

Pain Isn't Always Obvious



Suicide Is Preventable

MAKING HEADLINES

GUIDE TO ENGAGING THE
MEDIA IN SUICIDE PREVENTION
IN CALIFORNIA



suicideispreventable.org



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INTRODUCTION

The California Mental Health Services Authority (CalMHSA), an organization of county governments working to improve mental health outcomes for individuals, families and communities, in partnership with AdEase and the Education Development Center, Inc. is pleased to provide individuals and organizations engaged in suicide prevention throughout California with this Guide to Engaging the Media in Suicide Prevention.

Funded by counties through the voter approved Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) (Prop. 63), this guide is based on a document that was created through a cooperative agreement between the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), Education Development Center, Inc. (EDC), and Suicide Prevention Action Network (SPAN USA). CalMHSA provided funding to AdEase which subcontracted to EDC to revise and update the national document to be relevant and specific to California. The revised Guide will play an important role in helping to achieve California's suicide prevention goals by providing people engaged in suicide prevention with the tools necessary to serve as effective media spokespeople and to generate media coverage in order to create awareness of this important issue.

- Helping to educate the media about suicide prevention can raise awareness about both the problem and the solutions.
- Generating coverage means more people reading and talking publicly about suicide and mental illness, helping to eliminate the stigma that keeps so many people from seeking the treatment they need.
- In the long term, increased awareness and understanding of the value of treatment will build support for ensuring that sources of funding are available even in times of economic trouble.

In 2008 the California Department of Mental Health published the California Strategic Plan on

Suicide Prevention: Every Californian is Part of the Solution (available for download from www.dmh.ca.gov/prop_63/MHSA/Prevention_and_Early_Intervention/docs/SuicidePreventionCommittee/FINAL_CalSPSP_V9.pdf). The California Strategic Plan is evidence-based and built on recommendations of the Suicide Prevention Plan Advisory Committee. It is intended to guide the work of policy makers, program managers, providers, funders, and others in bringing systems together to better coordinate their efforts, and to enhance needed prevention and intervention services. This California Strategic Plan established a blueprint for change on the state and local levels. An important strategic direction in the plan included recommendations for “engaging and educating the news media” to improve awareness and understanding of the problem of suicide as well as resources that are available to help.

The value of reaching out beyond the mental health community to educate more people about suicide prevention is well understood by people in the field and many of those personally impacted by suicide. Speaking out to the media on suicide prevention is an important step in making the California Strategic Plan's vision a reality.

As you move ahead with your local media efforts, be aware that similar efforts are taking place throughout the state and the nation. The National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention is a public-private partnership devoted to advancing the National Strategy for Suicide Prevention. The Alliance has formed a task force on public awareness and education. The task force seeks to engage both the entertainment industry and news media to help generate accurate, compelling stories and depictions that reinforce suicide prevention programs. Learn more about the National Alliance for Suicide Prevention and the public awareness and education task force at: <http://actionallianceforsuicideprevention.org/>.

CALIFORNIA STRATEGIC PLAN ON SUICIDE PREVENTION: *Every Californian is Part of the Solution**

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 3: EDUCATE COMMUNITIES TO TAKE ACTION TO PREVENT SUICIDE

Raise awareness that suicide is preventable and create an environment that supports suicide prevention and help-seeking behaviors.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS AT THE STATE LEVEL

- Launch and sustain a suicide prevention education campaign.
- Coordinate the suicide prevention campaign with any existing social marketing campaigns designed to eliminate mental health stigma and discrimination.
- Engage and educate the news media and entertainment industry.

NEXT STEPS AT THE STATE LEVEL

- In conjunction with any existing social marketing efforts, develop and implement an age-appropriate, multi-language education campaign to positively influence help-seeking behaviors and reduce suicidal behaviors.
- Obtain the necessary social marketing consultation to design, test and promote the suicide prevention messages for target populations at risk for suicide.
- Support local efforts to engage and educate the media by disseminating resources from national suicide prevention organizations.
- Coordinate the suicide prevention campaign with any existing social marketing campaigns designed to eliminate mental health stigma and discrimination.

