



Office of Injury and Violence Prevention Report

2025 Annual Report
11/30/2024 to 11/30/2025

Pursuant to:
22 M.R.S § 1427; Public Law 2023, c. 643, Pt. FFFF, §1

Submitted by:
Maine Department of Health and Human Services
Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Pursuant to 22 M.R.S. § 1427, the Department of Health and Human Services, Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention (Maine CDC) reports on the work of the Office of Violence Prevention (operationally referred to as the ‘*Office of Injury and Violence Prevention*’ (OIVP or the ‘*Office*’)). Established in Maine law in 2024, the Office is tasked with coordinating resources, analyzing data, promoting public awareness and education, and researching best practices and initiatives, all aimed at reducing violence, including gun violence, statewide.

This annual report includes information on steps taken to build the Office’s footprint in the state, as well as efforts to comply with mandates in statute. Highlights of the first year’s work include hiring five new staff, folding in the complementary portfolio of Maine CDC’s existing Adolescent Health and Injury Prevention Program, and working to assess the existing injury and violence prevention landscape in Maine. While outside of the reporting period, the Office of Injury and Violence Prevention proposed LD 2108, *An Act to Establish the Suicide Mortality Review Panel*, in partnership with sponsor Representative Holly Stover to the 132nd Maine Legislature. This legislation was passed and signed into law (Public Law 2025, Ch. 586), and establishes permanently Maine’s first panel focused on reviewing the trends in deaths by suicide to identify strengths and weaknesses of the system of care and recommend ways to decrease Maine’s suicide rate. The 2026 Annual Report will elaborate on this important work.

INTRODUCTION

Maine CDC, Office of Injury and Violence Prevention was established to increase the State’s public health capacity to address injury and violence in Maine (Public Law 2023 c. 643). This recent legislation centralizes violence prevention efforts across the state, including, but not limited to, gun violence. OIVP is responsible for coordinating initiatives to reduce violence and related trauma, focusing on public health approaches, firearm safety, strengthening mental health services, and promoting research regarding causes of and evidence-based responses to violence. OIVP serves as a bridge between multiple sectors, including healthcare, education, social services, mental health, and criminal justice. Using a public health approach, the Office is focused on increasing awareness of and education on state and federal laws and the existing resources related to injury and violence prevention and interventions (i.e. victim services, mental health treatment and responsible gun ownership practices). As directed, the Office is also working to implement a data and resource hub to be used for informing gaps, research trends, and strategies for improving community access to evidence-based violence prevention tools. (22 M.R.S. § 1427). As this is the Office’s inaugural report, this report summarizes the Office’s work to date to establish an infrastructure for effectively managing this work and its efforts to comply with statutory mandates. Moving forward, the Department will report to the legislature annually, using October 1st through September 30th as the reporting period.

OIVP ACTIVITIES REPORT

Staffing and Collaboration

Since the enabling legislation went into effect in 2024, the Office successfully worked with the Department of Administrative and Financial Services, Bureau of Human Resources to establish the six new positions authorized by Public Law 2023, c. 643, Pt. FFFF, §1. To date, the Office has successfully recruited for five of the six positions which include the Office Director, Comprehensive Health Planner II, Public Health Educator III, Epidemiologist, and Planning and Research Associate I. The Office continues recruitment efforts for the Health Program Manager position.

To further bolster capacity and streamline resources, the Office assimilated the personnel and activities of the existing Adolescent Health and Injury Prevention Program (AHIP) within Maine CDC. This team's areas of focus include school-based health centers, suicide prevention and the Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey (MIYHS). Consolidating the existing AHIP and the newly established OIVP created a single, coordinated program for addressing safety and violence through a public health lens. This approach positions the Office to more effectively apply and direct statewide efforts to reduce injury and violence in Maine, support strengthening the state's mental health system and firearm safety laws and increase public awareness of available resources and best practice.

OIVP's mission is enhanced by the evidence-based violence prevention work under AHIP done in partnership with Maine's Department of Education and provided through school-based health centers. School-based health centers (SBHCs), now under OIVP, are an important collaboration between healthcare providers and local school districts, serving as a resource for identifying potential risk factors and root causes of behaviors and assisting in addressing student violence through mental health support, trauma screening, referrals and violence prevention programs. SBHCs may screen for mental health and substance use disorders and may offer onsite services or treatment referrals. They may also increase connectedness between youth and caring adults by building trusted relationships with the providers and creating safe spaces for students to seek help. The Office supported 19 of Maine's SBHCs over the last year.

OIVP will continue the AHIP efforts that have focused on secure firearm storage (i.e. safes, lock boxes, cable locks, separation of guns and ammunition, Lethal Means Safety (LMS¹) and other methods to prevent unauthorized access, theft, and accidents). In addition to education and training material, gun locks and locking boxes have been distributed as part of the Office's promotion of secure firearm storage and its ongoing outreach and education efforts. Collaboration with Maine's Department of Public Safety is more of a focus this year with OIVP's safe storage expansion work.

