

Finding ways to prevent violent deaths in Iowa by understanding contributing circumstances.

IDPH • University of Iowa

Fall 2020

IAVDRS Newsletter

For calendar year (CY) 2019, there were 636 deaths entered into the database. As of October 2020, there have been 467 deaths entered for CY2020 and data continue to be collected and entered into the system.

What Have We Been Doing?

There have been big staff changes since August! Former program manager, Tiffany Conroy, returned to social work private practice. Binnie LeHew is back from retirement! She will be working on an interim, part-time basis until Tiffany's position can be permanently filled. (Binnie was the previous Program Manager before her retirement in December 2017). Marlene Callahan, our full-time abstractor, has reduced her hours beginning in October as she prepares to transition into retirement. She will still be around to help train the new program abstractor once the position is filled.

Grant Activities Update

As you can imagine, a lot of our outreach activities came to a grinding halt after March. Several of the annual conferences at which we typically present were canceled or delayed. However, there were a few virtual presentations given by program staff, including:

- ✓ 2020 Virtual Governor's Conference on Public Health (April 2020)
- ✓ Iowa Suicide Prevention Planning Group (May 2020)

Iowa received its annual data quality report from the CDC in early October. This provides an evaluation of our performance on key data collection measures. Iowa received an overall composite rank of 10 out of 42 states. Data quality is evaluated for:

- ✓ Timeliness (percent of deaths entered into NVDRS within 120 days)
- ✓ Percent of deaths with descriptive information
- ✓ Percent of deaths with CME circumstances information
- ✓ Percent of deaths with LE circumstances information.

Of particular note, Iowa made great improvements in our case initiation rate and ranked 2nd for initiation of suicide deaths. Similarly, we had high rankings for completeness of descriptive information on cases, showing modest improvements over 2017. The areas where improvement is needed (and we declined from last year) include getting better circumstance data from law enforcement records for both homicides and suicides.



UPCOMING EVENTS

UI-IPRC staff will present on suicide data at the Iowa Association of County Medical Examiners Death Investigators Webinar on November 6, 2020.



Upcoming Survey of Data Providers

If you are member of a law enforcement agency or medical examiner's office, look for an upcoming link to complete a brief survey about your experiences related to providing data and reports to our program. We are doing this as part of a program-improvement process for the grant.

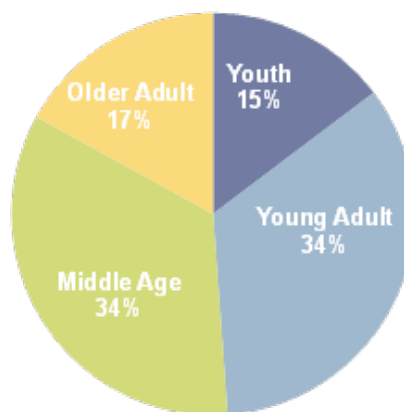
Notable Data from 2018 Suicide Report

- ✓ The suicide rate in Iowa (15.3 per 100,000) was slightly higher than the national average of 14.8 per 100,000 residents
- ✓ In 2018, the majority of violent deaths in Iowa were classified as suicide, 78.5%
- ✓ The remaining deaths from violence in Iowa were attributed to homicide (12.5%), undetermined (6.8%), and legal intervention (1.5%)
- ✓ Firearm use was the manner of death in 47.9% of suicides, followed by asphyxiation (30.8%) and poisoning (14.6%)
- ✓ Across all age groups and genders, mental health problems were the most common contributing circumstance to suicide
- ✓ For male Iowans 65 years old and older, physical health problems were commonly identified as a contributing cause of death by suicide
- ✓ Drug or alcohol problems and intimate partner problems contributed to more circumstances among young adults

Males accounted for 82.2% of suicide victims and females accounted for 17.8% of suicide victims in 2018.

You can always stay up-to-date on our program by visiting the program's website: <https://idph.iowa.gov/disability-injury-violence-prevention/iaavdrs>.

Suicide Deaths by Life Stage*



*Age groups defined as
Youth: 10-24;
Young Adult 25-44;
Middle Age 45-64;
Older Adult 65+

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Supporter SPOTLIGHT!



