

How to Talk, Share, and Report About Suicide

Reporting deaths by suicide is a serious responsibility, but it's also an opportunity to show empathy, support, and understanding. By following guidelines that emphasize sensitivity and accuracy, we can respect the individuals involved, avoid stigmatization, and contribute positively to suicide prevention efforts.

Show Sensitivity and Respect

Make sure reporting on suicides is done with sensitivity toward the individuals involved and their families. Please respect their privacy; avoid sensationalizing details, such as images or graphic depictions, details, and location of death; and do not mention the method used. Reporting details of a high-profile suicide or showing images of the death scene is considered unsafe reporting practices and has been shown to contribute to an increase in suicide attempts and deaths.

Promote Help

Include information about Ohio's suicide prevention hotline, support services, and mental health resources in all communications related to suicide. Suggested text for the hotline: "If you are in crisis, please call, text, or chat with the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline at 988."¹



Provide Accuracy and Context

Please provide accurate information about the factors contributing to suicide without oversimplifying or attributing it to a single cause. Contextualize the incident within broader mental health issues.

Media's Influence

When a death or suicide attempt involves a celebrity or high-profile person, there is a greater likelihood of others identifying with that individual.

Studies show media reporting on celebrity suicides can influence suicide rates.

Research indicates a potential 13% increase in suicides over 1-2 months after coverage of celebrity suicides and a 30% increase in deaths by the same method when the specific method is reported.²

This highlights the importance of responsible media reporting and offers an opportunity to positively impact suicide prevention efforts through thoughtful and considerate coverage.

Choose Words Carefully

As the saying goes, “Words matter.”

Sometimes, even unintentionally, words can make stigma worse and affect how we see suicide.

According to the following information from the Suicide Prevention Alliance, we can all do our part by using the correct words when talking about suicide.³

| Say this | Instead of this |
|---|---|
| Died by Suicide | Committed/Completed Suicide |
| Suicide death | Successful attempt |
| Suicide attempt | Unsuccessful attempt |
| Person living with suicidal thoughts or behaviors | Suicide ideator or attempter |
| Working with someone in crisis | Dealing with someone in a suicidal crisis |

Educate

Take the opportunity to educate the public about the complexities of suicide and mental health, encouraging open conversations and reducing stigma.

Collaborate with local mental health and suicide prevention experts, such as your [local suicide prevention coalition](#) or the [Ohio Suicide Prevention Foundation](#), to provide community and online resources.

Cover community suicide prevention efforts and post-suicide recovery plans, including school programs, support for those recovering from a suicide attempt or loss, and available support and mental health treatment resources.

Resources

- Ohio Suicide Prevention Foundation. ohiospf.org.
- Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services. Resources for reporting on suicide. <https://mha.ohio.gov/about-us/media-center/media-resources/reporting-on-suicide>.

References

1. Safe Reporting Guidelines for Media. AFSP. <https://afsp.org/safereporting/>
2. Association between suicide reporting in the media and suicide: systematic review and meta-analysis | The BMJ. 2020. <https://www.bmj.com/content/368/bmj.m575?ref=sanitybytanmoy.com>.
3. Suicide Prevention Alliance. (n.d.). Suicide language. Retrieved from <https://www.suicidepreventionalliance.org/about-suicide/suicide-language>

ABOUT OHIO SUICIDE PREVENTION FOUNDATION

Ohio Suicide Prevention Foundation (OSPF) educates, advocates for, and builds connections and support for individuals, families, and communities to prevent suicide.



(614) 429-1528 / [OhioSPF.org](https://ohiospf.org)

