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Executive Director
Andrew T. LeFevre

1110 West Washington, Suite 230
Phoenix, Arizona 85007
PHONE: (602) 364-1146
FAX: (602) 364-1175
www.azcjc.gov

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CONTACT: Molly E. Edwards

Public Information Officer

602-364-1151

medwards@azcjc.gov

What Arizona has Been Doing to Tackle Gun Violence Since the 2011 Tucson Shooting

***Nearly \$15 Million in Federal and State Funding Directed Towards Ensuring
Accurate & Complete Criminal History Database/Keeping Guns Out of the Hands
of Individuals with Mental Health Adjudications***

Phoenix, AZ, Tuesday, August 6, 2019 – Over the weekend our nation witnessed two more mass shootings—the first in El Paso, Texas and the second in Dayton, Ohio.

“The Members and staff of the Arizona Criminal Justice Commission (ACJC) join with our fellow Arizonans and all Americans in extending our deepest sympathies to the families and loved ones impacted by these appalling acts of violence,” said Yavapai County Attorney and ACJC Chairperson Sheila Polk. “Arizona is no stranger to this kind of tragedy, but the work that we have done as a state since 2011 is making a difference in creating safer communities for all of our state’s residents.”

On January 8, 2011, a horrific act of gun violence impacted Tucson, Arizona, when a gunman with known mental health and substance abuse issues opened fire at a public event held by U.S. Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords, killing six people and injuring 14 others. As a result of this tragic event, the Arizona Criminal Justice Commission (ACJC) formally established a NICS (National Instant Criminal Background Check System) Task Force.

NICS is a national computerized system that checks available records on persons who may be disqualified from receiving firearms. It is used by all firearms licensees to instantly determine whether a prospective buyer is disqualified from receiving firearms due to a criminal record or other lawful reason.

Members of the NICS Task Force include over 400 representatives from over 100 of Arizona’s local, county, state and federal criminal justice agencies, along with non-governmental organizations, such as domestic violence advocacy groups, and academia. The goal of the NICS Task Force is to develop solutions for ensuring accurate and complete information is reported by Arizona into the National Instant Criminal Background Check system (NICS).

Since 2011, ACJC has successfully been awarded nearly \$15 million in federal grant funds and state general fund dollars to support the improvement of the quality and accessibility of all NICS-eligible records—including mental health adjudications. A few of the key state accomplishments include:

2014

- House Bill 2322: Mandates reporting of all mental health adjudications to the NICS system. As a result, the cumulative total of Arizona mental health adjudications in the NICS system increased from 15,663 in 2013 to 38,803 as of June 2019.

2015

- Senate Bill 1373: Authorized notification of mental health adjudications to law enforcement.
- Senate Bill 1295: Required the courts to obtain appropriate fingerprints on defendants to create a criminal history prior to sentencing. The number of incoming inmates to the Department of Corrections with an accurate history for their crime decreased from 159 in 2015 to 22 in 2018.

2016

- House Bill 2154: Clarified fingerprinting protocols to ensure all adjudicated individuals have an accurate criminal history for their crime.
- Creation of Arizona Historical Warrant Repository to allow for a searchable state-wide database of warrants. The cumulative Active Warrant entries into the National Crime Information Center at the FBI has increased from 11,706 in 2013 to 74,647 as of June 2019.

2017

- House Bill 2249: Overhauled and modernized Arizona's Order of Protection/Injunction Against Harassment system to give greater access to people seeking protection from the courts. The new system will go live the first quarter of 2020.

2018

- Governor Ducey and the Arizona Legislature provided \$1.8 million to ACJC to complete a three-year project to create a direct feed from local and county prosecutors' offices into the Arizona Computerized Criminal History System (ACCH). This direct, real-time feed will help to ensure that the state's criminal history records are as accurate and complete as possible. As of July 2019, over 40 percent of the county records are now being directly fed into the ACCH.

"I am extremely proud of the significant accomplishments that our state has made in improving our criminal history records and putting into place protections that will keep guns out of the hands of individuals with mental health issues," said Andrew T. LeFevre, executive director of the Arizona Criminal Justice Commission. "We will continue to work with the Governor, Legislature, and stakeholders to improve public safety by identifying solutions that will close gaps in our criminal justice systems."

Created in 1982, the Arizona Criminal Justice Commission (ACJC) is a statutorily authorized entity mandated to carry out various coordinating, monitoring and reporting functions regarding the administration and management of criminal justice programs in Arizona. The ACJC serves as a resource and service organization for Arizona's criminal justice community on a myriad of issues ranging from drugs, gangs and victim assistance to criminal history and crime laboratory enhancements.