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FOR RELEASE:

It only takes a moment

It can happen without warning, and life is needlessly lost. Teen suicide is the leading cause of death of young people in Colorado, and teenagers often don't show warning signs at home.

It only takes a moment for a teen to make an impulsive decision to take their lives when they find themselves in a dark place with nowhere to turn and access to firearms.

"Too frequently, we see families experience the highest tragedy when they lose a child to suicide. A real, meaningful way to help protect your family is to properly secure your firearms when not in use. It only takes a moment. If you own it, respect it, and secure it," said Larimer County Sheriff Justin Smith.

The Larimer County Juvenile Gun Safety Coalition has joined with many organizations to foster awareness of gun safety and teens struggling with mental health issues with the "It Only Takes a Moment" campaign covering gun safety tips and teen mental health awareness.

"Everyone can help to save a life, and it's easier than you think," said Rachel Olsen, Imagine Zero Coordinator, Alliance for Suicide Prevention. "Lock up your guns so your children can't access them in a moment of crisis."

It only takes a moment for a teen struggling with mental health issues to take their own life. Still, it also only takes a moment for a responsible gun owner to safely store and secure their firearms to eliminate an impulsive, tragic, and life-changing decision.

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“Unfortunately, we do see a number of patients in our emergency departments every year who have attempted suicide by a number of methods. However, we don’t see suicide by gun when everything is locked up,” said Dr. Jamie Teumer, a longtime emergency physician in northern Colorado and Medical Director of UCHHealth Medical Center of the Rockies in Loveland. “The most difficult situation is when the attempt comes out of the blue and no one had any inkling that this could possibly happen. That’s why it’s important for anyone who owns a gun to make sure it is always stored responsibly. It’s a simple step that can save a life.”

Adults can take several steps to prevent teen suicide:

- Responsibly store and secure all guns and firearms from children.
- Talk about gun safety with your kids.
- Pay attention to a child’s behavior more attentively and encourage students to report concerning behavior or guns in school using tools such as Safe2Tell.

For more information about the It Only Takes a Moment campaign or to find available community resources, visit the Juvenile Gun Safety website at www.larimer.org/gun-safety.

The Larimer County Gun Safety Coalition partner organizations include the 8th Judicial District Attorney’s Office, 8th Judicial Probation Department, Alliance for Suicide Prevention, Big Waves, Boys & Girls Clubs of Larimer County, City of Fort Collins Restorative Justice, Colorado Division of Youth Services, Colorado State Patrol, Colorado State University Police Department, Colorado Youth Detention Continuum, Estes Park Police Department, Estes Park School District, Fort Collins Police Services, Imagine Zero of Larimer County, Juvenile Legal Defense Representative, Larimer County Attorney’s Office, Larimer County Criminal Justice Services, Larimer County Department of Health & Environment, Larimer County Department of Human Services, Larimer County Sheriff’s Office, Loveland Police Department, Poudre School District, The Center for Family Outreach, Thompson School District, Timnath Police Department, UCHHealth, Windsor Police Department.