

## MEDIA GUIDELINES

Updated: April 2019

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:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Do</b> educate the public about the facts of suicide and suicide prevention without spreading myths</li> <li>• <b>Do</b> consider the reason behind reporting on this death</li> <li>• <b>Do</b> look for links to broader social issues (e.g. poverty, substance abuse, etc.)</li> <li>• <b>Do</b> respect the privacy and grief of family or others</li> <li>• <b>Do</b> acknowledge the individual's challenges</li> <li>• <b>Do</b> encourage help seeking behaviour</li> <li>• <b>Do</b> include resources, such as Crisis Service numbers, as well as education and training opportunities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Don't</b> shy away from writing about suicide. The more taboo, the more the myth.</li> <li>• <b>Don't</b> romanticize the act or reasons for the suicide(s) (e.g. 'We want to be together for all eternity')</li> <li>• <b>Don't</b> jump to conclusions. The reasons why people kill themselves are usually complex.</li> <li>• <b>Don't</b> suggest nothing can be done to prevent suicide.</li> <li>• <b>Don't</b> go into details about the method used.</li> <li>• <b>Don't</b> site simplistic reasons for suicide (e.g. "Boy dies by suicide because he has to wear braces")</li> <li>• <b>Don't</b> use photographs, video footage or social media links</li> </ul>
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### Your Choice of Language Matters:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Do</b> use plain words like:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the person 'died by suicide'</li> <li>- the person 'killed herself'</li> <li>- the person 'took his own life'</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Don't</b> say the person 'committed suicide' – it is an outdated term and implies illegality or moral failing.</li> <li>• <b>Don't</b> call suicide 'successful' or attempted suicide 'unsuccessful'. Death is not a matter of success.</li> <li>• <b>Don't</b> use or repeat pejorative phrases such as 'the coward's way out' which reinforce myths and stigma.</li> </ul>
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The above guidelines are based in part on the Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention (CASP); Mindset: Reporting on Mental Health, produced by the Canadian Journalism Forum on Violence and Trauma; and Preventing suicide: a resource for media professionals, update 2017. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2017 (WHO/MSD/MER/17.5). Licence: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO. These dos and don'ts are intended to be general statements to aid in a responsible presentation of information about suicide.



SUICIDE PREVENTION

is everyone's responsibility

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## HELPFUL RESOURCES

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### 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: 905-688-3711 (St. Catharines); 905-734-1212 (Port Colborne/Welland); 905-563-6674 (Beamsville/Grimsby); 905-382-0689 (Fort Erie)
- 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) – in English and French: Call 1-833-456-4566 (24/7), Text @ 45645 (daily 4pm-12am) and Chat Support

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*For more information and helpful resources please visit our website at:*

[www.niagarasuicidepreventioncoalition.com](http://www.niagarasuicidepreventioncoalition.com)

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