

Paul Manganiello MD

Hi Agatha:

Senator Ayers asked that I contact you, concerning the above questions. Unfortunately getting accurate data is problematic. Although there is the National Instant Background Check System (NICS), states are not mandated to report individuals who would be denied the ability to legally acquire firearms. Also, for some reason, in 2002 Vermont switched from full Point of Contact (POC), with a state level check, to only performing the federal background check. Add to that, the fact that Congress in 1996 (under pressure from the NRA) included language in the Omnibus Consolidated Appropriations Bill “none of the funds made available for injury prevention and control at the CDC may be used to advocate or promote gun control”.

Dr. Chris Barsotti, an ER doctor, recently wrote in the Vtdigger [<http://vtdigger.org/2015/02/17/christopher-barsotti-safest-state-not-vantage-point-er/>]: “Vermont crime data is available through the Vermont Domestic Violence Fatality Review Commission Report, the Vermont Crime Information Center, the FBI Uniform Crime Report and the Centers for Disease Control. The most recent year with comparative data is 2012, and here is the number of people who died by homicide in Vermont: 13, 7, 8 or 9. Each database reports a different number, and even within Vermont’s own data, there is a variation of 85%.” And that was for homicides, which you would think would be relatively easy to track, as compared to injuries, and intimidations? So the only data that I can give you with some confidence is that from other states which have enacted stricter CBCs.

Her question concerning the mentally ill is certainly an important one. We certainly don’t want to stigmatize an individual with mental illness as necessarily being a threat to the community, or infringing on their civil liberties. Neither do we want to discourage individuals from seeking help for their mental illness. We certainly don’t want to support the assumption, that those who are mentally ill are all dangerous. The sad fact is that individuals with mental illness are more likely to be a victim of criminal violence, than to be the perpetrator. In fact only 3-5% of violent crimes (assault, murder, rape and robbery) are committed by the mentally ill. In the Wintemute white paper that I have included, he cited the National Epidemiologic Survey on Alcohol and Related Conditions, where there is a strong association with substance abuse, psychiatric history and a prior history of threats or acts of violence. They estimated the risk to be increased by a factor of 10.

Concerning, her question about the effects of CBC on public health, the 2008 article by Sumner [Sumner SA, Layde PM, Guse CE. Firearm death rates and association with level of firearm purchase background check. American journal of preventive medicine. Jul 2008;35(1):1-6, I will include the pdf], looked at the time period from 2002 -2004, examined mortality rates and the individual States level of involvement in the NICS program; they found that overall mortality was reduced, and significantly so for suicides, when in addition to the FBI database, Federally Licensed Firearm dealers had access to data collected at the local level. Similar finding were also presented by Sen [Sen B, Panjamapirom A. State background checks for gun purchase and firearm deaths: an exploratory study. Prev Med. 2012;55(4):346-350.] Wintemute also cited studies, which showed reductions in the rates of intimate partner homicides where there are prohibitions on firearm possession. He goes on to state “at least 80% of criminal acquisitions now occur through private-party transactions”.

If the Senator has any other concerns that I can hopefully address, please feel free to get in touch with me

Sincerely yours,

*Paul*

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