



Department of Justice

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JUSTICE DEPARTMENT TO INVEST \$20 MILLION IN FIREARM BACKGROUND CHECK SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS

Grants to Help Reduce Information Gaps in National Instant Criminal Background Check System

WASHINGTON - The Justice Department's Office of Justice Programs (OJP) is planning to invest more than \$20 million to strengthen the firearm background check system by improving states' abilities to share information with the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS). OJP's Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) and Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) are providing funding for three grants to support state, territorial and tribal efforts to reduce information gaps and make instantly available to NICS all records prohibiting the purchase or possession of firearms.

"As part of President Obama's comprehensive plan to reduce gun violence, the Administration is committed to enhancing and strengthening the national criminal record system in support of stronger firearm background checks," said Attorney General Eric Holder. "The Department of Justice intends to take immediate and effective action to work with states to fill gaps in information currently available to the NICS system."

The NICS background check system is the most efficient and effective way to keep guns out of the hands of dangerous individuals, but in order to work, the system must have timely and accurate information about these individuals. States are a critical source for several key categories of relevant records and data, including criminal history records and records of persons prohibited from having guns because of domestic violence or for mental health reasons.

The grants would be used to improve access to and reporting of prohibiting mental health information such as involuntary commitments to mental health facilities, felony convictions as well as misdemeanor convictions of domestic violence, domestic violence restraining orders and immediate access to active felony and misdemeanor warrants. The grants will also support upgrades and enhancements to electronic submissions of fingerprints to state and federal systems as well as linking of arrest and disposition. Funding will be provided under National Criminal History Improvement Program (NCHIP), NICS Act Record Improvement Program (NARIP), and a new, one-time initiative called, *Improving the Completeness of Firearm Background Checks through Enhanced State Data Sharing*. This new initiative creates a competitive grant program designed to incentivize states, territories and tribes to share information with NICS by closing information gaps that inhibit complete and accurate background checks.

Since 1995, the BJS has provided grants and technical assistance to states to improve criminal history data availability for background checks and other purposes under the NCHIP. In

2009, after the Virginia Tech shootings, BJS launched the NARIP, addressing information requirements of NICS firearm background checks and requiring states to make additional records available. BJA also supports information sharing among the nation's state and local government agencies, directly supporting the mission of BJS and President Obama's plan to reduce gun violence.

For more information on *Improving the Completeness of Firearm Background Checks through Enhanced State Data Sharing*, please visit:
www.bja.gov/Funding/13FirearmBackgroundCheckSol.pdf.

For more information on President Obama's plan to reduce gun violence, please visit:
www.whitehouse.gov/issues/preventing-gun-violence.

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