

**Supporting Statement
For OMB Information Collection Request**

SUPPORTING STATEMENT: PART B

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“School-Associated Violent Deaths Surveillance System (SAVD)”

Supported by:

Department of Health and Human Services
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
National Center for Injury Prevention and Control
Division of Violence Prevention
Surveillance Branch

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B. COLLECTIONS OF INFORMATION EMPLOYING STATISTICAL METHODS

The data collection does not involve statistical methods. Therefore, the following section will describe the data collection procedures employed in this system. In the following, the terms “system” or “surveillance system” and “study” will be used interchangeably.

B.1. Respondent Universe and Sampling Methods

Sampling methods will not be used for this study. Instead, we aim to collect data on every school-associated violent death in the United States (expected 30-40 per year). While the study population includes the victims and offenders from all identified events in which there was a school-associated violent death in the United States, the respondent universe is limited to the law enforcement and school officials who are knowledgeable about these incidents, as the victims of such incidents are deceased.

B.2. Procedures for the Collection of Information

Overview of the Data Collection System.

A school-associated violent death is defined as a homicide, suicide, or legal intervention in which the fatal injury occurred 1) on the campus of a functioning public or private elementary or secondary school in the United States, 2) while the victim was on the way to or from regular sessions at such a school, or 3) while the victim was attending or traveling to or from an official school-sponsored event. Cases will include deaths of students as well as non-students (e.g., faculty, school staff, family members, or community residents).

The system will draw cases from the entire United States in an attempt to capture all cases of school-associated violent deaths that have occurred. Cases will be primarily identified by CDC staff through a systematic search of a computerized newspaper and media database (i.e., Lexis-Nexis). Additional cases may also be identified (1) via active web searches using search engines such as Google, (2) through leads voluntarily disclosed by law enforcement or school officials. To confirm the facts of each event, a brief interview will then be conducted with at least one law-enforcement officer (i.e., a law enforcement officer, law enforcement chief, or district attorney) familiar with the event. For each identified case additional data will be obtained from three official sources: (1) law enforcement investigative reports (2) structured telephone interviews with investigating law enforcement officials (see Attachment G for a copy of the law enforcement participation letter used to request interviews and investigative reports), and (3) structured telephone interviews with school officials (i.e., school principal, school superintendent, school counselor, school teacher, or school support staff) who are familiar with the case in question. These sources will provide detailed information regarding victims, alleged offenders, the school associated with each death, and the circumstances of the fatal injuries.

Items of Information to Be Collected.

IC involves Information in Identifiable Form (IIF). This information includes:

- a) Name (for victims)
- b) Date of Birth (for victims and offenders)
- c) Other:
 - i. Name of School (associated with event)
 - ii. School Address
 - iii. School Phone Number
 - iv. School Fax Number
 - v. Name of School Principal
 - vi. School District Name
 - vii. School District Telephone Number
 - viii. Principal's Email Address
 - ix. Name of Law Enforcement Contact
 - x. Law Enforcement Department Address
 - xi. Department Phone Number for Law Enforcement Contact
 - xii. Department Fax Number for Law Enforcement Contact
 - xiii. Law Enforcement Investigative Reports

Procedures for collecting information.

In the system, investigators will review public records and published press reports concerning each school-associated violent death.

Case Definitions. Investigators will identify all cases of school-associated violent death according to the following three-tiered case definition:

A school-associated violent death is any homicide, suicide, or firearm-related death in the United States, in which the fatal injury occurred:

- Level 1. on the property of a functioning public or private elementary or secondary school;
- Level 2. on the way to or from regular sessions at such a school; or,
- Level 3. while attending or on the way to or from an official school-sponsored event.

Cases will be identified through a systematic search of an online newspaper and broadcast media database (LEXIS/NEXIS).

To obtain as much detailed information as possible concerning each identified case, investigators will seek to obtain information from multiple sources. These will include: 1) the initial law enforcement investigative report and interviews with 2) a law enforcement official and 3) a

school official. This multiple source approach will also permit the researchers to compare the quality and quantity of data obtained from the different sources.

Investigators will rely on existing public records for a substantial portion of the data collection. Some of the data will be abstracted from initial law enforcement reports into the survey instrument. These law enforcement reports are public domain and will be requested for each case. The principal investigator and project analyst will be responsible for abstracting data from these documents. As each case is identified, school officials and law enforcement officials with jurisdiction over the case will be contacted in writing and asked to participate in the study.

More detailed data will undoubtedly exist in law enforcement investigation files and school system records; however, direct access to these records will not be possible. Researchers will attempt to gain this detailed information by arranging telephone or face-to-face interviews with a law enforcement official and school official.