¹ *Lethal Means Safety* (LMS) is a voluntary, evidence-based suicide prevention strategy that involves reducing a person's access to dangerous items, such as firearms, to prevent suicides, homicides, and unintentional gun deaths and nonfatal firearm injuries. This intervention creates time between a crisis and access to a firearm.

Awareness and Education

OIVP is a leader in the state's efforts to reduce the occurrence of injury and violence, including but not limited to, firearm-related tragedies and mental health crisis. The focus is on state-level and community partnerships, lived experiences, and data-driven approaches. In developing public awareness campaigns, the Office considers diverse initiatives, including suicide awareness campaigns, community-led risk assessments, and evidence-based programs and best practices (i.e. safe firearm storage practices and domestic violence victim service supports).

OIVP uses several different approaches to educate the public and create awareness of existing resources. The two primary approaches include boosted promotion of adult- and youth-focused information campaigns and the distribution of materials to support access to mental health services and prevent suicide.

The adult campaign's primary audience was all adults 18 years of age and older in Maine, and its objective was to encourage adults to seek help and connect to supportive resources. This campaign was promoted on several media platforms including Meta, TikTok, Snapchat, and paid searches between February and November of 2025, and resulted in over 16 million impressions and over 4,400 clicks to call, text or chat with 988 for support. This campaign includes the maintenance of the website www.heretohelpmaine.com and the top three resources accessed were: *Download a Safety Plan*, 211Maine.org, and StrengthenMe.com. The website reached users in 311 Maine towns.

The youth campaign's primary audience was youth 10 to 24 years of age, and it had two primary objectives: encouraging youth to seek help and connect to supportive resources, and to provide educational and trauma-related support to build resilience in Maine's youth. Like the adult campaign, this was actively promoted across multiple media platforms between April and November 2025. The youth campaign resulted in over 20 million impressions and over 12,700 clicks to call, text or chat with support. This campaign includes the maintenance of the website www.filteroutthenoise.com. The website reached users in 309 different Maine towns.

In addition to the two mass-reach campaigns, the Office leveraged the existing Maine Prevention Store – www.maine preventionstore.com – to make available print and digital materials. For the period of September 1, 2024-August 31, 2025, a total of 68,456 mental health and suicide prevention materials, a combination of physical copies and digital downloads, were distributed through the store at no cost to the requester. In addition to educational materials, gun locks, and lockboxes can be requested via the Maine Prevention Store. In the 2025 calendar year, over 2,300 gun locks and 68 lockboxes were distributed. These counts are underestimates of the total number of materials distributed, as they do not include items distributed through the course of tabling at conferences and events across the state. The Office is currently developing a way to track those materials and OIVP is also working on aligning data collection dates, while considering federal grant deliverables.

Violence Intervention and Prevention Research

OIVP is researching causes of and evidence-based responses to violence occurring in Maine's communities, homes and schools. Data shows that Maine has a high rate of domestic violence resulting in homicide and that suicide is the second leading cause of death for Maine residents 10 to 24 years of age. As such, domestic violence and suicide are focus areas for Maine's injury and violence prevention work. OIVP is familiarizing itself with current public health intervention efforts such as the supports through Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence (MCEDV), the work of the Maine Domestic Abuse Homicide Review Panel, resources for school age children seeking supports at SBHCs, as well as available data on domestic violence and suicides in the state, with and without the involvement of a firearm.

The Office reviewed existing evidence-based and best practices for effective violence intervention programs. It found two promising options that it continues to research to better understand if and how these models are already being implemented in Maine, and to assess infrastructure needed for supporting widespread implementation.

- Hospital-based Violence Intervention Programs (HVIPs)

These programs intervene immediately after a violent injury when individuals are most receptive to change. A trauma intervention specialist would meet with individuals when they present to an emergency department to provide counseling and case management to connect the individual to housing, employment, education and behavioral health services.

- Community Violence Interruption/Intervention Programs

These programs focus on deescalating conflict, providing mediation and building supportive relationships with those at highest risk of violence, both perpetrating and experiencing it. These interventions often leverage trusted community members who have themselves experienced violence to outreach those individuals at highest risk and to amplify messages intended to change community norms.

In addition to reviewing the literature related to evidence-based interventions, the Office also reviewed effective violence prevention programs. The US CDC has published *Community Violence Prevention Resource for Action: A Compilation of the Best Available Evidence for Youth and Young Adults*.² This resource identifies seven strategies to prevent community violence:

1. Strengthen economic security
2. Provide quality education
3. Create protective environments
4. Promote healthy family relationships
5. Strengthen youths' and young adults' skills
6. Connect young people to caring adults and activities
7. Intervene to lessen harms and prevent future risk

The Office gathered information about programming and services that exist in Maine that would fall under one of these seven strategies and will use this information when considering any future

² CDC. (2024). *Community Violence Prevention Resource for Action: A Compilation of the Best Available Evidence for Youth and Young Adults*. Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://stacks.cdc.gov/view/cdc/183362>

recommendation to implement a new initiative or which services to expand or enhance in the coming year. It does not seek to duplicate efforts, so a comprehensive landscape analysis is critical to ensure optimal use of the Office's resources.