- Engage and educate the news media and entertainment industry.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

- Build grassroots outreach and engagement efforts to tailor the suicide prevention campaign to meet community needs.
- Engage and educate local media to promote greater understanding of the risks and protective factors related to suicide and how to get help.
- Educate individuals to recognize, respond to and refer people demonstrating acute risk factors and warning signs.

NEXT STEPS AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

- Coordinate local outreach, awareness and education with other social marketing efforts to expand suicide prevention messages and information in multiple languages.
- Design and implement a strategy to better engage and educate the local media on the importance of appropriate and responsible reporting about suicide.

* California Department of Mental Health. California Strategic Plan on Suicide Prevention, 2008.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE

The guide provides individuals and organizations engaged in suicide prevention, such as CalMHSA partners, Prevention and Early Intervention Coordinators and County liaisons with the tools to generate media coverage and the skills to act as effective spokespeople.

The news media is pervasive in our culture. Most people receive their news through reading newspapers, watching news on television, listening to news on the radio, reading news items over the internet or by receiving news updates through social media websites and applications. The media informs the public, educates them and may even inspire them to take action or behave in certain ways. There is no doubt the news media is a powerful resource. It can motivate positive change but it can also perpetuate negative or destructive myths and misinformation.

This guide will help people and organizations engaged in suicide prevention to understand the needs of the news media as part of an effective media outreach program. Media outreach can be a critical component of suicide prevention programs

and activities, enabling you to reach individuals and policy-makers who make or can influence decisions as well as to educate members of the public that may otherwise be difficult to reach.

A critical component of an effective media outreach program is to understand how news stories are developed and what the media considers newsworthy. Although it's not the reporter's job to sell newspapers, he or she must convince the editor that your story should be printed in their newspaper because it covers an issue that their readers care deeply about.

Successful engagement and education of local media is an important way that community organizations, programs, advocates and other stakeholders can contribute to eliminating the stigma surrounding mental illness. It can encourage those in need to seek help, and ultimately help to reduce the number of lives lost to suicide. Let's make it our goal to ensure that Californians understand that suicide is a preventable public health problem.

“Even in a new era, journalism has one responsibility other forms of communication and entertainment do not: to provide citizens with the information they need to navigate society. That does not preclude it being entertaining or profitable—or publishing something merely because it’s interesting. But it does imply a commitment to comprehensiveness.”

Source: The Project for Excellence in Journalism

CREATING SUICIDE PREVENTION MESSAGES

Because suicide is a sensitive issue, there are unique challenges in communicating with the public and the news media about suicide prevention. The potential for stigma associated with suicide requires careful thought and attention to your message. The way in which suicide is presented in the media can affect those bereaved by a suicide death as well as those who could potentially benefit from seeking help. It can also influence the risk of suicide contagion.

The good news is that there are recommended ways to talk about suicide that reduce the potential for stigma and the risk of contagion. If you want to change the way that people talk about suicide, you need to change your message and delivery. “Safe and Effective Messaging For Suicide Prevention” (pages 10-11) offers evidence-based recommendations

for creating messages to raise public awareness about suicide. In addition, the “Recommendations for Reporting on Suicide” (pages 18–19) were developed for the media but they apply to how spokespeople communicate about suicide as well.

One important consideration is your target audience. An effective message considers who you are trying to reach, what they need to know and why it will be important to them. It’s a good idea to develop different sets of talking points for different audiences. For example, if the goal is to support the expansion of a local hotline, you may develop one set of points to convince local officials to allocate funds for the expansion but use a different set of points to educate local residents about the number and the services it provides.

USING THE MESSAGE TRIANGLE

The message triangle is a visual that can aid in creating your message and can serve as a mental “safe harbor” when confronted by controversy or confusion during an interview by allowing the spokesperson to easily return to any one of three core messages. Like the equilateral triangle, all

points are equally important. However, depending on the audience, you may want to customize the message by focusing on areas of specific concern, such as suicide and older adults, or youth suicide prevention. For example, if an interview is for a story for the senior section of a local paper, focus on issues pertinent to suicide and older adults.



TIPS FOR DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE MESSAGES

Messages should be clear and concise. They should be specific about what you want your audience to know and to do.

