The National Violent Death Reporting System (NVDRS):

A powerful tool for prevention

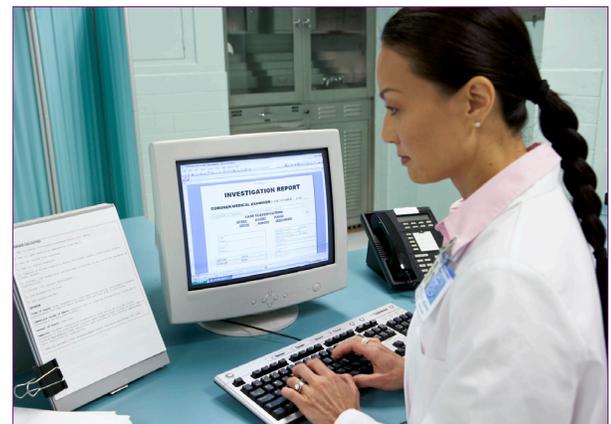**The National Violent Death Reporting System (NVDRS) provides data that can help state and local health departments develop evidence-based strategies for reducing violent deaths.**

Violence is a public health problem that affects individuals, families, and communities throughout the United States. Too often, violence results in death by homicide or suicide. According to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control (CDC Injury Center):

NVDRS data provide a complete picture of violent deaths.

- **More than 55,000 Americans died because of homicide or suicide in 2010 — that's an average of more than 6 people dying a violent death every hour.**

- **Violence-related deaths, assaults, and acts of self-harm are expensive. They cost the United States an estimated $107 billion in medical care and lost productivity every year.**

The good news is that violence can be prevented — and accurate information about violence is the key to directing, designing, implementing, and evaluating prevention efforts. NVDRS provides this information to state and local health departments.

What is the National Violent Death Reporting System (NVDRS)?

NVDRS is a state-based surveillance system developed by the CDC Injury Center. NVDRS compiles facts about every violent death from multiple sources, including:

- **Medical examiners**
- **Coroners**
- **Law enforcement**
- **Crime labs**
- **Death certificates**

No other data system combines information like this to provide a complete picture of violent deaths. NVDRS is able to:

- **Link records on violent deaths that are related** and happened within 24 hours of each other (for example, multiple homicides or homicides followed by the suicide of the suspect). This can help identify risk factors.

- **Detail the circumstances** that may contribute to a violent death — like job loss, physical and mental health problems, and family and other stressors.

- **Provide information on how the person was killed,** including information about alcohol, drug use, and method of death.

How can you use NVDRS data to prevent homicides and suicides?

NVDRS data describe the "who, when, where, and how" of violent deaths — which can lead to a better understanding of the "why." Use NVDRS data to guide your prevention programs, policies, and practices.
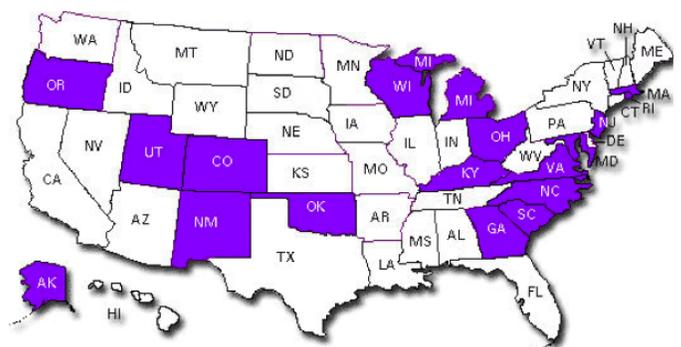
Use NVDRS data to help you:

✓ Apply for resources for state and local prevention programs.

✓ Inform decision makers and program planners about the magnitude, trends, and characteristics of violent deaths.

✓ Identify risk and protective factors for violence in your county or state.

✓ Assist groups in selecting and targeting violence prevention efforts.

✓ Evaluate the impact of prevention programs and strategies.

Are data available for my state?

Right now, 18 states participate in NVDRS:

Alaska, Colorado, Georgia, Kentucky, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Utah, Virginia, and Wisconsin.

If NVDRS data aren't available for my state, can I still use the information to guide prevention efforts?

Yes. You can still use NVDRS data to better understand general patterns in violent deaths and emerging multi-state trends. But keep in mind that NVDRS data aren't nationally representative. We still don't have a complete picture of violent deaths in every state.

How can I access NVDRS data?

Visit **http://www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/nvdrs.html**. The CDC Injury Center distributes information from NVDRS at the state and national level in both summary and topic-specific reports. You can customize your search of the data. Researchers and public health officials can also apply for access to the restricted-use dataset at **http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/nvdrs/rad.html**.

NVDRS Data in Action

Here are just a few examples of how NVDRS data are being used to shed light on national and local efforts to prevent violent deaths.

☑ **Understanding suicide among soldiers**

CDC's Injury Center is collaborating with the Department of Defense (DoD) to link information from NVDRS with information from DoD data systems. Findings from one study identified the following factors as common among soldiers who died by suicide:

- **Problems in romantic relationships**
- **Military-related stress, particularly job stress**
- **Suicidal thoughts, a sad or depressed mood, or a recent crisis**

Focusing efforts to prevent these forms of stress may help soldiers and reduce suicides in the military. A number of NVDRS states, including New Jersey, Colorado, and Kentucky, are also using data to investigate suicides in the military.

☑ Identifying underserved, at-risk groups

NVDRS states can use the data to uncover patterns and make the best use of resources. For example, NVDRS data helped Oregon develop and implement suicide prevention programs for older adults.

The data showed that only a small percentage of older adults who died by suicide were receiving treatment for depression when they died — even though more than half (1 out of 2) were reported to have a depressed mood.

In response to these findings, Oregon developed an Older Adult Suicide Prevention Plan designed to help primary care and mental health providers collaborate to identify and treat suicidal behavior in older adults.

☑ Localizing efforts to prevent violence

States with NVDRS data can investigate whether violent death circumstances vary by county or zip code.

- **Virginia and North Carolina NVDRS have recently published reports analyzing violence by each county in their state.**

- **New Jersey currently maps the locations of violent deaths to better understand trends and patterns in violence. For instance, geographic analyses revealed suicide rates in New Jersey were highest in rural areas.**

Efforts like these help local communities better understand and respond to the problems of violence they face.

What's next for the NVDRS program?

To further develop and strengthen the NVDRS program, CDC hopes to:

- **Expand the NVDRS system to all 50 states and the District of Columbia.** Right now, NVDRS data can't be generalized to national trends because data from the current 18 states aren't nationally representative. With additional funding, the NVDRS system could expand to cover more states and provide more data.

- **Ensure NVDRS data support and translate into violence prevention activities by:**

  – Increasing dissemination and use of NVDRS data at the national level.

  – Providing technical assistance to funded states to help them monitor and report their data.

- **Link NVDRS data with even more data sources,** like child fatality review reports and adult protective services reports.

- **Improve the new web-based reporting platform** to increase reporting efficiency, consistency, and security and decrease administrative costs.