

*In Memory of Aaron B. Xue
(1994-2009)*



Aaron would have been with us today
if the gun owner had securely stored
the guns at home.

CAP Law will save lives like Aaron and
many other Vermont children.

Let us take a stand to
make VT a safer place for our children.

Together we can make a difference!

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

Join Citizens for Safer Vermont Children

Sign up to support CAP Law at
www.Citizens4SaferVTchildren.org

Let your voice be heard

Urge your district legislators to vote for CAP Law
in 2011

Pass this brochure to another Vermonter

What is CAP Law?

On January 21, 2011, the Vermont House introduced a bill H.83: *An act relating to negligent storage of a firearm*, as a result of the tragic death of Aaron Bing Xue, a vibrant and warm-hearted 15 year old Vermont boy, on April 17, 2009.

This bill, in Aaron's memory, is similar to CAP laws (Child Access Prevention from firearms) that currently exist in 28 states. It requires gun owners to securely store firearms at home when children are around, and proposes to make it a crime for a gun owner to negligently leave a firearm accessible to a child.

CAP Law is about gun storage, about common sense, about protecting children, and about **public health**. It is **not** in conflict with the 2nd Amendment. The full text of the bill can be found [here](#).

What happened to Aaron?

Aaron Xue was a freshman at Essex High School in Vermont. He was an honor-roll student, a cellist in the Vermont Youth Philharmonia, and a champion of many boys's and men's Tennis Tournaments. He was generous, affectionate, and friendly to everyone he knew.

Among Aaron's friends was a 15-year-old youth, who repeatedly coerced Aaron a few weeks before his death. This youth spread rumors and bad-mouthed Aaron at school, and then pressured Aaron to do things for him, or else, including a gun-related plan for 4/20, the anniversary of Columbine massacre. On April 17, 2009, this youth sneaked two handguns and a

package of ammo out of his house, showed them off to others, and left them unsecured in an open area near Aaron's home.

Aaron was deeply distressed and frightened by all of this. He lost sleep and appetite, and became noticeably nervous when around that youth. He wanted to foil the plan, but he was afraid of being resented and further intimidated by this youth. He made several attempts in his way: he tried to be extra nice to this youth by buying him dinner, and tried to purposely get caught at a grocery store in an attempt to get the attention of the police and deter this youth. Finally, seeing no signs of backing off, Aaron went to remove the handguns left in the woods, and at a moment of deep agony and fear, he ended his own life with one.

Aaron's tragic death is the direct result of peer pressure and bullying, and the easy access of lethal firearms by children. Apparently, the handguns and ammo this youth sneaked out of the house belonged to his parent, a former state police officer and firearm instructor, who owned multiple firearms and did not store them securely at home. This youth had easy access to the guns at home and could easily take them out of the house. If these guns were kept secured by the parent, the youth would not have been able to take them out, and Aaron would still be with us today.

You can read more about Aaron's story at www.AaronBingXue.org.

Support CAP Law (Child Access Prevention) Protect Vermont Children from Firearm Mortality

Citizens for Safer Vermont Children

To educate Vermonters on the necessity of
passing CAP Law to prevent unauthorized
firearm access by children

www.Citizens4SaferVTchildren.org

Are there other children like Aaron?

Yes. Aaron is just one of the many young, precious lives lost in Vermont due to easy access to firearm by children. Firearm related death in children has become a public health problem in the US and in Vermont. Here are some sobering statistics, facts, and report headlines:

Firearm related suicide death:

- Suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death for Vermont youth ages 15-24. Suicide death in youth is more than the total health related death combined (CDC).
- During a 20-year period (1987-2006), firearms were the main method used for suicide by **66%** youth suicide victims aged 19 and under, **higher** than the national average of only 58%,
- During the same period, Vermont's youth **firearm suicide rate** is the **highest of all states in the Northeast** (including six New England states, New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania). During these years there were **69** youth firearm suicides in Vermont.
- A review of 173 youth suicides in Vermont from 1970-1995 found that **69%** of such suicides **occurred at the victim's home**.
- Firearms used in youth suicide usually belong to a parent. The risk of suicide increases in homes where guns are kept loaded or unlocked.