“Many suicides are associated with mental illness or substance abuse. The good news is that effective mental health and substance abuse treatment programs do exist in our community.”

Memorable messages are vivid and create an image.

“Suicide is a preventable tragedy. We can make a difference in people’s lives and prevent the pain of suicide from affecting our friends and families.”

Use anecdotes, metaphors, similes or word pictures. Appropriate analogies can be powerful ways to communicate your message in a way that people will remember, relate to and repeat.

“More Californians die by suicide every year than are killed in motor vehicle crashes.”

Consider what makes your message newsworthy. Look for opportunities to tie your message to a current event or topic that is already receiving news coverage, or to a piece of legislation or a policy change that is under consideration.

“We were all saddened to hear about the recent suicide death in our community and our hearts go out to the family and friends. By focusing on help and prevention, all of us can work to heal our community when tragedies like this occur, and also reduce the likelihood of them happening in the future.”

Back up your message with evidence. It is not necessary to provide hard data if it is not readily available or if your audience may be more convinced by a compelling example of how a suicide intervention saved a life or made a difference for a specific group.

“Suicide is among the top ten leading causes of death among seniors in California. A major factor in this tragic statistic is the isolation many older adults experience. One solution is to offer suicide prevention training to Meals on Wheels providers in our community, equipping them to recognize signs of depression and suicide risk and how to connect people to the help they need.”



Safe and Effective Messaging for Suicide Prevention

This document offers evidence-based recommendations for creating safe and effective messages to raise public awareness that suicide is a serious and preventable public health problem. The following list of “Do’s” and “Don’ts” should be used to assess the appropriateness and safety of message content in suicide awareness campaigns. Recommendations are based upon the best available knowledge about messaging.^{1,2,3} They apply not only to awareness campaigns, such as those conducted through Public Service Announcements (PSAs), but to most types of educational and training efforts intended for the general public.

These recommendations address message content, but not the equally important aspects of planning, developing, testing, and disseminating messages. While engaged in these processes, one should seek to tailor messages to address the specific needs and help-seeking patterns of the target audience. For example, since youth are likely to seek help for emotional problems from the Internet, a public awareness campaign for youth might include Internet-based resources.⁴

The Do’s—Practices that may be helpful in public awareness campaigns:

- **Do emphasize help-seeking and provide information on finding help.** When recommending mental health treatment, provide concrete steps for finding help. Inform people that help is available through the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (1-800-273-TALK [8255]) and through established local service providers and crisis centers.
- **Do emphasize prevention.** Reinforce the fact that there are preventative actions individuals can take if they are having thoughts of suicide or know others who are or might be. Emphasize that suicides are preventable and should be prevented to the extent possible.⁵
- **Do list the warning signs, as well as risk and protective factors of suicide.** Teach people how to tell if they or someone they know may be thinking of harming themselves. Include lists of warning signs, such as those developed through a consensus process led by the [American Association of Suicidology \(AAS\)](#).⁶ Messages should also identify protective factors that reduce the likelihood of suicide and risk factors that heighten risk of suicide. Risk and protective factors are listed on pages 35-36 of the [National Strategy for Suicide Prevention](#).
- **Do highlight effective treatments for underlying mental health problems.** Over 90 percent of those who die by suicide suffer from a significant psychiatric illness, substance abuse disorder or both at the time of their death.⁷⁻⁸ The impact of mental illness and substance abuse as risk factors for suicide can be reduced by access to effective treatments and strengthened social support in an understanding community.⁹

The Don’ts—Practices that may be problematic in public awareness campaigns:

- **Don’t glorify or romanticize suicide or people who have died by suicide.** Vulnerable people, especially young people, may identify with the attention and sympathy garnered by someone who has died by suicide.¹⁰ They should not be held up as role models.
- **Don’t normalize suicide by presenting it as a common event.** Although significant numbers of people attempt suicide, it is important not to present the data in a way that makes suicide seem common, normal or acceptable. Most people do not seriously consider suicide an option; therefore, suicidal ideation is not normal. Most individuals, and most youth, who seriously

