



NEWS RELEASE

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Illinois Launches New “Pause to Heal” Firearm Restraining Order Education Campaign

IDPH Joins Forces with Brady & the Ad Council to Promote Life-Saving Tool to Prevent Suicides and Other Shootings by People in Distress; First Phase of Expansive New Gun Safety Effort

CHICAGO – A new partnership to raise awareness about the lifesaving potential of Firearm Restraining Orders (FROs), or “red flag laws,” is launching today during National Public Health Week involving the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH), Brady: United Against Gun Violence, and the Ad Council.

The Illinois effort is the first phase of a planned multi-state campaign called “Pause to Heal.” It is designed to prevent firearm suicides and other shootings by educating the public about the state’s FRO law, and the power that family and household members have to ask a court to temporarily restrict access to guns and ammunition when a person poses a threat to themselves or others. Though FROs can be highly effective, a recent study from the Ad Council Research Institute (ACRI) and Joyce Foundation found that only 10% of Illinoisans are familiar with these potentially life-saving tools and know how to use them if needed. The new campaign aims to bolster awareness of these interventions, featuring a new website [PauseToHeal](#) and ads that will launch today across radio, digital, print, and outdoor with video PSAs to come starting later this year. For a sample print ad, [click HERE](#).

“When people are in crisis, they deserve an opportunity to ‘pause to heal’ and access mental health resources,” said **Governor JB Pritzker**. “With this new awareness campaign, we will help Illinoisans connect with the resources they need to keep them and their loved ones safe.”

The first-of-its-kind collaboration combines the expertise of [Brady](#), the nation’s oldest gun violence prevention group, with the [Ad Council](#)’s unique model of using the power of communications to inspire change on pressing social issues, and IDPH’s authority and credibility to drive a measurable impact by highlighting Illinois FRO law that was signed by Governor Pritzker in 2019.

“The epidemic of gun violence is a growing public health crisis both in Illinois and across the nation,” said **IDPH Director Dr. Sameer Vohra**. “The State of Illinois is fortunate to partner with Brady and the Ad Council to launch a one-of-a-kind public health campaign educating the public on the importance of firearm restraining orders. These red flag laws give Illinoisians the power to help their loved ones ‘pause to heal,’ protecting them during moments of crisis.

Since the federal 2022 Bipartisan Safer Communities Act, there has been a growing investment and public focus on the use of FROs or [“extreme risk” laws](#) as a critical tool to create safer and healthier communities free from gun violence. Currently, Illinois is one of 21 states and Washington D.C. that have an extreme risk law in effect.

The [research study](#) by the ACRI and [the Joyce Foundation](#) showed the critical need for localized efforts on extreme risk law education, highlighting that local and state-level government agencies were key trusted messengers and that government websites were respondents’ preferred sources for information. This understanding serves as the foundation for this unique public-private partnership, which includes a new digital hub on Illinois.gov that includes resources and FAQs to educate Illinoisans about the state’s extreme risk law.

“The Ad Council is taking a holistic approach to addressing the gun violence crisis facing this country. Educating the public about extreme risk laws is a key step to making our homes, communities, and our nation safer,” said **Michelle Hillman, Ad Council Chief Campaign Development Officer**. “We know that FROs can be life-saving tools, but the research shows that while there is a desire among the public for more detailed information, awareness of the practical uses of these laws is limited. This partnership with Brady and IDPH allows us to put our collective expertise into action, working together to save lives in Illinois and beyond.”

“What wouldn’t you do to stop a loved one from taking their own life or another’s? We’re showing people that they can take action and there are tools to help them stop a momentary crisis from becoming a permanent tragedy,” said **Brady President Kris Brown**. “FROs are simple and temporary. Most people would move mountains to save someone they love; we’re showing them that securing time for space and time for healing is not a Herculean task. Equipped with this knowledge, countless lives will be saved in Illinois.”

"Gun violence does not have to be inevitable," said **Illinois State Police Director Brendan Kelly**. "Illinois has two very effective tools, the Firearm Restraining Order and Clear and Present Danger reporting. But they are only effective when used. This campaign will let people know they are not helpless against gun violence and there are steps they can take to intervene and save lives."



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This partnership debuts at a time when the nation’s gun suicide rate is at an all-time high and over [48,000 people](#) die from gun violence annually, according to the CDC. This data underscores the need for a comprehensive public health approach to addressing gun violence, including education about extreme risk laws in the states where they are available.

Beginning this month, residents across Illinois will be exposed to “Pause to Heal” campaign efforts developed pro bono by creative agency McKinney to ensure they are aware of this life-saving tool at their disposal. This campaign is an Illinois-specific pilot, with a goal to expand into the other 20 states and Washington, D.C., that have variations of extreme risk laws in place.

The ads stress that family and household members can come to the aid of a “Loved One in Crisis” by learning about the law and petitioning a court for a temporary FRO if deemed necessary. “A Firearm Restraining Order gives a person in crisis time to heal,” says one billboard.

This initiative builds upon the success of the Ad Council and Brady’s “[End Family Fire](#)” campaign, a unique and effective public education effort that focuses on secure gun storage as an evidence-based solution to preventing gun deaths and injuries. According to an ongoing tracking study by the Ad Council and Brady, gun owners and people in gun-owning households who are aware of the End Family Fire campaign are significantly more likely to make changes to store their guns more safely than those not aware, underscoring the importance of comprehensive awareness campaigns in preventing gun violence.

For more information on FROs in Illinois, visit [PauseToHeal](#).

About Brady

In America, there are more guns than there are people. And that’s matched with a gun homicide rate that is 26 times greater than that of other high-income countries. Brady – the nation’s oldest gun violence prevention organization – works to enact reasonable solutions to free America from gun violence. We tackle three critical areas: change the laws, change the industry, and change the culture. This three-point strategy is unique in the movement and follows the roadmap behind other successful public health campaigns, like those around youth smoking, seatbelt use, and drunk driving. By changing hearts and minds and fostering a culture of responsible gun use and ownership, we can free America from gun violence. Join the movement at [bradyunited.org](#).

About IDPH

IDPH is one of the state's oldest agencies and was first organized in 1877. It now has headquarters in Springfield and Chicago, seven regional offices located around the state, three laboratories, and 1,200 employees. The Department is organized into 12 offices, each of which

addresses a distinct area of public health. Each office operates and supports numerous ongoing programs and is prepared to respond to extraordinary situations as they arise.

About The Ad Council

The Ad Council convenes creative storytellers to educate, unite and uplift audiences by opening hearts, inspiring action and accelerating change around the most pressing issues in America. Since the non-profit's founding, the organization and its partners in advertising, media, marketing and tech have been behind some of the country's most iconic social impact campaigns – Smokey Bear, A Mind Is a Terrible Thing to Waste, Love Has No Labels, Tear the Paper Ceiling and many more. With a current focus on mental health, gun safety, the opioid epidemic, skill-based hiring and other critical issues, the Ad Council's national campaigns encompass advertising and media content, ground game and community efforts, trusted messenger and influencer engagement, and employer programs, among other innovative strategies to move the needle on the most important issues of the day. To learn more or get involved, visit AdCouncil.org, join the Ad Council's communities on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [X](#), and view campaign creative on [YouTube](#).

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