



### **D61 Adult Suicides in Northern Virginia: A Look at Trends From July 2012 to June 2013**

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After attending this presentation, attendees will learn about the suicidal trends among adults (ages 22 and older) in the Northern Virginia (NoVA) area which include: methods of suicide; the correlation of suicide with substance abuse; mental illness; cohabitation with family; and the impact of physical ailments or diseases on suicide. Attendees will also learn that these factors can be specific to geographic areas and local populations. Knowledge of suicidal trends in one's own jurisdiction is pertinent for a thorough and accurate investigation. Having the ability and foresight to investigate a case with this information in mind will assist in capturing comprehensive and precise data for future research in the area of suicide.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by raising awareness of suicidal trends among adults in the Northern Virginia region. By comparing data of this study to state and national populations, the importance of regional and national tendencies is revealed. This data can be used as a springboard for future research on suicide trends in even more specific populations such as young adults, the elderly, returning war veterans, and those recently released from jails and institutions, with the goal of encouraging death investigators to refrain from generalizing suicide cases and to investigate each case individually.

This study proposes that methods of suicide and the correlations between suicide rates, the use of drugs and alcohol, psychiatric diagnoses, medical ailments, and living arrangements with family vary according to region. The information gathered provides a tool to all death investigators in raising awareness that the region of death may affect the trends associated with suicide.

The information for this study was obtained with the aid of statistics from the Virginia Violent Death Reporting System (VVDRS). Decedent age, sex, race, jurisdiction, and cause of death were gleaned from information reported through the VVDRS via the Northern District Office of the Chief Medical Examiner. Other pertinent information such as history of drug or alcohol abuse, living arrangements, history of mental illness, marital status, and sub-fatal agency was gathered through individual case investigation. An analysis was completed on 251 adult suicide cases which occurred in the Northern Virginia jurisdiction from July 1, 2012, to June 30, 2013. Correlations were created using a Microsoft® Excel® spreadsheet which analyzed the average age of adult decedents, common methods of suicide, jurisdictions, trends regarding sex and methods, the impact of mental illness, medical diseases, and substance abuse, and trends regarding adults who become dependent and move back into their parents' homes.

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#### **Adult, Northern Virginia, Suicide**