Continued >>

- consider suicide do not overtly act on those thoughts, but find more constructive ways to resolve hem. Presenting suicide as common may unintentionally remove a protective bias against suicide in a community.¹¹
- **Don't present suicide as an inexplicable act or explain it as a result of stress only.** Presenting suicide as the inexplicable act of an otherwise healthy or high-achieving person may encourage identification with the victim.¹² Additionally, it misses the opportunity to inform audiences of both the complexity and preventability of suicide. The same applies to any explanation of suicide as the understandable response to an individual's stressful situation or to an individual's membership in a group encountering discrimination. Oversimplification of suicide in any of these ways can mislead people to believe that it is a normal response to fairly common life circumstances.¹³
- **Don't focus on personal details of people who have died by suicide.** Vulnerable individuals may identify with the personal details of someone who died by suicide, leading them to consider ending their lives in the same way.¹⁴
- **Don't present overly detailed descriptions of suicide victims or methods of suicide.** Research shows that pictures or detailed descriptions of how or where a person died by suicide can be a factor in vulnerable individuals imitating the act. Clinicians believe the danger is even greater if there is a detailed description of the method.¹⁵

Acknowledgment

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CATCHING THE MEDIA'S ATTENTION WITH YOUR NEWS

There are many types of news. It's important to know which category your story falls into because it will determine which editor or reporter to pitch your story to and whether your story should be published as print or broadcast media.

Types of news include:

- **Hard news:** New information that is just becoming public, a story that no one else has reported on or a new angle to an ongoing story.
- **Soft news:** Typically involves a personal point of view on a story such as a profile, human-interest or feature story.
- **Editorials:** Convey the opinions of editorial writers on a particular subject.
- **Events:** Can be hard or soft news depending on the type of event and participants.
- **Calendar announcements:** Notify the public of upcoming events or appearances. Newspapers, especially local papers, and websites often have calendar sections that detail upcoming events.

WAYS TO SELL YOUR STORY

What you may think of as news may not be considered newsworthy by a reporter. You can help make your story newsworthy by offering the reporter the building blocks of a news story:

Basic appeal: Make sure the story is of specific interest to the media outlet's target audience, with the potential to increase readership or viewership.

Example: Pitch a story about a program for student mental health to a campus publication, and connect the story to a local program, service or activity that promotes student wellness.

The right timing: Your story should be directly related to a current event or topic, especially if it is already receiving media attention.

Example: "Butte County will hold its second annual Walk to Prevent Suicide in Bidwell Park on Saturday. Over 200 Butte County residents are expected to participate in this important community event that will raise funds for our local program."

A local angle: Your story should feature local statistics or spokespeople.

Example: "Rates of suicide are highest in the rural counties of California. Our program is taking on this challenge by offering training to local service providers to increase their ability to recognize signs of suicide and how to help."

A human-interest element: Your story must be relevant to people's daily lives and appeal to readers' emotions.

Example: "A local mother who lost her son to suicide is traveling to Sacramento to raise awareness of the need for more funding for programs that could prevent other parents from suffering the same type of loss."

Access to information and people: Provide the media with access to data and statistics that will support the story. **The California Department of Public Health EpiCenter (<http://epicenter.cdph.ca.gov/>), the Centers for Disease Control and Preventions WISQARS database (www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/) and the California Office of Suicide Prevention county data profiles (www.dmh.ca.gov/peistatewideprojects/SuicidePrevention.asp)** are good resources for data and statistics on suicide deaths and hospital and emergency room data related to self injury. Be aware that the latest year data available from these sources is typically 2 to 3 years behind the current year. Your county health department or sheriff's office may have more recent data.

It's also important to provide the media with access to knowledgeable experts who can be quoted in the story. **The California Office of Suicide Prevention (www.dmh.ca.gov/peistatewideprojects/SuicidePrevention.asp)** and any of the ten accredited crisis centers in California are good resources for expertise. An additional national resource is the **Recommendations for Reporting on Suicide "Ask the Experts" website (<http://reportingsuicide.org/talk-to-the-experts/>)**.

It's important to know which news category your story falls into, because the type of news will determine which editor or reporter to pitch your story to.

