Bath County Public Schools
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September 10, 2026

Dear Parents and Guardians:

As part of our commitment to the safety and well-being of every student, Bath County Public School's is providing this annual notification as required by Va. Code § 22.1-79.3(F) regarding the safe storage of prescription medications and firearms in the home.

Virginia law recognizes the importance of preventing children and adolescents from gaining unauthorized access to prescription drugs and firearms. We encourage every family to take appropriate steps to safely secure these items in the household.

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 medication 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**.

For additional resources, please visit the Virginia Department of Education's webpage on Parent & Caregiver Resources for Self-Harm, Suicide, & Violence Prevention.

SAFELY STORE FIREARMS

Virginia law places responsibility on firearm owners and others who possess firearms to take appropriate precautions to prevent children from accessing firearms.

Under **Va. Code § 18.2-56.2**, a person who recklessly leaves a loaded firearm where it could endanger a child under 14 years of age may be subject to criminal penalties when the firearms 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 in accessible to children and adolescents.
- Use an appropriate locking device, such as a cable lock or trigger lock, consistent with the firearm manufacturer's instructions.
- Never assume that a child will not find or handle a firearm.
- Ask about firearm storage before allowing your child to visit another home.

For the current text of Virginia's firearm-storage and child –access law, please review **Va. Code § 18.2-56.2**.

FIREARMS, ACCIDENT, INJURIES, AND SUICIDE

Firearms can cause fatal or life-altering injuries when they are accidentally discharged or accessed by someone who is 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, highlighting the importance of violence prevention, suicide prevention, and safe firearm storage efforts.

Between 2019 and 2023, nearly 1 in 3 deaths among Virginia children and teens (ages 1-17) involved a firearm. Of these deaths, 19.5% were firearm homicides and 11.8% were firearm suicides.

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.

Parents may want to 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 a nationally recognized crisis-support resource, such as the **988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline**, when appropriate.

Additional information and resources are available through the Centers for Disease Control and other nationally recognized public-health and mental-health organizations.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Families may wish to consult:

- **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** – Crisis support and suicide-prevention resources.
- Local health, behavioral-health, and community organizations serving children and families.
- The Virginia Department of Education's webpage on **Parent & Caregiver Resources for Self-Harm, Suicide, & Violence Prevention**.

Bath County School Division 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 and authorization.

Thank you for helping us maintain safe environments for our students at school and at home.

Sincerely,

John Taylor
Superintendent, Bath County Public Schools

JT:prc