



National Violent Death Reporting System (NVDRS) Merges Public Health and Safety Data to Prevent Intimate Partner Violence

On average, more than three women a day were murdered by their husbands or boyfriends in 2004, and there were more than 625,000 victims of intimate partner violence. Intimate partner violence is a serious crime that takes the lives of thousands of Americans each year. Although women are more likely than men to be killed by an intimate partner, incidence varies significantly by age and ethnicity.

Much of the research on intimate partner violence has measured the prevalence and impact of abuse on women and children. Today, 17 states participating in the National Violent Death Reporting System (NVDRS) are using enhanced data to better understand the circumstances involving intimate partner deaths, and to develop programs that will be effective in preventing future deaths.

National Violent Death Reporting System (NVDRS)

Created by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in 2002, NVDRS is a state-based, national data system for suicide, homicide, intimate partner violence and selected other injury deaths. The system links data from public health and safety agencies to guide prevention programs and public policy by supplying detailed, objective information.

The FBI Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) System's Supplementary Homicide Reports (and, in jurisdictions that use it, the National Incident-Based Reporting System) has been a vital tool for tracking trends and evaluating prevention strategies.

The NVDRS builds on the UCR by adding additional information collected during the course of a violent death investigation, like whether the toxicology screen detected the presence of cocaine in a homicide victim, or an antidepressant in a suicide victim. The new information, coupled with our public health focus on prevention, brings new partners to the table from many disciplines to work on preventing violent deaths, including intimate partner deaths.

Examples of How NVDRS will Help Identify Prevention Strategies

NVDRS tracks all victims related to an intimate partner death. Therefore, if a man kills his ex-girlfriend and her new boyfriend and then takes his own life, NVDRS identifies all three deaths in the incident. With this level of data, researchers were able to attribute one-quarter of all homicides in the state of Oregon in 2003 to intimate partner violence.

Following are additional examples of how NVDRS data is helping public health, law enforcement and other public safety officials to better understand the causes of intimate partner violence and identify strategies for prevention.

- Among women killed by an intimate partner in Kentucky, only 39 percent had filed for a restraining order or been seen by or reported to Adult Protective Services.
- NVDRS data in Alaska indicated a high risk for intimate partner violence, both homicide and suicide, when one partner was attempting to leave the relationship.
- NVDRS data indicates that most murder-suicide victims are current or former intimate partners of the suspect, and a substantial number of victims were the suspect's children.
- Suspects commonly had a recent history of legal (25.3 percent) or financial (9.3 percent) problems and 30 percent of males who killed their partners also took their own lives within 24 hours.
- NVDRS data in Oregon demonstrated that intimate partner violence was most likely to occur in the victim's home, all self-defense cases involved female suspects, all cases where the children and the partner were killed involved male suspects and that intimate partner homicide against females is typically preceded by a long history of abuse.

- Data from NVDRS pilot sites in Connecticut, Maine, Utah, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania and San Francisco found that intimate partner conflicts, usually a breakup, were common among suicide victims of all ages, and were the most frequent type of problem preceding suicide for people in their 20s.
- NVDRS pilot data also indicated that among people dying in intimate partner violence incidents, 61 percent were the partners, while 39 percent were bystanders, other family members or suspects committing suicide.
- In North Carolina, women were seven times more likely than men to be killed by a spouse, ex-spouse, lover or former lover. Intimate partner violence was the leading cause of female homicides, and the majority of such incidents occurred in the women's homes.

These types of findings underscore the need for communities to improve outreach linking potential victims to local protective services and are molding state strategies for domestic violence prevention.

The National Violence Prevention Network, a coalition of national organizations that advocate for health and welfare, violence and suicide prevention and law enforcement, is urging Congress to provide no less than \$7.5 million for NVDRS in 2009 and to achieve full funding of \$20 million by 2011.

Once it is fully funded, NVDRS will capture data from all 50 states that is critical to identifying patterns and developing strategies to save lives. With a more complete picture of why violent deaths occur, law enforcement and public health officials can work together more effectively to identify those at risk and provide effective preventive services.