HOW TO MAKE A GOOD STORY GREAT

CHANGE, INNOVATION OR DISCOVERY:

Release of a report that includes new data; expansion of a hotline into a new area; information about a program or strategy that has demonstrated effectiveness.

A SIGNIFICANT TREND:

A recent change in the data such as a decrease in rates among a specific group; strongly supported anecdotal evidence of a significant shift or change in how people are affected by the issue of suicide.

DATA AND STATISTICS:

Provide evidence to back up your statements, such as local and state data, survey results or evaluation results. Be sure that you do not present the data in a way that makes suicide appear common, normal or acceptable.

USEFUL INFORMATION:

Contact information for a suicide prevention hotline and/or local programs; information about signs and how to help; websites and other resources where people can find out more.

CONFLICT:

Point out any possible supports or threats to the services, programs or activities you are supporting, such as funding issues or proposed legislation.

DRAMA:

Highlight information or personal stories that illustrate the urgency and real impact of your story that the audience may relate or react to.

TIMELINESS:

Tie your message to an event or topic that is already receiving a lot of media attention.

Facts about suicide have been provided in your Media Outreach toolkit or you may refer to the resources provided on page 13 of this guide.

HOW TO WORK WITH THE MEDIA

Generating media coverage for suicide prevention requires a long-term commitment. It is a good practice to identify and cultivate relationships with those reporters who are most likely to be presenting stories on suicide and mental health. Make sure they are aware of you as a ready resource for the information they need to write a good story. Often a single day's news story is generated very quickly, but much of its content can result from months of outreach and a series of information exchanges. There must be a mutually beneficial relationship between the reporter and the story advocate.

To be a credible and timely resource for the media, you must be responsive and prepared. Be positive and answer the questions. Be familiar with "Recommendations for Reporting on Suicide" (pages 18–19) and "Safe and Effective Messaging for Suicide Prevention" (pages 10-11) so you can constructively communicate messages.

A mutually rewarding experience for you and the media involves goal fulfillment for each:

WHAT YOU WANT:

To reach the public

WHAT THE MEDIA WANTS:

To capture the public's attention

WHAT THE MEDIA PROVIDES:

Access to the public

WHAT YOU PROVIDE:

Compelling stories that spark interest

Send the right message to the right people at the right time. The key to successful media relations is developing a rapport by first understanding precisely what they want in a story, and then presenting the relevant information to them clearly and concisely.

- Identify the right people: Make sure you speak to the right reporter or editor. Just because someone is listed as a "health reporter" does not mean he or she has an interest in suicide prevention; he or she may actually report on physical fitness. Research the reporters who are writing the types of stories you want to generate and keep a list of these people.
- Build rapport and cultivate relationships over time: Keep reporters apprised of new information or items of interest regarding your organization even if it won't necessarily result in a story. If they do write about your issue, write a follow-up note to let them know what a great job they did.
- Help reporters do their jobs: Reporters need timely information, expert advice, data and access to spokespeople to do their jobs well. You can be a valuable resource to a reporter by providing breaking news, expertise and access.

The ultimate goal is to make your organization and its spokespeople a "go-to" resource for local reporters. You can achieve this by consistently providing reporters with new information about the issue and the organization.

HELPING THE MEDIA REPORT ON SUICIDE

The media can play an important role in educating the public about suicide prevention and in helping to eliminate the stigma surrounding mental illnesses. Stories about suicide can inform readers and viewers about risk factors for suicide, warning signs and advances in treatment of mental illnesses.

But news stories about individual deaths by suicide also have the potential to do harm. In fact, research has shown that inappropriate coverage can fuel suicidal thoughts and behaviors among already vulnerable individuals. To minimize this risk, reporters need to be sensitive to tone, content and language when reporting on suicide.

TONE

Responsible media coverage uses factual, non-judgmental tones to communicate the full story and to educate the audience about suicide risk factors, including mental illness.

Overly dramatic stories that idealize those who take their own lives by portraying suicide as a heroic or romantic act may encourage others to identify with the deceased. Stories that blame a suicide on a single negative event are overly simplistic as suicidal behavior is complex and often the result of several risk factors, including underlying mental health problems, which may not be readily evident. In addition, prolonged or repetitive coverage of a suicide can invite imitation, particularly when a celebrity or well-known figure dies by suicide.

