

Gun, fire, motor vehicle safety practices linked to parents' depressive symptoms

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AU School of Public Affairs assistant professor Taryn Morrissey conducted a study that links parental depression to increased safety risks for their children. Her article on the findings, 'Parents' Depressive Symptoms and Gun, Fire, and Motor Vehicle Safety Practices,' was published online by the *Maternal and Child Health Journal* on Jan. 5, 2016.

Morrissey used data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-Birth Cohort, a nationally representative sample of children birth to age five, to examine associations between measures of [parents'](#) depressive symptoms and their parenting practices related to gun, fire, and auto safety.

The results suggest that mothers with moderate or severe depressive symptoms were two percentage points less likely to report that their child always sat in the back seat of the car and three percentage points less likely to have at least one working smoke detector in the home. Overall, one in five households with young children owned at least one firearm, and only in about two-thirds of these homes were all guns kept locked at all times. When both parents exhibited [depressive symptoms](#), children were 2 to 6 percentage points more likely to live in households that owned one or more guns.

Morrissey said her interest in a possible link between depressive parents and at-risk children was prompted by recent mass shootings, as well as the incidence of firearm-related injuries and deaths among children.

Morrissey hopes her study will prompt physicians to screen for depression among their patients, and to talk to their young patients' parents about safeguarding their children, including the need for car safety, smoke detectors, and the potential risk and safe storage of firearms. The American Academy of Pediatrics states that the absence of guns from children's homes is the most reliable and effective measure to prevent firearm-related injuries in [children](#) and adolescents.

More information: Taryn W. Morrissey. Parents' Depressive Symptoms and Gun, Fire, and Motor Vehicle Safety Practices, *Maternal and Child Health Journal* (2016). [DOI: 10.1007/s10995-015-1910-z](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10995-015-1910-z)

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