

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

Iowa Department of Public Health • University of Iowa

Fall 2021

# IAVDRS Newsletter



## What Have We Been Doing?

Wendy Ringgenberg, IAVDRS Program Abstractor presented at the Iowa Law Enforcement Investigators Conference on October 5. This provided a great opportunity to share information about the program and recent data analysis to the participants that attended.

Staff at IDPH have been busy reviewing applicants for the full-time position that is the IAVDRS Program Manager. Interviews were held in mid-October, and expect to announce the new staff person by the end of November!

## Grant Activities Update

We just started our third year of this current grant cycle, which runs from Sept 1, 2021 – August 31, 2022. We have ambitious plans to get our VDRS data onto the state health data portal, and to issue several more reports in the coming year.

The IAVDRS provided data on intimate partner violence deaths to the Iowa Domestic Abuse Death Review Team at their last meeting in September. A report by the team will be issued before the end of the year.

We received our annual Data Quality Report from the CDC, which provides feedback on the completeness and timeliness of the data we enter into the Secure Access Management System. Prior to this year, Iowa was compared to the other 42 states in the National VDRS. Beginning with deaths closed out in 2019, we are compared to 52 states or territories. Refer to page 2 for more information on our 2019 data quality report.

We hope you'll participate in an upcoming survey from the University of Iowa Injury Prevention Research Center. The survey results will help us complete a partner network analysis, which is included in our Year 3 project goals.

Recently there has been focus on the increase in homicides during last year (based on recent FBI data). The IAVDRS is working on final edits to a homicide report that will be released later in November. We shared with our advisory committee that while there was an increase in homicides between 2019 and 2020 – there was a similar increase from 2016 – 2017. At this point, it does not appear to stand out statistically, and we will continue to monitor the numbers as we continue through calendar year 2021.

**Update on Cases in the System**  
As of October 28, 2021, there have been 448 deaths entered into the database for CY2021.

- ✓ 80% were suicides
- ✓ 14% were homicides
- ✓ 5% were undetermined
- ✓ <1% were unintentional firearm-related



## 2019 Data Quality Report

Iowa continues to do very well with our case initiation rates – we consistently score in the “Excellent” category for our ability to initiate a case in the VDRS system within 120 days of the death. Iowa’s ability to receive electronic data from vital records is a key part of this success. We are also evaluated on the degree of “completeness” of the circumstances data that is entered from medical examiner and law enforcement reports. We scored “Excellent” to “Good” for completeness of medical examiner variables in homicide and suicide deaths. We have room for improvement with our law enforcement variables, and scored a rating of “Fair” in those areas. The table below illustrates our results and ranking.



**Percent of Violent Deaths in 2019 with C/ME (Coroner/Medical Examiner) and LE (Law Enforcement) Circumstances and Change in Percent from 2018**

Manner of Death	C/ME Circumstances				LE Circumstances			
	Percent	VDRS Program Rank	Performance Category	Change from 2018	Percent	VDRS Program Rank	Performance Category	Change from 2018
Homicide/Suicide/Legal Intervention	89.8	15	N/A	-0.4	71.1	30	N/A	+1.3
Homicide/Legal Intervention	71.3	20	Good	-21.1	60.9	24	Fair	-6.5
Suicide	92.9	13	Excellent	+3.1	72.8	31	Fair	+2.5

The program has set a goal to increase the information that we receive in our law enforcement reports and will be working with statewide associations to get the word out about what information is collected and entered into the system.

*We scored “Excellent” to “Good” for completeness of medical examiner variables in homicide and suicide deaths.*



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## Staff SPOTLIGHT!

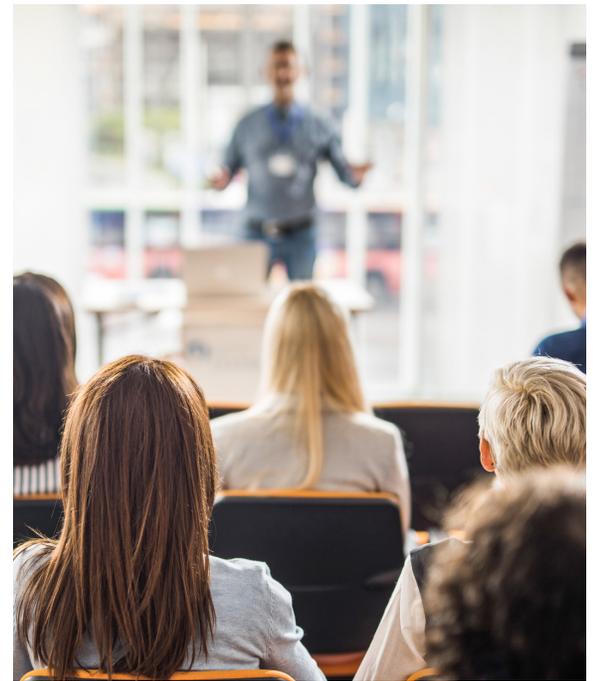


**Toby Yak PhD, MPH**

Toby V. Yak is an injury and WIC epidemiologist with the Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH). Dr. Yak joined IDPH in 2013 as a Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP) Prevention Fellow. He provides epidemiological and data analysis support for the Office of Disability, Injury and Violence Prevention and Women, Infants & Children Program in his current role. Dr. Yak earned a Bachelor of Science degree from North Dakota State University and an MPH degree and PhD in Public Health with a concentration in epidemiology from Walden University. As an epidemiologist, Dr. Yak's focus is to help reduce the risk and occurrence of adverse health outcomes due to nutritional needs for children, violence, and injuries in Iowa through sound epidemiological principles, education, and evidence-based approaches.



Toby Yak



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## UPCOMING EVENTS

**IAVDRS will present and exhibit at the Annual County Medical Examiners Conference November 5-6, 2021.**

**Our next Advisory Committee meeting will be January 19, 2022 – mark your calendars now!**

**The national NVDRS Conference, scheduled for May 2022 in Milwaukee WI may now be delayed until 2023 due to Covid-19. Stay tuned for more updates!**

If you know of upcoming meetings or conferences where the IAVDRS could present or display materials, please let us know! You can reach out to Lisa Roth [lisa-m-roth@uiowa.edu](mailto:lisa-m-roth@uiowa.edu) or Binnie LeHew [vivian.lehew@idph.iowa.gov](mailto:vivian.lehew@idph.iowa.gov) and they will work to get something scheduled.

## Partnering Together



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

THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA



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



**IAVDRS**  
IOWA VIOLENT DEATH REPORTING SYSTEM

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

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