provider, school counselor, or another qualified professional.
- Asking directly about thoughts of suicide or self-harm when you are concerned.
- Temporarily increasing supervision and reducing access to firearms, medications, and other potentially dangerous items.
- In an immediate emergency, calling 911 or going to the nearest emergency department.
- Using the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, available 24/7 by call or text, when appropriate.

### **Additional Resources**

- Virginia Code § 18.2-56.2 — Child access to firearms
- Virginia Code § 54.1-3401 — Definitions relating to prescription drugs
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) — Firearm injury and youth mortality data
- 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline
- Virginia Department of Education: [Parent & Caregiver Resources for Self-Harm, Suicide, & Violence Prevention](#)

This notice, along with translated versions, is posted on the Salem City Schools website at <https://www.salem.k12.va.us/parentsandfamilies>.

Salem City Schools encourages every family to review its home storage practices regularly and to take reasonable steps to prevent children and adolescents from accessing prescription medications and firearms without appropriate adult supervision. Thank you for helping us maintain safe environments for our students at school and at home.

Sincerely,

Dr. Curtis Hicks  
Superintendent  
Salem City Schools

<sup>1</sup> Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Violence Solutions; CDC Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System (WISQARS).