

## MEDIA GUIDELINES

Because of its impact on society, how we talk about and report on deaths by suicide matters. Here is a brief guide to what reporters and editors need to know to cover suicide deaths responsibly.

### The Dos and Don'ts about Reporting on Suicide in the Media:

- **Do** educate the public about the facts of suicide and suicide prevention without spreading myths
- **Do** consider the reason behind reporting on this death
- **Do** look for links to broader social issues (e.g., poverty, substance abuse, etc.)
- **Do** respect the privacy and grief of family or others
- **Do** acknowledge the individual's challenges
- **Do** encourage help-seeking behaviour
- **Do** include resources, such as crisis service numbers, as well as education and training opportunities

- **Don't** shy away from writing about suicide. The more taboo, the more the myth.
- **Don't** romanticize the act or reasons for the suicide(s) (e.g., 'We want to be together for all eternity')
- **Don't** jump to conclusions. The reasons why people kill themselves are usually complex.
- **Don't** suggest nothing can be done to prevent suicide
- **Don't** go into details about the method used
- **Don't** cite simplistic reasons for suicide (e.g., 'Boy dies by suicide because he has to wear braces')
- **Don't** use photographs, video footage or social media links

### Your Choice of Language Matters:

- **Do** use plain words like:
  - The person 'died by suicide'
  - The person 'killed herself'
  - The person 'took his own life'

- **Don't** say the person 'committed suicide' – it is an outdated term and implies illegality or moral failing
- **Don't** call suicide 'successful' or attempted suicide 'unsuccessful'. Death is not a matter of success.
- **Don't** use or repeat pejorative phrases such as 'the coward's way out' which reinforce myths and stigma

## HELPFUL RESOURCES

### For Immediate Risk: Call 9-1-1

**For adults in crisis:** Contact COAST (Crisis Outreach and Support Team) 1-866-550-5205

**For children and youth in crisis:** Contact Pathstone Mental Health 1-800-263-4944

### 24-Hour Supports:

- **COAST Niagara:** 1-866-550-5205
- **Pathstone Mental Health Services:** 1-800-263-4944
- **Distress Centre Niagara:**  
St. Catharines: 905-688-3711  
Port Colborne/Welland: 905-734-1212  
Beamsville/Grimsby: 905-563-6674  
Fort Erie: 905-382-0689

- **Kids Help Phone:** 1-800-668-6868  
Jeunesse J'écoute: 1-800-668-6868
- **First Nations and Inuit Hope for Wellness Help Line:** 1-855-242-3310
- **Crisis Services Canada (CSC)**  
For chat support in English and French (daily 4 p.m. – 12 a.m.): 1-833-456-4566 (24/7),  
Text: 45645

For more information and helpful resources, visit our website at:  
[niagarasuicidepreventioncoalition.com](http://niagarasuicidepreventioncoalition.com)

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