CONTENT

Exposure to detailed reports of suicide methods or pictures of the location or site can encourage vulnerable individuals to imitate it.

In addition, coverage that continually focuses on a grieving community may encourage some to view suicide as a method for gaining attention or as a form of retaliation against others. Responsible media coverage should mention whether someone who died by suicide had a history of depression, mental illness or substance abuse.

LANGUAGE

Responsible media coverage should describe suicide in ways that do not contribute to “contagion” or “copycat” suicides.

Research indicates that referring to suicide as a cause of death in a headline can contribute to suicidal behavior; the cause of death should be reported in the body of the story. Avoid the term “committed suicide,” which may imply criminal or sinful behavior and instead use “died by suicide” or “completed suicide.”

As suicide prevention spokespeople and advocates, it is our duty to help the media report ethically and responsibly about suicide-related issues. National consensus-based media recommendations have been developed to help journalists cover suicide, reprinted here on pages 18 to 19 and available online at: www.reportingonsuicide.org.

Recommendations for Reporting on Suicide follows.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REPORTING ON SUICIDE

Developed in collaboration with: American Association of Suicidology, American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, Annenberg Public Policy Center, Associated Press Managing Editors, Canterbury Suicide Project - University of Otago, Christchurch, New Zealand, Columbia University Department of Psychiatry, ConnectSafely.org, Emotion Technology, International Association for Suicide Prevention Task Force on Media and Suicide, Medical University of Vienna, National Alliance on Mental Illness, National Institute of Mental Health, National Press Photographers Association, New York State Psychiatric Institute, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Suicide Awareness Voices of Education, Suicide Prevention Resource Center, The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and UCLA School of Public Health, Community Health Sciences.



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.

• **Suicide Contagion or “Copycat Suicide”** occurs when one or more suicides are reported in a way that contributes to another suicide.

References and additional information can be found at: www.ReportingOnSuicide.org.

INSTEAD OF THIS:



- Big or sensationalistic headlines, or prominent placement (e.g., “Kurt Cobain Used Shotgun to Commit Suicide”).
- Including photos/videos of the location or method of death, grieving family, friends, memorials or funerals.
- Describing recent suicides as an “epidemic,” “skyrocketing,” or other strong terms.
- Describing a suicide as inexplicable or “without warning.”
- “John Doe left a suicide note saying...”
- Investigating and reporting on suicide similar to reporting on crimes.
- Quoting/interviewing police or first responders about the causes of suicide.
- Referring to suicide as “successful,” “unsuccessful” or a “failed attempt.”

DO THIS:



- Inform the audience without sensationalizing the suicide and minimize prominence (e.g., “Kurt Cobain Dead at 27”).
- Use school/work or family photo; include hotline logo or local crisis phone numbers.
- Carefully investigate the most recent CDC data and use non-sensational words like “rise” or “higher.”
- Most, but not all, people who die by suicide exhibit warning signs. Include the “Warning Signs” and “What to Do” sidebar (from p. 2) in your article if possible.
- “A note from the deceased was found and is being reviewed by the medical examiner.”
- Report on suicide as a public health issue.
- Seek advice from suicide prevention experts.
- Describe as “died by suicide” or “completed” or “killed him/herself.”



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

HELPFUL SIDE-BAR FOR STORIES



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
- 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.



WHAT TO DO

If someone you know exhibits warning signs of suicide:

- Do not leave the person alone
- Remove any firearms, alcohol, drugs or sharp objects that could be used in a suicide attempt
- Call the U.S. National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 800-273-TALK (8255)
- Take the person to an emergency room or seek help from a medical or mental health professional

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.



