State and Local Data Sources

There are some sources of data in states and communities that may be able to provide you with a better understanding of suicide locally than what you might find in national online databases, like the Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System (WISQARS) and National Violent Death Reporting System (NVDRS).

Alternative Data Sources

Following are some state, county, and community data sources. This is not intended to be an exhaustive list. There may be other sources of data in your region.

- Health Departments
- Hospitals
- Medical Examiners and Coroners' Offices
- Courts and Justice Department
- Community Coalitions and Task Forces (e.g., Substance Abuse Prevention Workgroup)
- Child Death Review Teams
- Law Enforcement Agencies
- Emergency Medical Services and Ambulance Companies

Tips When Asking for Data

Data from these sources may not be publicly available or accessible online. Since agencies and organizations are not obligated to share their data with you, here are tips to consider *before* approaching them.

- Find out who at the organization has the authority to release the data to you, and approach that person first (i.e., at a hospital it could be the hospital administrator). After you obtain the appropriate signoff, then you can approach the person who will release the data to you.

- Be prepared to make a strong, compelling case for why you need the data. Also point out how sharing their data might benefit their work (e.g., a hospital administrator may be concerned about the number of patients who attempted suicide that are seen at the hospital, and therefore may be willing to share data for prevention efforts).

- Ask for specific data that the organization collects. Make sure you know in advance what data they have that matches your needs.

- Identify any potential concerns they might have about sharing their data with you, such as confidentiality, or limited time/staff to compile the data for you (e.g., a hospital will have patient privacy regulations to follow when sharing data).

The more prepared you are *before* making your request, the more likely you will get the data you need.