

Suicide Surveillance: A Look at Alaska Violent Death Reporting

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What is the AKVDRS?

- Initial Funding 2004 (2003 data included)
- Active surveillance system
- Captures data using a variety of sources
- Flexible & Timely
- Continuing to evolve to meet needs & improve efficiency
- Validation studies



What is a Violent Death?

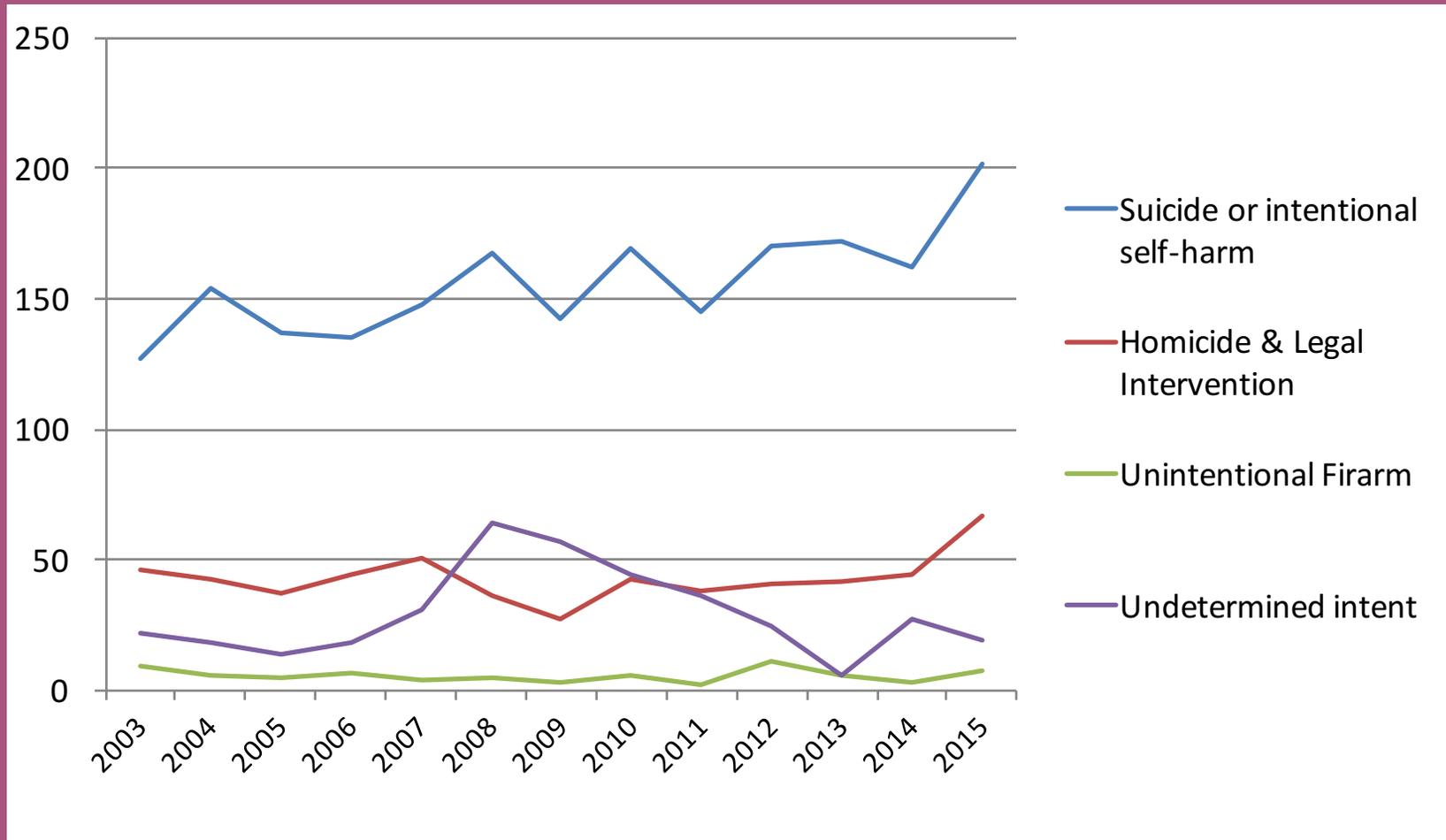
- “ A death resulting from intentional use of physical force against oneself, another person or against a group or community” (W.H.O.)
- NVDRS broader definition includes any firearm death and select deaths of undetermined manner
- Deaths of special interest to states*



