



SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2023.** Please include this submission form with the electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact [Gage Harter](#).

PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: Prince William County

Program Title: Gun Safety Program

Program Category: Criminal Justice & Public Safety

CONTACT INFORMATION

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SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: Christopher J. Shorter

Title: County Executive

Signature: 



Glendell Hill
Sheriff

OFFICE OF THE SHERIFF

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Prince William County Sheriff's Office – Gun Safety Program Brief Overview

The Prince William County Sheriff's Office created the Gun Safety program in 2016 in collaboration with Project Child Safe and the Virginia Cooperative Extension. In Prince William County, this program is provided as an additional component of the "Safe at Home, Safe Alone" program that is taught to fourth-grade students across the Commonwealth. The purpose of the program is to teach children what to do if they find a gun. The program teaches children, through repetition and by signing a Firearms Responsibility Contract, the appropriate steps to take if they find a gun and ways to keep themselves and others safe.

The Gun Safety program was initially only taught in our public school system; however, the program was so well-received, that it is now offered to private schools and traditional schools within the county. We are very proud of this program and the tremendous benefit it provides to the families in our community.



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Prince William County Sheriff's Office – Gun Safety Program Executive Summary

The Prince William County Sheriff's Office Gun Safety program was created in 2016 in collaboration with Project Child Safe and Virginia Cooperative Extension. In Prince William County, the program is provided as an additional component of the "Safe at Home, Safe Alone" program that is taught to fourth-grade students across the Commonwealth. The purpose of the program is to teach children what to do if they find a gun. The program teaches children, through repetition and by signing a Firearms Responsibility Contract, the appropriate steps to take if they find a gun and ways to keep themselves and others safe.

The Gun Safety program was initially only taught in our public school system; however, the program was so well-received, that it is now offered to private schools and traditional schools within the county. This program could easily be adopted by any locality that has the resources to provide it in a school setting. We are very proud of this program and the tremendous benefit it provides to the families in our community.

**Virginia Association of Counties (VACo) Achievement Awards
Nomination Narrative
Program: Prince William County Sheriff's Office Gun Safety Program**

The Prince William County Sheriff's Office, in collaboration with Project Child Safe and the Virginia Cooperative Extension, created their Gun Safety Program in 2016 as an added feature to the "Safe at Home, Safe Alone" program that is taught to all fourth-grade students throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia. The purpose of the Gun Safety Program is to educate the fourth-grade students in Prince William County and the City of Manassas on what to do in the event that they should happen across a firearm at home, at someone else's home, or while outdoors.

The Prince William County Sheriff's Office Gun Safety Program is led by Deputy Johnson, Master Deputy Bakalov and Master Deputy Kevin Truesdale. The Prince William County Sheriff's Office Gun Safety Program concept was initiated to fill a void in firearm safety education in the schools. The deputies provide the fourth-grade students a 30–45 minute PowerPoint presentation along with videos and group discussion. The focus of the program lies heavily on what to do, and how to react if the students come across a firearm. The students are taught that if they come across a firearm, "Don't touch it; walk away and tell an adult." The fourth-grade students are also educated on the differences between real firearms and toy firearms and how easily a toy firearm can resemble a real firearm during the Gun Safety Program presentation.

Problem:

It has been estimated that there were 427 unintentional firearm fatalities per year according to a study of unintentional firearm deaths in the United States from 2005-2015. In this study, 46% of the unintentional gun deaths between the ages of 0-19 took place while playing with a gun. More than two-thirds of the unintentional gun deaths were attributed to playing with firearms for the ages of 0-14 in

this study. Research for this study found that unintentional firearm fatalities were often caused by a firearm in the victim's home, or the home of a friend or relative. (<https://injepijournal.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s40621-019-0220-0>). The deputies who created the Gun Safety Program wanted to create a program that would educate children on what to do in the event that they found a firearm at home, in the home of a friend or relative, or outside. In an effort to prevent an unintentional death at the hands of a firearm, the Prince William County Sheriff's Office Gun Safety Program was born.

Program Description:

The Prince William County Sheriff's Office began instructing their Gun Safety Program to fourth-grade students in Prince William County and the City of Manassas in 2016. Deputy Johnson, Master Deputy Bakalov and Master Deputy Truesdale instruct between 4,000-5,000 fourth graders that comprise the 72 elementary schools in Prince William County and the City of Manassas. The blocks of instruction are comprised of a PowerPoint presentation, videos, and group discussion that provide the fourth graders with an interactive learning environment that encourages participation. The course itself relies heavily on repetition so that all participating students will know that if they see a firearm, they should not touch it; walk away and tell an adult. All of the fourth graders are given a contract that they are encouraged to complete with their parents. The Firearms Responsibility Contract states that:

"I hereby promise:

- I will not handle firearms without permission.
- I will never play with firearms.
- If I find a firearm, I will not touch it; I will tell an adult immediately.
- I will obey the rules of safe firearms handling."

Innovation:

The Prince William County Sheriff's Office Gun Safety Program was created in response for a need for gun safety education in our public schools. The program was adopted by the 4-H Virginia Cooperative Extension to be included in partnership with Prince William 4-H as part of the "Safe At Home, Safe Alone" school enrichment program taught to all fourth graders in Prince William County as well as the City of Manassas. The 2022-23 school year also saw the introduction of the Gun Safety Program to various private schools and traditional schools in Prince William County.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, our deputies began introducing the Gun Safety Program to schools virtually. Our deputies would distribute brochures to the schools prior to the virtual instruction, and the brochures would then be distributed to the fourth-grade classes to ensure all the students were aware of the topics to be discussed and to encourage the completion of the Firearms Responsibility Contract.

The Gun Safety Program is designed to be easily adaptable for any community outside of Prince William County. The Prince William County Sheriff's Office has assisted other agencies in the Commonwealth of Virginia with presentations of the Gun Safety Program at other civil organizations outside of elementary schools.

Results of the Program:

While there is not a definitive set of statistics defining the results of the Gun Safety Program, the deputies who present the program are often contacted by school administrators, and teachers about the difference they have observed in their schools since the onset of the Gun Safety Program. The staff members of the schools feel that the Gun Safety Program has encouraged the students to not hesitate to notify any staff member at the schools when a student brings any weapon to school. There have been instances where students have notified school faculty of BB guns, other toy guns and knives that have

been brought to school by other students. There have also been incidents of students reporting that they themselves have accidentally brought weapons to their schools. It has become clear that these fourth graders realize that their educational facilities are not places where any weapons should be.