**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REPORTING ON SUICIDE**

Developed in collaboration with: American Association of Suicidology, American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, Annenberg Public Policy Center, Associated Press Managing Editors, Canterbury Suicide Project - University of Otago, Christchurch, New Zealand, Columbia University Department of Psychiatry, ConnectSafely.org, Emotion Technology, International Association for Suicide Prevention Task Force on Media and Suicide, Medical University of Vienna, National Alliance on Mental Illness, National Institute of Mental Health, National Press Photographers Association, New York State Psychiatric Institute, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Suicide Awareness Voices of Education, Suicide Prevention Resource Center, The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and UCLA School of Public Health, Community Health Sciences.

**IMPORTANT POINTS FOR COVERING SUICIDE**

- More than 50 research studies worldwide have found that certain types of news coverage can increase the likelihood of suicide in vulnerable individuals. The magnitude of the increase is related to the amount, duration and prominence of coverage.

- Risk of additional suicides increases when the story explicitly describes the suicide method, uses dramatic/graphic headlines or images, and repeated/ extensive coverage sensationalizes or glamorizes a death.

- Covering suicide carefully, even briefly, can change public misperceptions and correct myths, which can encourage those who are vulnerable or at risk to seek help.

**Suicide Contagion or “Copycat Suicide” occurs when one or more suicides are reported in a way that contributes to another suicide.**

**INSTEAD OF THIS:**

- Big or sensationalistic headlines, or prominent placement (e.g., “Kurt Cobain Used Shotgun to Commit Suicide”).

- Including photos/videos of the location or method of death, grieving family, friends, memorials or funerals.

- Describing recent suicides as an “epidemic,” “skyrocketing,” or other strong terms.

- Describing a suicide as inexplicable or “without warning.”

- “John Doe left a suicide note saying...”.

- Investigating and reporting on suicide similar to reporting on crimes.

- Quoting/interviewing police or first responders about the causes of suicide.

- Referring to suicide as “successful,” “unsuccessful” or a “failed attempt.”

**DO THIS:**

- Inform the audience without sensationalizing the suicide and minimize prominence (e.g., “Kurt Cobain Dead at 27”).

- Use school/work or family photo; include hotline logo or local crisis phone numbers.

- Carefully investigate the most recent CDC data and use non-sensational words like “rise” or “higher.”

- Most, but not all, people who die by suicide exhibit warning signs. Include the “Warning Signs” and “What to Do” sidebar (from p. 2) in your article if possible.

- “A note from the deceased was found and is being reviewed by the medical examiner.”

- Report on suicide as a public health issue.

- Seek advice from suicide prevention experts.

- Describe as “died by suicide” or “completed” or “killed him/herself.”

**References and additional information can be found at: www.ReportingOnSuicide.org.**

Suicide is a public health issue. Media and online coverage of suicide should be informed by using best practices. Some suicide deaths may be newsworthy. However, the way media cover suicide can influence behavior negatively by contributing to contagion or positively by encouraging help-seeking.

EXPERTS AVAILABLE for media comments, contact:

DHMedia@causecomm.org
323-419-3141
SUGGESTIONS FOR ONLINE MEDIA, MESSAGE BOARDS, BLOGGERS & CITIZEN JOURNALISTS

- Bloggers, citizen journalists and public commentators can help reduce risk of contagion with posts or links to treatment services, warning signs and suicide hotlines.
- Include stories of hope and recovery, information on how to overcome suicidal thinking and increase coping skills.
- The potential for online reports, photos/videos and stories to go viral makes it vital that online coverage of suicide follow site or industry safety recommendations.
- Social networking sites often become memorials to the deceased and should be monitored for hurtful comments and for statements that others are considering suicide. Message board guidelines, policies and procedures could support removal of inappropriate and/or insensitive posts.

MORE INFORMATION AND RESOURCES AT:
www.ReportingOnSuicide.org

HELPFUL SIDE-BAR FOR STORIES

WARNING SIGNS OF SUICIDE

- Talking about wanting to die
- Looking for a way to kill oneself
- Talking about feeling hopeless or having no purpose
- Talking about feeling trapped or in unbearable pain
- Talking about being a burden to others
- Increasing the use of alcohol or drugs
- Acting anxious, agitated or recklessly
- Sleeping too little or too much
- Withdrawing or feeling isolated
- Showing rage or talking about seeking revenge
- Displaying extreme mood swings

The more of these signs a person shows, the greater the risk. Warning signs are associated with suicide but may not be what causes a suicide.

WHAT TO DO

If someone you know exhibits warning signs of suicide:

- Do not leave the person alone
- Remove any firearms, alcohol, drugs or sharp objects that could be used in a suicide attempt
- Call the U.S. National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 800-273-TALK (8255)
- Take the person to an emergency room or seek help from a medical or mental health professional

THE 988 SUICIDE AND CRISIS LIFELINE
DIAL OR TEXT 9-8-8

A free, 24/7 service that can provide suicidal persons or those around them with support, information and local resources.