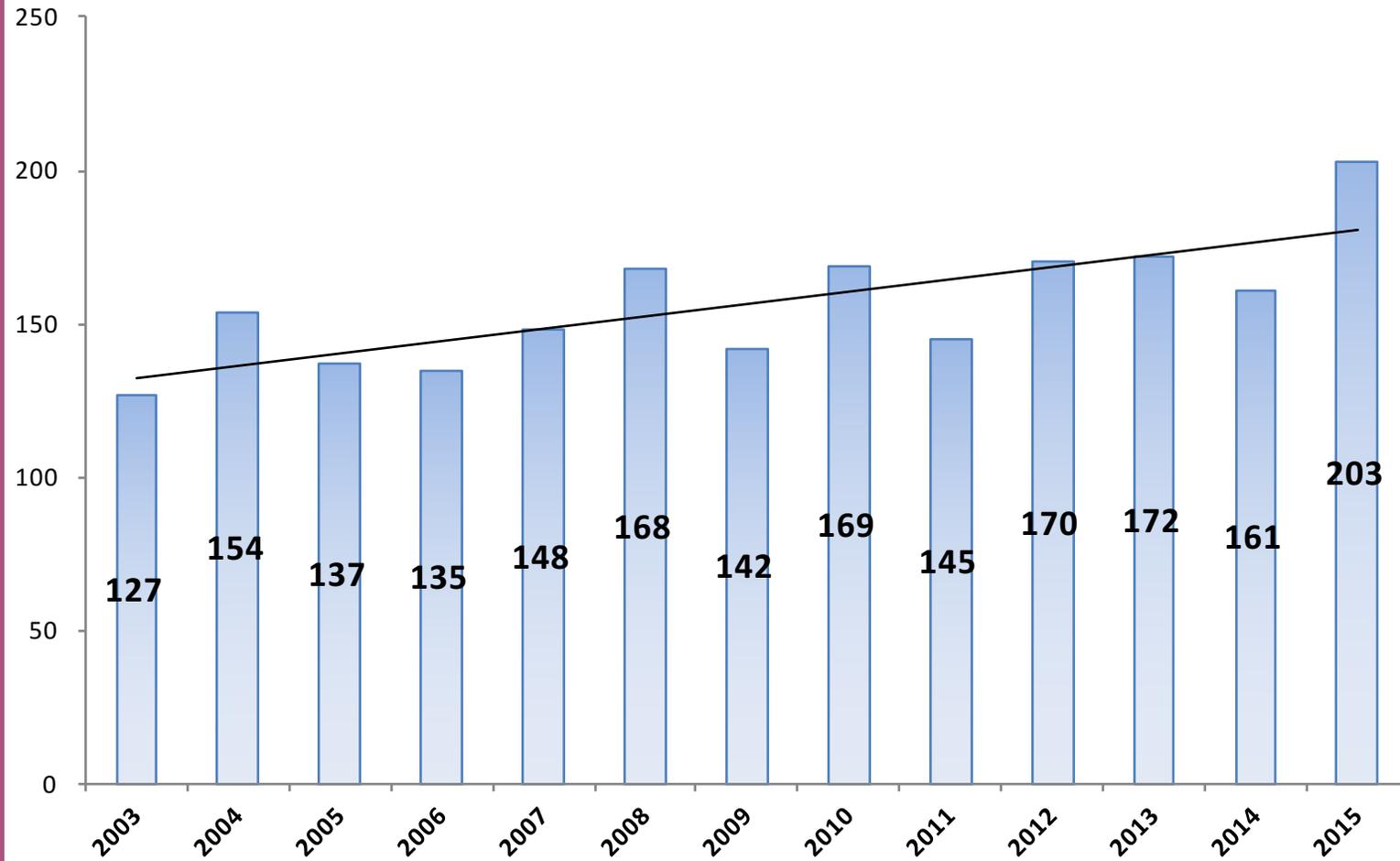
Manners of Death

- Homicide
- Suicide
- Accidental firearm
- Legal interventions
- Undetermined manner
- Acts of terrorism
- Deaths as a result of an earlier assault, GSW or suicide attempt
- Special studies (e.g., Suicide Toxicology Project, Opioid Overdose Study)

Violent Deaths in Alaska, by Year of Death—AKVDRS, 2003–2015



Number of Suicides by Year, Alaska, 2003-2015



Alaska's suicide rates demonstrate the need for in-depth surveillance

2015

- Alaska had the highest suicide rate among all 50 states.
- Suicide ranked 10th leading cause of death in the United States.
 - 13.8 per 100,000 persons
- Alaska had the highest suicide rate among all 50 states.
 - 27.2 per 100,000 persons (crude rate)



Identify Deaths Meeting Case Definition

- Queries using ICD-10 codes
 - Underlying Cause
 - Contributory Cause
 - ICD-10 codes X60-X84, Y87.1 if >1 year after injury
- Queries using key word search
- Report or documentation of death from Medical Examiner or law enforcement

Identify Deaths Meeting Case Definition

- Mortality database query using ICD-10 codes
 - Underlying Cause
 - Contributory Cause
- Review of key word search of mortality database

Other surveillance

- Alaska State Trooper press releases
- Query of Medical Examiner files
- Media reports
- Firearm Injury Reporting System
- Occupational Injury Surveillance Program

Key Data Source

- Medical Examiner (i.e., Autopsy and Toxicology reports)*
- Vital Statistics (death certificates)*
- Law enforcement agencies*
 - Alaska State Troopers
 - Municipal police departments (e.g., Anchorage PD)
 - Airport police
 - University of Alaska police
 - Military investigative agencies
 - Criminal Investigation Division (CID-US Army)
 - Office of Special Investigations (OSI-US Air Force)



Supplemental Data Sources

- Medical records
- EMS records
- Firearm injury reports
- National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) reports
- Crime Laboratory reports (e.g., ballistics, firearm trace reports)
- Court records
- Child Fatality Review
- Public Health Laboratory reports
- Alaska Office of Veterans Affairs
- Fire Marshal reports
- Media

Who & How, What, Where, When, Why

- Victims (V) and weapons (W)
- Pre-event, event, and post-event location(s) and time(s)
- Relationships and related circumstances and environment factors
- Other associated events

What is done with the data?

- Identify patterns (long- and short- term)
- Identify related incidents previously captured in the data & narratives

Confidentiality

The AKVDRS takes confidentiality very seriously and has developed protocols to ensure confidentiality including:

- MOUs with data providers
- Elimination of personal identifiers
- Strict data release policy and practices



Other Challenges:

- Toxicological testing is limited
- Lack of available circumstance data
- Inconclusive cause or manner of death
- Limited funding & staffing levels
- Availability of electronic dataset suitable for importation

Suicide Attempt Data Sources

- Alaska Trauma Registry
- Health Facility Data System
- EMS records
- Firearm injury reports
- Syndromic Surveillance of ED visits