



## **"A Message from the Inspector General: Audit of Selected Aspects of the Federal Bureau of Investigation's National Instant Criminal Background Check System" July 2021**

Hello, I'm Michael Horowitz, Inspector General for the U.S. Department of Justice.

Today, my office released a report that examined selected aspects of the National Instant Criminal Background Check System, or NICS. NICS is a system maintained by the FBI and is used by retailers to determine whether a prospective firearms purchaser is legally prohibited from doing so.

Our report identified an important gap in the NICS system for individuals who cross state lines to purchase a firearm. Specifically, we found that for out-of-state purchasers, the NICS system only checks whether a person is old enough to purchase a gun under the federal minimum purchase age. It doesn't automatically check whether that buyer meets the age requirements in their home state, which is also required by federal law. As a result, gun retailers are left to manually conduct this check, rather than relying on NICS.

This gap can result in individuals purchasing guns out of state that they would not be able to buy in their home state. For example, in April 2019, an 18-year-old Florida resident traveled to Colorado and purchased a firearm, even though she did not meet the age requirement to purchase a gun in Florida, which was 21 years old. The NICS system didn't prevent the sale, and the sale was completed.

She then allegedly made threats against Colorado schools, resulting in the lockdown and closure of hundreds of schools. Ultimately, the purchaser died of an apparently self-inflicted gunshot wound.

In order to reduce the risk of future improper firearm transfers and to protect the public, our report recommends that the FBI improve the National Instant Criminal Background Check System age verification process.

Today's report made one recommendation to the FBI to help them improve NICS.

To read our report, please visit our website [oig.justice.gov](http://oig.justice.gov), or go to [oversight.gov](http://oversight.gov).

Thank you for joining me today.

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