



Pennsylvania Department of the

AUDITOR GENERAL

Facebook: Pennsylvania Auditor General

Twitter: @PaAuditorGen

News for Immediate Release

April 23, 2019

Auditor General DePasquale Visits Penn Medicine Lancaster General Health, Urges Action to Save Lives by Curbing Firearm Violence

Suicides accounted for nearly two-thirds of firearms deaths in 2016

LANCASTER – Auditor General Eugene DePasquale today toured the emergency department and trauma bays at Penn Medicine Lancaster General Health, where he urged action on his proposals to save lives by curbing firearm-related violence – including suicide.

DePasquale’s special report on the impacts of firearm violence, released last fall, noted firearm-related injuries cost Pennsylvania taxpayers about \$1.5 billion in health care costs over the past decade. Nearly two-thirds of the 1,500 firearm-related deaths reported in 2016 were suicides.

“This hospital treats an average of 22 shooting victims per year and more local victims are treated at other facilities in the region,” DePasquale said. “We must find ways to end the cycle of violence.”

Auditor General DePasquale spoke with emergency and trauma intervention staff, and asked for their ideas on ways to reduce injuries stemming from firearms. He was joined on the tour by LG Health medical staff.

DePasquale’s special report, “[A Safer Pennsylvania: A Community Approach to Firearm Safety](#),” contains 12 recommendations for Pennsylvania to work within existing laws to curb deaths and injuries stemming from firearms:

1. The state should work to expand access to mental health care, especially in rural communities.
2. The stigma of seeking mental health help must end; to do that, the state should mount a culturally responsive public awareness campaign.
3. Engage medical doctors and train all physicians, especially primary care physicians, to screen patients for risks of firearm violence.
4. Engage licensed firearms dealers in looking for red flags in customers who might potentially use a firearm for suicide.
5. The Pennsylvania Game Commission should expand its hunter education program section on firearm safety and create a voluntary training program on safe firearm usage and storage.
6. Encourage all firearm owners to voluntarily use safe storage best practices, such as locking unloaded firearms in a safe and storing ammunition away from firearms.
7. The state should continue to support hospital-based violence intervention programs and behavioral health resources in hospitals so they can be fully responsive to the violence they treat and ensure that unresolved trauma will not contribute to retaliation or suicide.
8. The state should support communities in organizing violence prevention efforts proven to be effective. The Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency’s Gun Violence Reduction Initiative is a good example of that support.

9. The governor should sign an executive order requiring Pennsylvania State Police to issue quarterly and monthly reports on firearms traced from crimes to help track lost and stolen guns as well as firearm-related criminal activity.

10. The state should secure funding to increase Pennsylvania's participation in a national network that uses bullets to connect multiple crimes to single firearms.

11. Sheriffs and other law-enforcement officials who issue concealed-carry permits should thoroughly check applicants' references and backgrounds before approving applications and consider prosecuting those who provide false information.

12. Pennsylvania State Police should implement the Lethality Assessment Program, which connects victims of intimate partner violence to local domestic violence programs, statewide.

DePasquale said none of his proposals would impact the constitutional rights of firearm owners.

To review the special report on firearm safety, visit www.paauditor.gov.

###