

NATIONAL VIOLENT DEATH REPORTING SYSTEM

WHAT IS THE PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUE?

- The United States has one of the highest rates of violence in the world, with roughly 50,000 deaths each year resulting from homicide or suicide.
- Homicide is the second leading cause of death for people 15 to 24 years of age in the United States, and suicide is the third leading cause of death for those 10 to 24 years of age.
- Accurate assessment of the factors that increase the risk for violence and the circumstances that surround violent deaths in the United States is necessary.

WHAT HAS CDC ACCOMPLISHED?

CDC provides funding for the National Violent Death Reporting System (NVDRS). Thirteen states (AK, CO, GA, MA, MD, NC, NJ, OK, OR, RI, SC, VA, and WI) have begun recording data on homicides, suicides, and deaths of undetermined cause. NVDRS will generate information at the national, state, and local levels that has been compiled from multiple state-based sources. These sources include medical examiners, coroners, police, crime labs, and death certificates. One goal of NVDRS is to improve the overall understanding of conditions surrounding violent deaths. Individually, these information sources provide a fragmented view of the factors leading to violence, but collectively they define its scope and nature. Through NVDRS, local governments will quickly see how their problems compare with other communities across the nation. This information can help develop, inform, and evaluate violence prevention strategies at both the state and national levels.

Example of Program in Action

San Francisco served as a pilot city for the National Violent Injury Statistics System, a prototype for NVDRS run by the Harvard School of Public Health. Data collected in San Francisco has helped hospital trauma staff identify neighborhoods with high incidence rates of violence. This information led to the development of the Wrap Around Project, an intervention designed to prevent violence-related injury from reoccurring. This program connects victims of violence with drug counseling, vocational training, and other social services. It also provides skills they can use to remove themselves from dangerous situations.

WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

Within 10 years, CDC plans to incorporate all 50 states and the District of Columbia into NVDRS. NVDRS is modeled on the Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS), which tracks deaths from motor vehicle crashes. Operated by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, FARS has led to numerous improvements in motor vehicle safety. CDC will develop state-specific data files, allowing each state to better assess its violent injury situation. CDC will also continue to work toward standardizing data collection of law enforcement agencies, medical examiners, and coroners; resulting in easier data collection and the data being more comparable.