Participation in the study will be voluntary. All interviews will be conducted by the principal investigator and by SAVD analysts who will be trained to use the data collection instrument. The interviews will last approximately 1 hour, depending on the circumstances of the event (single victim/offender vs. multiple victims/offenders). The investigators anticipate that in some cases, school and law enforcement officials will be unable or unwilling to provide an answer for every question. At the start of each interview, school and law enforcement officials will be reminded that the study is not part of an official criminal investigation and that they may decline to answer any questions or terminate the interview at any time.

Data Entry, Editing and Management

Data will be directly entered into EpiInfo using a Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) tool created using EpiInfo functionalities. This CATI set up was implemented to reduce respondent burden, eliminate potential data entry errors. This becomes possible because (1) questions not applicable to the current respondent are automatically/programmatically skipped and manual navigation of the skip process by an interviewer is not required; (2) data entry occurs in a single step (whereas paper based interviewing requires separate entry of data into a database) and (3) error checking occurs in real-time—the validity of entered responses is assessed immediately and invalid responses are instantly brought to an interviewer's attention for correction. All submitted answers will be exported to relevant database or statistical analysis programs.

Data from police reports will be abstracted by the principal investigator and the study coordinator. Again, the principal investigator and the study coordinator will review each report and abstract the information to complete a questionnaire.

Quality Control/Assurance

Data from law enforcement investigative reports will be abstracted in a manner similar to that described above. Again, the principal investigator and the study coordinator will abstract the

information to complete a questionnaire. The data will then be entered first, into a Microsoft access database, and then prepared for cross-validation. An inter-rater reliability figure will be determined. Discrepancies will be noted and resolved in a conference setting with the other members of the study group. All decisions that impact data entry and data coding will be documented and stored for future reference

Bias in Data Collection, Measurement, and Analysis. The proposed study is open to recall bias given the design and the time-period covered. School-associated violent deaths are particularly traumatic events, which may differentially affect the interpretation and subsequent recall of the characteristics surrounding these events for those involved. Similarly, the attention that these events receive in the press and the awareness this coverage generates may potentially lead to interviewer bias.

Two strategies have been proposed to lessen the effects of these two forms of information bias. First, information for each event will be collected from at least two sources (school official interview, law enforcement report and/or interview). Final data for analysis will be drawn from these sources depending on the variable (school focused vs. law/community focused) and its relevance to the data source. To reduce the potential impact of interviewer bias, each interviewer will be blinded through the process described above. In this way, the interviewer will not know the identity of the person they are interviewing, the relevant school, or any of the persons involved.

Data Analysis

Most of the analysis will be restricted to simple descriptive statistics--frequencies and univariable analysis. Case-finding methods will be compared using capture-recapture calculations, which can also be used to estimate the proportion of cases not identified by a particular case-finding technique. To calculate a rate of school-associated violent death in the United States, the DOE will provide national enrollment data. In computing the rate, it may be necessary to restrict the numerator to those cases that concern the death of a student on school property during regularly scheduled hours of operation.

Limitations of the System

An important limitation of the proposed study is the possibility that cases not reported in the press may be overlooked, because both case-finding methods depend heavily on news reports. However, since most cases receive extensive, often nationwide, coverage, it is not likely that many cases of school-associated homicide or suicide would go entirely unreported. Because the data in this report are based on a small number of deaths, the risk estimates that are generated may be unstable. It will be important to emphasize that the risk estimates presented in the final analysis should not be interpreted as actual rates but as the best possible estimates based on the available data.

B.3. Methods to Maximize Response Rates and Deal with Nonresponse

To maximize response rates, detailed letters to law enforcement and telephone scripts for contacting law enforcement and school officials have been developed (Attachments G and J). These letters describe the SAVD study goals and methods, along with the intended use of the data. These documents describe how the potential respondents' knowledge about the cases in question would benefit both the CDC and public health. Study staff have also secured a CDC Assurance of Confidentiality to ensure the confidentiality of any information provided by interviewees and have made the questions in the interview tool as simple and brief as possible. Additionally, the Department of Education provides funds to CDC for two post-doctoral fellows to follow-up with law enforcement officials who did not respond on the first or second opportunity for dated cases to obtain investigative reports. Case management and tracking will be completed using the Microsoft Access software package. This package will allow for records management, tracking of interviews and law enforcement reports, and mail merging for correspondence with identified cases.

Finally, obtaining multiple sources of data will allow us to deal with nonresponse. In most cases, we will be able to obtain at least one interview. In cases where it is impossible to obtain interview data, data will be abstracted from the law enforcement report, ensuring that each case has detailed data associated with it, whether it is from a school official interview, law enforcement interview, or law enforcement report.

B.4. Tests of Procedures or Methods to be Undertaken

This surveillance system is currently in its 21st year of existence. The procedures for collecting data have been revised over time to increase efficiency. The current procedures have proven effective for obtaining data for the system.

B.5. Individuals Consulted on Statistical Aspects and Individuals Collecting and/or Analyzing Data

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