OKLAHOMA Violent Death Reporting System
Part of CDC’s National Violent Death Reporting System
Operated by the Oklahoma State Department of Health, Injury Prevention Service
Collecting data since 2004

A SUICIDE IN OKLAHOMA
The example below tells the story of a suicide in Oklahoma, but to ensure confidentiality, it is not the story of an actual death. The example was created to illustrate the violent death data typically collected and linked in the Oklahoma Violent Death Reporting System (OKVDRS).

DEATH CERTIFICATE
- 47-year-old white male
  - Married
  - Veteran
  - Suicide

MEDICAL EXAMINER
- Had been drinking earlier in the day
- Recent health scare
- History of depression
- Problems at work

LAW ENFORCEMENT
- 9mm semi-automatic pistol found near the victim
- No suicide note left
- Threatened to kill himself during recent argument with wife as he often did

DEATH CERTIFICATE
The victim was a 47-year-old white male who lived in a rural area of eastern Oklahoma. He was a married oilfield worker with a high school diploma. He died at home due to a single gunshot wound to the head. The manner of death was suicide. The victim was a veteran of the U.S. Armed Forces.

MEDICAL EXAMINER
A 47-year-old white male died from a single gunshot wound to the head. The investigator reports the victim was found in his bedroom after the victim’s son heard a shot. The victim was reported to have been drinking earlier that day and had argued with his wife. The victim had recently been having trouble at work due to layoffs. The victim had a previous medical history of depression and had been stressed about a recent health scare. No suicide note was found.

LAW ENFORCEMENT
Law enforcement responded to the home when the victim’s son called police after hearing a gunshot and finding his father in the bedroom. The victim’s wife reported that she and the victim had argued that morning over finances. She said the victim had threatened to kill himself during the argument, but he often threatened to kill himself when they argued and she didn’t think anything of it. She said the victim went to a nearby pond to drink alcohol and shoot guns, but he returned later that afternoon and acted normal. An interview with the victim’s son revealed that the victim had seemed stressed lately due to problems at work, concern about losing his job, and a recent diagnosis of cancer with possible related surgery and treatment. There was no suicide note left. A 9mm semi-automatic pistol was found near the victim.

TOXICOLOGY
Toxicology reports showed the victim had a blood alcohol concentration of 0.16.
THE BIG PICTURE

The age-adjusted suicide rate in Oklahoma was 33% higher than the same rate for the U.S. in 2013. Oklahoma Violent Death Reporting System (OKVDRS) data illustrate the extent of this problem.

- Suicide was the third leading cause of death for Oklahomans age 10-34 in 2013, and the most prevalent type of violent death from 2004-2013, accounting for nearly 600 resident deaths each year.
- Suicides outnumber homicides by about three to one
- The Veteran suicide death rate increased by 34% from 2005-2012, with over 1,000 veteran suicides during that time; the suicide rate among veterans was twice that of non-veterans.

Among the 5,881 suicide deaths in Oklahoma from 2004-2013:
- 79% were male, and 21% were female
- 22% of suicide victims were veterans

- 144 (2.4%) victims killed at least one other person before taking his/her own life, resulting in 173 homicide deaths.
- Firearms (61%) were the most prevalent means of suicide, followed by hanging/strangulation (20%), poisoning (14%), and other means (5%); immediate access to lethal means may increase the risk for suicide.
- Among suicide victims noted to have a diagnosed mental health problem (2,098), 62% were currently receiving mental health treatment.
- A significant number of suicides were associated with a current depressed mood, intimate partner problem, mental and/or physical health problem, and/or crisis in the past weeks.

TRANSLATING DATA INTO ACTION

Informing prevention planning

- The Oklahoma Injury Prevention Service provides OKVDRS data and statistics and works closely with the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (ODMHSAS), the Oklahoma Suicide Prevention Council, and other suicide prevention groups.
- OKVDRS suicide data informed the Council’s 2011 Oklahoma Strategy for Suicide Prevention.

Supporting veteran suicide prevention

With five military bases in Oklahoma, veterans’ health issues impact more than 300,000 Oklahomans. An OKVDRS special study and report on veteran suicides opened doors for collaboration with the Veterans Administration in Oklahoma, and helped illustrate the:

- increased risk for suicide among veterans of all ages
- leading circumstances associated with veteran suicides across the lifespan - physical and mental health problems, depressed mood, and intimate partner problems
- most common means of suicide (firearms)

Expanding the power of OKVDRS data

- OKVDRS data will be linked to other state databases to better inform suicide prevention, mental health treatment, and problematic drug prescriptions related to suicide.

- OKVDRS staff worked with law enforcement, the Child Death Review Board, and the Oklahoma Suicide Prevention Council to modify a pocket card that helps law enforcement collect more complete and accurate suicide circumstances data, which are used to understand suicide risks.

Partnering with law enforcement

- The Oklahoma Association of Chiefs of Police hosts the OKVDRS Advisory Committee meetings and distributes data reports to its members.
- The Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation maintains a full time program officer to collect law enforcement data for the OKVDRS through a contract with the Injury Prevention Service.