



Understanding Homicide/Suicide Incidents Through NVDRS Data

Although relatively rare, homicides that are followed within 24 hours by the perpetrator's suicide — or “homicide/suicides” — have devastating effects on children, families and communities.

The National Violent Death Reporting System (NVDRS), established by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in 2002, provides detailed information on homicide/suicide incidents. Currently operating in 17 states, NVDRS links data from medical examiners and coroners, law enforcement and other sources to provide a more complete picture of the circumstances surrounding homicides and suicides.

While we are beginning to identify trends and characteristics of homicides/suicides, there is much that we don't know. Because homicide/suicides are one of the least common forms of violent death, the data from the 17 participating states only gives us a glimpse of the problem. With NVDRS data from all 50 states, public health officials, law enforcement and lawmakers will better be able to make more informed decisions and develop more effective policies and programs to prevent homicide/suicides.

13 States Identify Characteristics of Homicide/ Suicide Victims and Perpetrators

NVDRS data collected from 13 states in 2003 and 2004 contributes to a better understanding of the prevalence, circumstances, and indicators of homicide/suicide incidents.

The NVDRS report on 209 homicide/suicide incidents occurring in selected states in 2003 and 2004 found that most incidents — 86 percent — involved only one homicide victim. Sixty-two percent of the perpetrators were non-Hispanic white, 22 percent were non-Hispanic black and 1 percent were Asian. . Few homicide/suicide incidents involve strangers – more than 95 percent of perpetrators were known to the victims. Another common factor among perpetrators is a history of depression or mental illness.

Homicide/suicides too often stem from intimate partner violence or other family violence, suggesting that more needs to be done to assist families in crisis and victims of intimate partner violence. Fifty-eight percent of victims were current or former intimate partners of the perpetrator and another 20 percent were other family members, usually children. Most victims — 75 percent — were female, while most perpetrators — 92 percent — were men.

The report also shed light on incidents involving violence against children and adolescents. When the homicide victim in a homicide/suicide incident is 15 or younger, a parent, usually the father, is the perpetrator in more than 70 percent of cases.

Implement NVDRS in all 50 States

While state-specific information provides value to local public health and law enforcement officials, national data from all 50 states, the U.S. territories and the District of Columbia must be obtained to complete the picture and establish effective national homicide/suicide prevention policies and programs.

The National Violence Prevention Network, a coalition of national organizations who advocate for health and welfare, violence and suicide prevention and law enforcement, is asking Congress to provide \$7.5 million for this critical program for fiscal year 2009.

Read the entire report at: http://injuryprevention.bmj.com/cgi/content/full/12/suppl_2/ii33