

Recommendations for Reporting on Suicide to the Media

- Reviews of more than 50 studies on suicide have shown that certain types of news coverage can increase the likelihood of suicide in vulnerable individuals. The magnitude of the increase is related to the quantity, duration and prominence of coverage.
- Risk of additional suicides increases when the story explicitly describes the suicide method, uses dramatic/graphic headlines or images, repeated/extensive coverage, or 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.
- [National Action Alliance’s Framework for Successful Messaging](#)
- [Recommendations for Reporting on Suicide](#)

Media Reporting on Suicide can Influence Behavior

INSTEAD OF THIS:	DO THIS:
Using big or sensational headlines, or prominent placement in the news.	Inform the audience without sensationalizing.
Including photos/videos of the location, grieving family or memorials/funerals.	Use school/work or family photo; include hotline logo or local crisis phone numbers.
Describing recent suicides as an “epidemic”, “skyrocketing”, or other strong terms.	Carefully investigate the most recent CDC data and use non-sensational words like “rise” or “higher.”
Describing a suicide as inexplicable or “without warning.”	Include a “Warning Signs” or “What to Do” list in a poster or article.
Investigating and reporting on suicide similar to reporting on crimes.	Report on suicide as a public health issue.
Quoting/interviewing police or first responders about the causes of suicide.	Seek advice from suicide prevention experts.
Referring to suicide as “successful,” “unsuccessful” or a “failed attempt.”	Describe as “died by suicide” or “completed” or “killed him/herself.”

Avoid Misinformation and Offer Hope

- Suicide is complex. There are almost always multiple causes, including psychiatric illnesses that may not have been treated. However, these illnesses are treatable.
- Avoid reporting that the death by suicide was preceded by a single event, such as a recent job loss, relationship breakup or bad grades. Reporting like this leaves the public with an overly simplistic understanding of suicide.
- Use your story to inform readers about the causes of suicide, its warning signs, trends in rates, and recent treatment advances.
- Include up-to-date local/national resources where readers/viewers can find treatment, information and advice that promotes help-seeking.