



Media Guidelines for reporting on Suicide

Media have a responsibility to characterize and report on suicide in a manner that does not contribute to suicide risk. According to ReportingOnSuicide.org, more than 50 research studies worldwide have found that certain types of news coverage on suicide are a risk factor for suicide. Inappropriate reporting, including the use of dramatic/graphic headlines or images, repeated or extensive coverage, and/or glamorization of suicide can contribute to the elevation of suicide risk for vulnerable individuals and communities.

On the other hand, covering suicide ethically offers media the valuable opportunity to change public perceptions and correct myths, which may encourage those at-risk or feeling vulnerable to seek help. Responsible reporting is therefore a protective factor!

We would like to encourage **responsible and culturally sensitive reporting and social media** through consideration of the following:

- When describing the act of suicide it is appropriate to use the terms “death by suicide” or “died by suicide” rather than “committed suicide”. Individuals are said to be “at risk for suicidal behaviour” rather than “suicidal.”
- “Suicide among Inuit” is more appropriate and grammatically correct than “suicide by Inuit” or “Inuit suicide.”
- Avoid using sensational terms such as “epidemic” or “skyrocketing” when describing the prevalence of suicide among Inuit. Instead, carefully investigate the most recent Health Canada and Statistics Canada data and use non-sensational phrasing such as “elevated rates of suicide among Inuit” or “the high rate of suicide among Inuit.”
- Suicide is a preventable public health crisis in Inuit communities. The challenges that are contributing to suicide risk in our population are well documented; they are rooted in historical trauma and enduring social inequities that have existed for decades. Suicide among Inuit is not an unexplainable phenomenon nor can it be attributed to any single event.
- Suicide is complex. Multiple risk factors can contribute to suicidal behaviour yet individuals are never destined to die by suicide. There is no “recipe” for suicide and prevention and intervention are always possible. Reporting that the individual showed “no signs” or that the event was “sudden” diminish that complexity and disempower people who may otherwise reach out to or

for help. Include “Warning Signs and What to Do” (below) in your article if possible.

- Suicide risk factors are the experiences, events or conditions that research has linked to suicidal behaviour within a population. This means that the lives of people who have died by suicide are more likely to share certain characteristics. These risk factors, such as experiencing childhood violence, are not necessarily “causes”.
- Suicide protective factors include the ability to cope with acute stress, mental wellness, and living in a safe and supportive environment. Protective factors buffer against suicide risk.
- Include stories of hope and recovery, information on how to overcome suicidal thoughts, and increase coping skills.
- When possible, use “trigger warnings” when and if the content will be very emotional; warn your audience ahead of time
- Familiarize yourself with [suicide warnings](#) and [risk factors](#), the language of suicide to help inform readers and reduce the risk of suicide. Seek advice from suicide prevention experts.
- Always refer your audience to community supports and/or crisis lines such as the Nunavut Kamatsiaqtut Helpline at 1-800-265-3333.

Many organizations have developed media guidelines for reporting on suicide, which in the age of social media is more broadly applicable. Please refer to the links below for more information.

We do ask that these guidelines are respected for the safety of suicide survivors and others.

Additional Resources:

<http://www.poynter.org/tag/covering-suicide/>

<http://reportingonsuicide.org/>

<http://www.cbc.ca/radio/thecurrent/covering-suicide-in-the-media-1.1719976>

<http://suicideprevention.ca/understanding/for-media/>

http://www.who.int/mental_health/prevention/suicide/resource_media.pdf

<https://sites.google.com/a/journalismforum.ca/mindset-mediaguide-ca/mindset-download>

<https://sites.google.com/a/journalismforum.ca/mindset-mediaguide-ca/new-chapter-download>

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Warning Signs of Suicide

- Talking about wanting to die*
- Looking for a way to kill oneself
- Talking about feeling hopeless or having no purpose*
- Talking about feeling trapped or in unbearable pain*
- Talking about being a burden to others*
- There is also the less obvious talk like “you might not find me here tomorrow”.
- Jokes about death
- Increasing the use of alcohol or drugs
- Acting anxious, agitated, or recklessly
- Sleeping too little or too much
- Withdrawing or feeling isolated
- Showing rage or talking about seeking revenge*
- Displaying extreme mood swings

The more of these signs a person shows, the greater the risk. Warning signs are associated with suicide but may not be what causes a suicide.

* or posting on social media

What To Do

If someone you know exhibits warning signs of suicide:

- Do not leave the person alone
- Remove any firearms, alcohol, drugs, belts, or sharp objects that could be used in a suicide attempt
- Call Kamatsiaqtut Helpline at 1-800-265-3333 or the Hope for Wellness Helpline at 1-855-242-3310.
- Take the person to the health centre, emergency room or seek help from a medical or mental health professional