*Dennis Klein MD, State Medical Examiner,
Iowa Department of Public Health*

Dennis Klein graduated from Bowdoin College in Brunswick Maine with a Bachelor's degree in chemistry. In college, Dennis developed his interest in medicine leading to his attendance at the University of Vermont College of Medicine where he received a M.D. degree in 1993. He completed an internship in Internal Medicine at the Beth Israel Hospital in Boston Massachusetts, where he continued his residency training in Anatomical and Clinical Pathology. Dr. Klein completed his subspecialty training in Forensic Pathology at the Office of the Medical Investigator at the University of New Mexico. Once completing his training, Dr. Klein and his family moved to Des Moines in 2000, where he was appointed Deputy Chief State Medical with the Iowa Office of the State Medical Examiner and then appointed Chief State Medical Examiner in August of 2016. The Iowa Office of the State Medical Examiner is responsible for providing forensic autopsy services as well as guidance and training to county medical examiners and investigators. As program director for the annual Iowa Association of County Medical Examiners meeting and embracing a culture of quality improvement, Dr. Klein is committed to the support and training for all personnel in the medical examiner system in Iowa.



Dennis Klein, MD

Dr. Klein, in his work at the IOSME, has been a strong supporter of the IAVDRS since it was established in 2015. He shares his insights about the work of the program:

Until the Iowa Violent Death Review System, comprehensive standardized collection of traumatic death data across agencies did not exist. There were significant legal, bureaucratic, and logistical hurdles to clear before the IAVDRS could begin. It was with sense of purpose, skill, and perseverance that the system got off the ground, and it is dedication and results which keeps the system going. IAVDRS data provides the foundation that begins the process to ask and answer questions extremely



important to policy makers about violent deaths and what can be done to prevent them.

The system's success also relies on the cooperation and support of the many agencies involved with death investigations. Agencies across Iowa, dedicated to public safety, have been invaluable to the system in providing their investigative information for IAVDRS abstractors. The time and efforts, however, are well spent, as local leaders begin to learn the tremendous value of IAVDRS data to their local communities.

"Being a part of an organization that is dedicated to the quality of medical legal death investigation in Iowa, it is inspiring to see information that we spend a significant amount of time and effort in trying to get it right, now contributing to something even larger and impactful to our citizens through the IAVDRS."

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Supporter SPOTLIGHT!



Laura Roeder-Grubb

Laura Roeder-Grubb has worked with the Iowa Department of Human Rights' Division of Criminal and Juvenile Justice Planning for nearly thirty years as a Statistical Research Analyst and as an Information Technology Specialist. Ms. Roeder-Grubb's duties include managing databases, conducting statistical analyses, preparing reports, and providing information technology support to the Division and other State agencies. She currently oversees the security, collection and analysis of charge, disposition and sentencing data, as well as the juvenile court and child welfare data in the Justice Data Warehouse, a central repository of key criminal and juvenile justice information. She has been particularly successful in her efforts to help justice system officials, staff, and others to make use of and improve the quality of data, as well as develop data visualizations. She resides on several committees, including IAVDRS, child welfare, statewide traffic records, and other user groups, and has been involved in many evaluation and research projects during her years of service.



Laura Roeder-Grubb

As a member of the IAVDRS Advisory Committee, Laura can be counted on to raise thorough and pointed questions about the data we are obtaining and using for the surveillance system. She has requested access to some of our data to use for her program. Laura says, "As a data nerd, the IAVDRS data is useful because it includes comprehensive data that isn't always included in administrative data. The details can provide relevant facts to enhance the 'who, when, where, why and how' to provide a more insightful, and accurate understanding of violent deaths."



Data to Action

Coming soon! If you have an example of how you've put IAVDRS data into action, please contact Binnie at: Vivian.Lehew@idph.iowa.gov.

Partnering Together



<http://www.idph.iowa.gov>

THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA



<https://www.public-health.uiowa.edu/iprc/>



IOWA VIOLENT DEATH REPORTING SYSTEM

Office of Disability, Injury & Violence Prevention
Iowa Department of Public Health

515.281.5032

<https://idph.iowa.gov/disability-injury-violence-prevention/iavdrs>

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