



NATIONAL VIOLENCE PREVENTION NETWORK

August 4, 2015

Senator Lamar Alexander
Chairman
Senate Health, Education, Labor and
Pensions Committee
428 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Senate Health, Education, Labor
and Pensions Committee
835 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairmen Alexander and Ranking Member Murray:

The National Violence Prevention Network congratulates you on the recent introduction of the *Mental Health Awareness and Improvement Act*, specifically Section 9 of the legislation, which calls for expansion of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) National Violent Death Reporting System (NVDRS).

Administered by the CDC National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, the NVDRS program acts as a state-based violent death surveillance program that links data from public health, law enforcement, medical examiners and social service agencies to create a more complete picture of the circumstances surrounding violent deaths. With this information, public health officials and other stakeholders are better equipped to target prevention programs that address the common circumstances that lead to violent deaths.

NVDRS data can provide information on access to mental health services in the 30 days prior to a violent death providing the information needed to understand potential gaps in coverage or opportunities to enhance treatment for mental health patients at risk of a violent death. Several states are utilizing their NVDRS data to develop a comprehensive suicide prevention plan and have formed a suicide prevention coalition to engage with community stakeholders on suicide prevention efforts.

Unfortunately, the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control only has sufficient funding to support NVDRS in 32 states. While additional states have signaled their interest in the program and applied for funding, all they can do is watch neighboring states advance their violent death prevention programs as they wait for the additional funding required to expand NVDRS nationwide.

The National Violence Prevention Network appreciates your recognition of the important public health roll NVDRS plays in improving mental health services for those at risk of

violent deaths and we look forward to working with you to realize nationwide implementation of the program.

For more information Please contact Paul Bonta, Associate Executive Director at the American College of Preventive Medicine, at pbonta@acpm.org or (202) 466-2044 ext. 110 or pbonta@acpm.org.

Sincerely,

Paul Bonta
Chair