

WARNING SIGNS AND ASSESSMENTS

Being a responsible firearm owner means planning for the future—even for things we hope don’t happen. Physical and mental changes, or changes in life circumstances can require us to face important decisions, for example, regarding storage and use.



Being aware of warning signs in yourself and others is an important first step.

Firearm range safety officers, firearm instructors, healthcare professionals, other professionals who support older adults, and older adult firearm owners have all suggested these common concerns. If you or others have noticed any of these signs, it may be time to think about making changes to how you use or store firearms. It’s also a good idea to talk to your healthcare provider, since some of these changes might be treatable.

Have you or others noticed...

<p>PHYSICAL</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenges holding, carrying, loading/unloading, shooting, or cleaning your firearm? • Decreased reaction time, aim, or performance (accuracy) in shooting? • Vision or hearing loss? Challenges seeing, reading, or hearing instructions?
<p>COGNITIVE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trouble remembering if the safety on your firearm has been engaged, or if a firearm is loaded or not? • Times when you’ve forgotten where your firearms are kept or stored? • Trouble remembering names?
<p>BEHAVIORAL</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relaxed or changed practices for safe firearm use and storage? • Times when you were told that you weren’t safely handling or storing a firearm? • Times when a trusted friend, family member, or shooting friend ever expressed fear or discomfort when you are shooting?
<p>EMOTIONAL</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mood changes like being more short-tempered, anxious, agitated, or angry? • Or the opposite—changes like being more depressed, helpless, or down? • Feelings like being more disconnected from family, friends, or activities you typically enjoy or used to enjoy over time?



MAKING SENSE OF THE WARNING SIGNS:

If you're unsure about your skills, practices, or firearm handling ability, consider getting input from someone with experience in safe firearm use—invite them to join you on a trip to a shooting range to provide feedback on how you're handling and operating the firearm.

You can also ask a range safety officer to evaluate your practices. These employees are responsible for ensuring safety on a firing range, and they have the skills and experience to give you an honest assessment.

Have you noticed any of these signs yourself, or has someone else remarked on them? Or has someone expressed some concerns about your firearm use? Being honest with yourself about your abilities and your responsibilities is a key step in this process.

Depending on what you or others think, see, or say, it might be time to think about making changes in how you use and store firearms.

These conversations can be difficult. In the next section, we provide a couple of conversation starters to consider. These discussion points and suggestions can help you start talking about a plan for your firearms.