Additionally, OIVP continues to research laws protecting victims of violence, such as protection from abuse orders and victim confidentiality standards, and Maine gun laws, including "yellow flag" laws for temporary removal of firearms from individuals in mental health crises, as well as other protective measures in place that help to better identify individuals who present a heightened risk (as a perpetrator or victim), including those residing in communities disproportionately affected by gun violence, those known by the criminal justice system, and those experiencing a mental health crisis and have access to firearms.

Funding

Beyond state resources, the Office has received funding from US Centers for Disease Control under its Comprehensive Suicide Prevention (CSP) Program. This grant, awarded to 24 programs nationwide, provides funding to implement and evaluate a comprehensive public health approach to suicide prevention. The goal of this funding is to reduce suicide and suicide attempts. This funding will end on August 31, 2026. A new competitive funding opportunity is forecasted to be posted in early 2026, with project start dates for successful applicants set for September 1, 2026. If a notice of funding opportunity (NOFO) is posted, OIVP intends to apply to continue to receive these funds. Current funds are used to support a number of suicide prevention activities including:

- Training for providers and communities on strategies for identifying and supporting individuals at increased risk for suicide;
- Working with Maine Primary Care Association to implement the Zero Suicide model within Federal Qualified Healthcare Centers (FQHC);
- Hosting annual webinars to share data and raise awareness of the epidemiology of suicide in Maine; and
- Maintaining a grief support list, stratified by county, which has shown a marked increase in utilization.

In addition to this federal funding, the Office also received funding to support the existing school-based health centers across Maine. This funding comes from a variety of sources including the Fund for Healthy Maine and State General Funds. Subject to available funds, Maine CDC is also authorized through 22 M.R.S. § 1427(5)³ to implement by rule a grant program to support community-based violence intervention initiatives. This section will sunset on June 30, 2027. OIVP will assess available funds to inform any related rulemaking.

Data Hub Management

Over this first year, the Office has been meeting with key stakeholders across Maine, reviewing existing data and similar existing hubs in other states in preparation for launching the data and research hub. It compiled information on the current services landscape and key data sources to include in the hub. It researched the data sharing agreements necessary in cases when the Office is not the data owner. It has also identified training needed for Office staff to populate and manage the data and research hub. The

³ <https://legislature.maine.gov/statutes/22/title22sec1427.html>

Office met with the State of Maine Office of Information Technology to outline the steps needed to launch the hub online. The data and research hub is targeted to launch in late 2026.

PRIORITIES MOVING FORWARD

As the Office looks ahead, it is prioritizing the following initiatives to enhance the administration and operation of the Office and support efforts aimed at strengthening the state's suicide prevention efforts and reducing violence and injury in the State.

- 1. Finalize and publish a five-year statewide injury and violence prevention strategic plan.**

A strategic plan that includes measurable performance indicators informed by the information gathered during this year, will serve as a clear roadmap for future work of the Office that is based on community-identified need, considers state and federal laws and best practices, and aligns with evidence-based frameworks.

- 2. Explore feasibility of conducting a survey of firearm owners in Maine to better inform future efforts.**

Various surveys and information points exist that collect some information on firearm owners in Maine. OIVP is exploring ways to focus on data specific to secure firearm storage practices, the understanding of firearm laws and Lethal Means Safety (LMS), and general attitudes regarding firearm ownership. Conducting an anonymous survey would allow future outreach and education efforts to be based on actual needs of Maine firearm owners.

- 3. Establish a multi-sector advisory council to provide input on the data and research hub.**

As the hub will be a public facing website, it will be critical to ensure its utility and comprehension across sectors. Pulling together a group of individuals with expertise in data analysis and display as well as hub end users will allow the Office to gain valuable input for optimization of the hub and its contents.

- 4. Establish a suicide mortality review panel to be overseen by the Office.**

Retrospective mortality review panels have been a proven strategy to identify programs and policies necessary to reduce preventable death in Maine. Most firearm deaths in Maine are suicides, and prior to 2026, Maine did not currently have a panel charged with reviewing deaths by suicide, specifically. In 2026, the Office and Representative Holly Stover presented and the legislature passed LD 2108, *An Act to Establish a Suicide Mortality Review Panel*. With authorizing statute secured, the Office may now access confidential health and social services information to create summaries for the panel to understand factors surrounding these deaths in an effort to identify policy and systems gaps that, if addressed, could reduce the incidence of death by suicide in Maine. The Office will be working to mobilize PL 2025, c. 586 to quickly and thoughtfully complete steps needed to convene the panel.