

Gun Safety & Dementia

Dementia is a progressive brain disease that will cause changes in a person's ability to safely handle a firearm, including:



Poor judgment leading to bad decisions



Memory loss, confusion, and hallucinations



Difficulty understanding situations & surroundings



Mood and personality changes



Impulsive behavior



Trouble recognizing family, friends, and neighbors

Even if someone has used guns safely their whole life, experience does not ensure they can safely handle firearms with cognitive decline. As dementia progresses, access to guns will become increasingly dangerous for the person living with dementia, caregivers, and others in the home.

Caregiver Safety Checklist:

If a person with dementia lives in or visits your home, ask yourself:

- ☐ Do I know where every gun is stored?
- ☐ Can the person with dementia get to any of the firearms?
- ☐ Is it still safe for them to have access?
- ☐ Have we talked about gun safety recently?
- ☐ Do we know the options for securing or removing firearms?

Having these conversations early can prevent accidents and save lives.



Safe Storage Best Practices

As of **January 1, 2026**, California law (Senate Bill 53) requires all firearms in the home to be stored safely in one of the following ways:

- locked in a California Department of Justice certified¹ gun safe
- OR locked or disabled with a certified firearm safety device (such as a trigger lock or cable lock)

For a safe home environment:

- Always store firearms **unloaded**
- Use a firearm safety device **AND** a locked container
- Store ammunition separately in its own locked container
- Keep firearms out of sight
- Do **not** store firearms in easy-to-reach places like bedside tables, under mattresses or pillows, or on closet shelves
- Consider off-site storage for firearms.

This handout is for educational purposes and does not constitute legal advice.



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Additional Resources

Los Angeles County Department
of Public Health:
<http://ph.lacounty.gov/ovp/gunsafety.htm>

California Attorney General:
<https://oag.ca.gov/firearms/tips>

¹ <https://oag.ca.gov/firearms/fsdcertlist>