A Public Health Approach to Firearm Violence

STRENGTHENING OUR NATION’S GUN DATA INFRASTRUCTURE

BUILDING VISIBILITY & SUPPORT

In 2020, NORC at the University of Chicago facilitated an Expert Panel which released a Blueprint for U.S. Firearms Data Infrastructure highlighting the limitations of existing data regarding nonfatal firearm injuries, pointing to the ineffective infrastructure as a root cause.

With support from Arnold Ventures, the Safe States Alliance is currently convening key subject matter experts and advocacy partners on a work group to build visibility and support for the priority recommendations identified in the Blueprint that seek to elevate gun data infrastructure as a national priority.

PROJECT PRIORITIES

Safe States will work with subject matter experts to achieve the following goals:

- Create and implement a comprehensive non-fatal firearm injury database.
- Increase the quality, availability, and usefulness of firearms data for research and policy.
- Improve Federal Coordination of the Firearms Data Infrastructure.

THE ISSUE

- The current firearms data environment is limited, disorderly and highly segmented.
- Firearm data are often difficult to assess as data sets are often incomplete, collections are narrow in scope, and few datasets and systems can be integrated.
- Access to firearms data is challenging as public release of data can lag by years, which limits the effectiveness of research findings.
- Due to the weak data infrastructure that exists today, the number of critical research questions that can be asked and answered in the service of more effective policymaking is severely constrained.
- Structure changes are needed to put data at the forefront of evidence-based policymaking to reduce firearm violence.

REDDUCING THE NUMBER OF FIREARM SUICIDES, HOMICIDES, ACCIDENTS, AND ASSAULTS IN THE U.S. REQUIRES ANSWERS TO FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS THAT CANNOT BE ANSWERED WITH THE DATA AVAILABLE TODAY.

Current data does not account for more than 60 percent of gun injuries.

Protecting public safety and public health requires good data.

Modest changes and investments can solve the problem.

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POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Administered through the Safe States Alliance, the Firearm Data Infrastructure Workgroup seeks to work collaboratively to:

- Strengthen data reporting by law enforcement agencies to the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s (FBI) National- Incident Based Reporting System (NIBRS).
- Expand the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) Firearm Surveillance Through Emergency Rooms (FASTER) program beyond the currently-funded 10 pilot sites.
- Strengthen the FBI National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) and examine the timeliness and quality of criminal history data reported to the program.
- Address the misclassification of injury intent in data collected through the Nationwide Emergency Department Sample (NEDS) at the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ).
- Improve the timeliness of CDC data released through the National Violent Death Reporting System (NVDRS), and standardize death investigation infrastructure.
- Increase public access to federal data systems and improve opportunities for data linkage, sharing, and transparency.

WORKGROUP MEMBERS

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The **Safe States Alliance** is a national non-profit 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to serving as the national voice in support of state and local injury and violence prevention professionals engaged in building a safer, healthier America. Founded in 1993, the Safe States Alliance is the only national non-profit organization comprised of public health injury and violence prevention professionals representing all states and territories in the United States.