Many states faced challenges in creating state estimates for the NIAA records report over the three years of data collection. Often, these challenges in estimating were direct results of structural or reporting problems of actual NICS records. This brief presents a strategy that at least one state has implemented to address that problem.

**Estimation Problem**
Cannot distinguish between voluntary and involuntary commitments.

**Reporting Problem**
Either under or over-reporting due to inability to distinguish between voluntary and involuntary.

**Strategy**
Create an indicator for voluntary/involuntary coding in the database.

---

### Improve Tracking of Involuntary Commitments

**About this strategy**

While involuntary commitments are prohibitors, often states cannot separate these records from non prohibiting voluntary commitments. Creating the ability to distinguish these records through modifications in the mental health database will improve the quality and accuracy of mental health records submitted to NICS.

- **Who it may work for:** States who are not able to distinguish between their involuntary and voluntary commitments and who have a database that can be tweaked to include a new indicator.
- **Costs:** Cost of making the programming changes, as well as training on the new indicator.
- **Timeframe for implementing:** December 31, 2012
- **Lead agency:** Illinois State Police

**Why this strategy makes a difference**

This strategy is a simple addition to a database that can make a considerable improvement in the quality of mental health records reporting.

### Who’s Doing It? Illinois

Illinois received a NARIP grant to improve their NICS reporting and have added a voluntary/involuntary indicator to their mental health database, as one component of their database upgrades.

For more information:

**Illinois**
- Gregory Stevens
- Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority
- 312-793-0890
- Gregory.Stevens@illinois.gov

**Bureau of Justice Statistics**
- Devon Adams
- 202-307-0765
- Devon.Adams@usdoj.gov
- www.bjs.gov

More on NICS [here](#)

---

This project was conducted under cooperative agreement 2009-NS-BX-K050 from the Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice. Points of view or opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official position or policies of the funding agency.