Firearm related unintentional death:

- During the last 20-year period (1987-2006), Vermont's **firearm unintentional death rate**, among those aged 19 and under, is the **highest of all states in the Northeast**.

Vermont's rate was over **three times** that of any other New England state and was also above the national average (CDC).

Firearm related violence (since 2003)

- Feb. 2010, Upper Graniteville, 14-year-old boy accidentally shot his brother.
- Feb. 2010, Georgia, 15-year-old boy fired multiple shots into his neighbor's home, narrowly missed a baby in crib.
- April 2009, Richmond, teen arrested for pointing a handgun at other cars while driving on I-89.
- Feb. 2009, Harwood Union high school student brought a loaded handgun to school. Police confiscated two more handguns during investigation.
- Nov. 2008, Bellows Falls, 16-year-old accidentally shot and killed himself.
- Aug. 2008, Wells, 14-year-old boy shot and killed his mother.
- June, 2008, Brattleboro, 17-year-old boy pulled a handgun from his car and threatened to shoot another boy.
- Dec. 2007, Burlington, 16-year-old boy stole his father's handgun and shot his girlfriend in the head.
- May 2007, Chittenden County, 16-year-old boy shot and killed his father.
- Jan. 2007, Sutton, 15-year-old boy shot and killed 24-year-old man.
- Nov. 2006, Highgate, 15-year-old boy accidentally shot and killed his friend.
- April 2004, Brookfield, 14-year-old boy accidentally shot his twin brother.
- July 2003, Dummerston, 14-year-old boy shot by friends playing with pistol.

Why do we need CAP Law?

Aaron is a victim of unsecured firearm storage and lack of state law that leads to easy access of firearms by children.

Studies show that the presence of unsecured firearms in homes increases the risk of intentional and unintentional gun-related death in children; and that the majority of guns used by children belong to their parents or relatives and are obtained from their own home.

Parents often have misperceptions about children's knowledge of firearms in the home. One study shows that all of the children whose parents owned a gun were aware of that fact, even though 24% of the parents claimed the children didn't know there was a gun in the house. Also, almost 20% of the children with guns in their houses reported that they had played with the guns without their parents' permission or knowledge.

Irresponsible gun storage has deadly and foreseeable consequences for children. We must have a law, CAP Law, to prevent easy access of firearms by children.

CAP Law will be no different from existing laws for alcohol, tobacco use, and seat belt. These laws are all for protecting children.

Can't we just do education?

No, because it does not work. Studies show that gun owners who have received gun safety training, including training in gun storage practices, are **more likely** (by two fold) to store their guns in the least safe way – loaded and unlocked.

Studies also show that programs aimed at educating children about the dangers of guns are **not effective** by themselves in reducing inappropriate gun use. Children who participate in these programs are no less likely to play with guns than others. Rather than encouraging parents to acknowledge the danger guns in the home pose for children, these programs place the burden of responsibility **on the children themselves**.

Will CAP Law work?

Yes. Reducing access to firearms by children will save young lives.

Studies show that the practices of keeping firearms locked, unloaded, and storing ammunition in a locked location separate from firearms can reduce youth suicide and unintentional injury in homes with children and teenagers.

Currently, twenty-eight states in the country have a law similar to CAP Law, and it works. Studies show that in twelve of these states that have such law in effective for at least one year, unintentional firearm deaths fell by 23% among children.

CAP Law will raise public awareness to gun safety in the home, and will make parents and gun owners take a similar view as other safety measures like seat belts, car seats, bicycle helmets, and locks for medicines and poisons.

CAP law will make a statement about the importance of safe storage of firearm at home to prevent easy access by children. CAP law is very much needed in Vermont.