Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists
Position Statement

03-INJ-01

Committee: **Injury Control and Prevention**

Title: **Support of National Violent Death Reporting System (NVDRS)**

Statement of Problem:
Violent deaths (suicides, homicides, unintentional firearm-related deaths, legal intervention deaths [excluding executions], suicide or homicide from terrorism, and deaths of undetermined intent) are an important public health problem, yet we know little about them. CDC has begun the development and implementation of the National Violent Death Reporting System, a comprehensive reporting system that captures the details of when, where, and how violent deaths occur.

Position to be Adopted:
CSTE supports the development and implementation of the National Violent Death Reporting System (NVDRS), and commits to supporting the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control (NCIPC) in its efforts to obtain funding for expansion of NVDRS to all states and territories. In addition, CSTE asks NCIPC at the Centers for Disease Control to help CSTE define what it might do to enhance the development of NVDRS and to help ensure that best practices are shared between states.

Methods for Surveillance:
Information from a violent death will be collected locally. Data will be collected from death certificates and from reports by medical examiners, coroners, police, and crime labs. If a violent death is reported from a death certificate, then the state health department or other state agency will request information from the medical examiner, coroner, police, and crime lab. In addition, other federal agencies (e.g. Bureau of Justice Statistics, Office of the Surgeon General, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms, Federal Bureau of Investigations) may report information from a violent death to the CDC and state health department.

Goals for Surveillance:
- Provide objective, high quality data useful for monitoring the magnitude and characteristic of violent death at the national, state, and local levels
- Provide data useful for the development of strategies and programs designed to prevent violent deaths and injuries
- Fill the information gap on firearm-related fatalities by collecting information on the characteristics of firearms involved in theses events and the circumstances under which these events occur
- Provide data useful for the evaluation of violence prevention programs and policies at the national, state, and local levels
- Build state capacity to address violence as a public health problem
- Ensure the data are used to influence and evaluate actions taken to prevent and control violence by establishing partnerships with organizations and communities
- Ensure data on violent deaths are routinely and expeditiously analyzed and disseminated
- Enhance Federal and State collaboration in efforts to prevent violent injury

Data to be Collected:
Data to be collected will include: victim demographics, cause of death, time and location of injury, toxicology results, life crises and mental health for suicides, circumstances (e.g., association with crime), victim-suspect relationships, weapon type, firearm storage, details or poisons used, other weapon details, and person who used each weapon.

Proposed Surveillance Definition:

A **violent death** is defined as a death that results from the intentional use of any means to injure or poison oneself, another person, or a group of people. A firearm-related death includes all deaths that results from projectile injuries from a gun that uses an explosive charge for a propellant. For the purposes of assessing misclassification, deaths for which it is undetermined whether they were purposely or accidentally inflicted will also be within the scope of the system. All suicides, homicides, unintentional firearm-related deaths, legal intervention deaths (excluding executions), suicide or homicide from terrorism, and deaths of undetermined intent occurring the United States will be included in NVDRS.

Information Systems to Collect and Transmit Information:

1. Vital Records (Death Certificates)
2. Medical Examiner/Coroner Reports
3. Police Reports
4. Crime Lab Reports

Temporary/Permanent:

Permanent

Background and Justification:

Violent deaths from homicide and suicide take the lives of nearly 50,000 people in the United States each year. Homicide and suicides are the third and fourth leading causes of death respectively for people age 1 to 39 years. Yet only the most basic national data are available on these violent deaths because there is no uniform comprehensive reporting system that captures the details of when, where, and how violent deaths occur. These data are not sufficient to inform policy and program decisions, and as a result, much of the public debate about violence prevention and its consequences is driven by rhetoric an anecdote, rather than evidence.

There is a clear need for a national reporting system that could provide the comprehensive information about violent deaths that does not now exist. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has received appropriations to establish a national violent death surveillance system that would draw upon data residing in a variety of state level agencies. A major goal of this project is to work toward ensuring that this surveillance system is institutionalized nationally and conducted in all 50 states. Information from a national violent death surveillance system can be used to target prevention and early intervention efforts to prevent a significant number of the 50,000 annual deaths in the United States due to violence. Therefore, developing and implementing this surveillance system will require a cooperative effort and substantial collaboration among health professionals statewide.

References:

National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. CDC Draft Plan for the Implementation of a National Violent Death Reporting System. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2000. http://www.stipda.org/s-pubs/cdcnvdrsv7.pdf.

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