

REALITY CHECK: Mental Illness and Carrying Guns

Reported by: [Andrea Ramey](#)

Email: aramey@local15tv.com

Published: 7/10 10:47 pm

Updated: 7/10 10:47 pm

MOBILE COUNTY, Ala. (WPML) - There are an alarming number of people who have serious mental health problems, but yet, are still able to purchase guns and get conceal and carry permits in Alabama. It's because only a handful of mental patients are reported to the national database that's used to perform background checks. Mayors Against Illegal Guns ranks Alabama as one of the worst performing states when it comes to providing mental health records. Local 15's Andrea Ramey explains why not all patients are put in the system and why some say more should be.

State law actually limits who can be reported to the National Instant Criminal Background Check System, or NICS. A revision to the law this past legislative session did loosen the restrictions a bit, but some worry it still takes too much to happen before a mental patient is finally added to the list.

"I am the anti-Christ." Worker's at La Bit's Heating and Air received this chilling message on their answering machine in April. "When you arrive in

the morning, I will blow up all the (unrecognizable) in the world."

"Oh, it was frightening. It was frightening," said owner Rodney LaBit.

LaBit says there had been other alarming instances, too. His mail box had been damaged, and he found a brick thrown in the window of his work truck.

"Literally, for weeks we had been terrorized," LaBit said.

LaBit says it was the man living across the street, Kenneth McGee, who was terrorizing him and his employees, several of them close family members.

"For some reason, he got fixated on us," said LaBit.

LaBit says McGee would post delusional messages on Facebook and hide in the woods by his business, stalking the workers. LaBit says he would sometimes scream threats.

"He said he was going to blow the building up and kill everybody," said LaBit.

Investigators say McGee actually tried to carry out that threat by placing a propane tank in LaBit's electrical panel at work and lighting rags on fire in an attempt to bomb the business.

And there was a nagging thought LaBit had while all of this was going on: "If he's mentally unstable, what if he gets a gun?"

Turns out, he could have. At the time, he was not registered in the federal database used for background checks when gun purchases are made. Even though investigators say McGee had been involuntarily committed to a state psychiatric hospital on and off for more than a decade.

In Alabama, probate judges are the ones who refer cases to the database. Mobile County Probate Judge Don Davis says by law, he can only refer cases where a firearm or dangerous instrument was used and inpatient commitment is ordered.

"And a number of our cases are limited to outpatient commitment where the respondent is going to receive treatment in the community," said Davis.

That means people with serious mental problems who are ordered by the court to receive outpatient care aren't added to the database.

In addition to being limited to inpatient cases, up until this year, police officers also had to testify in the probate hearing before a judge could refer a case. The law was amended this year removing that restriction.

"Well, it's better than what it used to be, but this is a shortcoming in my personal view," said Davis.

 [7/10 Reality Check: Mental Illness and Guns](#)

From 2010-2012 in Mobile County, an average of 457 people were involuntarily committed. No more than 4 cases were referred to the database each year. Since the law changed this year, already four have been referred, including Kenneth McGee. It took years of psychiatric treatment in state hospitals and being charged with making terroristic threats to be listed in the database.

"We've got to keep the guns out of the hands of people with mental illnesses," said Mobile County Sheriff Sam Cochran.

Cochran wonders how many mass shootings and tragedies it will take before lawmakers make it harder for guns to get in the wrong hands.

"Time and time again, these tragic events happen across the country. Nearly each and every time, it involves a person that has already been diagnosed, recognized with mental health issues. Yet, they were still able to obtain the weapons. That's the issue I've always said we need to address," said Cochran.

Cochran says his department maintains a database that tracks local probate cases where warrants are issued. That way his office has more information when people come to apply for pistol permits, but he says there is no statewide system like that. So counties are not talking to each other.

More From The Web

- [Baby Dies after Hospital Unwilling to Pay \\$3 for Incubator \(itsybitsysteps\)](#)
- [Things You Should NEVER Say to a Person Suffering From Migraines \(HealthCentral.com\)](#)
- [Kidnapped newborn sold on Facebook; grandfather cashes in \(Daily Dot\)](#)
- [ADHD Classroom Accommodations: Guide to Getting Special Accommodations, Services for ADD Children \(Additude Mag\)](#)
- [The 12 Worst Supermarkets in America \(The Fiscal Times\)](#)
- [Meredith Vieira on Marriage and Multiple Sclerosis \(Lifescrpt.com\)](#)

We Recommend

- [MPD: Man Arrested after Breaking Into Murphy High School \(WPML\)](#)
- [Authorities Recover Bodies of Mississippi Twins from Chickasawhay River \(WPML\)](#)
- [Man Arrested after Five Kids Found on Interstate \(WPML\)](#)
- [Allegations in Wood Family Sex Abuse Cases Interconnected, Says Investigator \(WPML\)](#)
- [Gun and ammo credentials among new Conn. laws \(WPML\)](#)
- [Woman Arrested After a Fatal Accident on Dauphin Island Bridge \(WPML\)](#)

Recommended by

Sponsored Links



LifeLock® Official Site

Victim of Identity Theft? LifeLock Can Protect You From Now On. LifeLock.com



Power Companies Fear This

53 Year Old Man Uses Weird Trick To Cut Power Bill By 75%. Watch Video HomeEcoSolution.com



Transformation of America?

This story could bring shame to the White House not seen since President Clinton www.StansberryResearch.com

[Buy a link here](#)