



National Violence Prevention Network

January 11, 2013

Joseph Biden, Jr.
Vice President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20501

Dear Mr. Vice President,

We greatly appreciate your interest and leadership in developing an inter-agency strategy to reduce gun-related violent deaths. As a coalition of organizations committed to the prevention of violent deaths, your leadership in this effort represents significant progress in advancing violence prevention policy.

The undersigned members of the National Violence Prevention Network strongly urge you to provide an increase of \$10 million in Fiscal Year 2014 to the National Violent Death Reporting System (NVDRS), a state-based violent death prevention tool administered by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. This important public health surveillance system is the underpinning of a multi-faceted, multi-agency approach. NVDRS requires cross-agency collaboration at the state level, and the surveillance data collected would prove invaluable for the design of targeted gun violence prevention strategies. But to do that, it must expand from its current 18 States and move toward national implementation. The CDC has developed a strategic plan for nationwide expansion and is committed to full implementation of the program.

Currently funded at \$3.5 million, an increase of \$10 million in FY14 would move the country half-way towards national implementation and represent a long-term, lasting contribution to the nation in state-based gun violence prevention efforts. We urge a multi-year approach following FY14 to secure the \$25 million needed for nationwide expansion of NVDRS to all 50 states and U.S. territories.

NVDRS links data from public health, law enforcement, medical examiners and social service agencies to create a more complete picture of the circumstances surrounding violent death. This information enables states and communities to develop effective and targeted violent death prevention strategies. The system tracks deaths including those caused by suicide, homicide, child abuse, and domestic violence.

The surveillance data collected through NVDRS includes information on the type of firearm used when such weapons are found to have caused a violent death. This

information can help us better understand how and when firearms are used and can expand the research base needed to identify the evidence gaps in gun violence prevention. States that participate in NVDRS have numerous successes to cite, and law enforcement officials have increasingly become the most ardent supporters of the system.

As recent mass shooting events in Connecticut, Colorado and Oregon highlight, reducing violent deaths must be prioritized. More than 50,000 Americans suffer from violent deaths each year, including 1,000 children who die from firearm-related fatalities. Unfortunately, most communities lack critical data about the circumstances surrounding these deaths. Increased funding for research and interventions to prevent these tragedies will strengthen the ability of local communities and states to eliminate violent injuries and deaths.

In addition, these and other mass shootings have resulted from people experiencing mental illnesses. We must do more to identify and learn from missed opportunities to care for those who perpetrate violence as a result of mental illness. NVDRS surveillance data provides critical information on how and when perpetrators intersect with the health care system. NVDRS allows such information to come to the forefront and many states harness this data to inform state violence prevention policy.

As you may know, Connecticut had previously applied to participate in the NVDRS program; however, with limited funding the CDC was unable to support the State's participation. While NVDRS would not have prevented this recent tragedy, it could help state public health officials identify important trends in firearm use when deadly acts of violence are committed.

Our Network offers our profound gratitude for your work in this area, especially in this challenging fiscal environment. We believe that NVDRS is highly cost-effective and invaluable to the long-term success of local efforts to better understand, and ultimately reduce, violent death in our communities. It is imperative that we work towards national implementation of this national resource so we can better understand and work to reverse these tragic trends.

For more information on NVDRS please visit www.preventviolence.net or contact Paul Bonta at the American College of Preventive Medicine at 202-466-2044, x110 or pbonta@acpm.org.

Thank you for your consideration of our request.

Most respectfully,

American Association of Suicidology
American College of Preventive Medicine
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention/SPAN USA
American Osteopathic Association
American Psychiatric Association

American Psychotherapy Association
American Public Health Association (APHA)
Arizona State University, Center for Violence Prevention & Community Safety
Association of State and Territorial Health Officials
Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, Injury and Violence
Prevention Unit
The Childhood Shield Foundation
Emory Center for Injury Control
Futures Without Violence
Injury Prevention Research Center, University of North Carolina
Injury Research Center, Medical College of Wisconsin
National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO)
National Association of Medical Examiners (NAME)
North Carolina Chronic Disease and Injury Section (CDIS)
North Carolina Violent Death Reporting System (NCVDRS)
The Police Foundation
Rhode Island Department of Health
Safe States Alliance
SAVE—Suicide Awareness Voices of Education
University of Michigan Injury Center