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 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.

References and additional information can be found at: www.ReportingOnSuicide.org.
AVOID MISINFORMATION AND OFFER HOPE

- Suicide is complex. There are almost always multiple causes, including psychiatric illnesses, that may not have been recognized or treated. However, these illnesses are treatable.

- Refer to research findings that mental disorders and/or substance abuse have been found in 90% of people who have died by suicide.

- Avoid reporting that death by suicide was preceded by a single event, such as a recent job loss, divorce or bad grades. Reporting like this leaves the public with an overly simplistic and misleading understanding of suicide.

- Consider quoting a suicide prevention expert on causes and treatments. Avoid putting expert opinions in a sensationalistic context.

- Use your story to inform readers about the causes of suicide, its warning signs, trends in rates and recent treatment advances.

- Add statement(s) about the many treatment options available, stories of those who overcame a suicidal crisis and resources for help.

- Include up-to-date local/national resources where readers/viewers can find treatment, information and advice that promotes help-seeking.

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
WHAT TO DO

THE NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION LIFELINE
800-273-TALK (8255)
A free, 24/7 service that can provide suicidal persons or those around them with support, information and local resources.