CONDUCTING AN INTERVIEW: BECOMING AN EFFECTIVE SPOKESPERSON

As suggested earlier, generating media coverage of your issue and organization requires a long-term commitment. It also requires a comprehensive media outreach program. Part of that program must be the development of an effective spokesperson or spokespeople for your organization. Whether it's a television or radio news broadcast, or a news story in a magazine or newspaper, the majority of news stories will quote at least one person in the story. This person should be versed in the "Recommendations for Reporting on Suicide" (pages 18–19) and "Safe and Effective Messaging for Suicide Prevention" (pages 10–11) that are referenced throughout this document. They should also be familiar with basic data, trends and helpful local resources such as the nearest crisis center affiliates of the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, local crisis hotlines, suicide bereavement support groups and others. Your organization can provide this expertise and may also serve as a conduit to individuals with personal stories that underscore the message that suicide is preventable and that there is help.

Once your organization has identified a spokesperson or spokespeople, they should receive media training if possible. Some people find interviews with the media intimidating at first. Media training can help to overcome their fears and feel more prepared. Media training is often offered through public relations firms, a specialized media training company and through community colleges or universities. Whether or not media training is readily available, the information in this guide will help spokespeople be prepared and effective.

THE ART OF THE MEDIA INTERVIEW

A good media spokesperson will establish credibility and be successful in promoting suicide prevention messaging. Much can be achieved by a well-

executed media interview, but it requires thoughtful planning and preparation. Outlined below are tips to help you prepare for and conduct your media interview.

PREPARING FOR THE INTERVIEW

1. When first contacted over the telephone, inquire about the story's deadline and whether you can schedule the interview so that you will have time to prepare. However, be aware that most reporters operate on very tight deadlines. This is why it is a good idea to have your suicide prevention messages prepared and rehearsed so you can respond on the spot if necessary. If you are able to delay the interview, be sure to call the reporter back after you've had some time to prepare, but as soon as you can.
2. Identify what you want to accomplish. What are your goals in talking with the media? Refer to your suicide prevention messages and how they relate to the specific story the reporter is contacting you about. Is it your goal to take this opportunity to educate people who were previously unaware; or are you trying to correct inaccurate information?
3. Gather background on the reporter. Read stories that he or she has written about suicide or mental health in the past. Know the tone of those articles. Does the reporter have a history of being friendly, neutral or adversarial to your issue, organization or point of view? Remember that you do NOT need to satisfy all requests for interviews, particularly if you believe that the coverage will not promote prevention.
4. Understand the reporter's audience. The reporter is not your audience. Who reads this publication and why would they be interested in suicide prevention?

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5. Tailor your message to the audience. If veterans and service members read the publication, focus your message on suicide and the military. If people in the Latino community read the publication, focus your message on issues related to suicide risk and Latinos.
 6. Try to gather information about the focus of this particular story. Is it a feature or a hard news story? Find out who else will be or was interviewed for the story.
 7. Anticipate negative questions and prepare responses. Some reporters may ask questions that appear to be looking for confirmation of negative myths or stereotypes; be familiar with messaging that helps to debunk these myths.
 8. Gather details about the logistics. Ask the reporter how long the interview will take. Be sure to confirm the time and location or the phone number if the interview will not be conducted in person.
 9. Always provide a copy of the “Recommendations for Reporting on Suicide” to the reporter. You can download a PDF from reportingonsuicide.org or download a Microsoft Word version that can be customized with a local telephone number. Explain that this is important, brief information for the journalist to have when covering this sensitive topic.
 3. Use facts, data and examples to back up your messages.
 4. Do not speculate or answer questions outside of your knowledge or expertise. It is OK to tell the reporter you will need to follow up or to simply state that a question is not in your expertise.
 5. Be honest. If you don’t know the answer, offer to find out and get back to the reporter.
 6. Never say “no comment.” It will make you look uninformed or as if you are trying to hide something. It’s better to explain why you can’t comment. For example, “It would be inappropriate for me to speak on behalf of the individual’s family.”
 7. Never speak off the record. It’s an easy way to get in trouble and a reporter may not honor your wishes. You should consider every conversation with the media as on the record.
 8. Watch out for hypothetical, speculative, personal or proprietary questions.
 9. Be quotable. This means you must be prepared to offer “sound bites” that convey your message in a brief but interesting manner (see “Creating Suicide Prevention Messages”).
 10. Share your experiences. Audiences relate best to people with whom they can identify.
 11. Be positive and avoid sounding intimidated, defensive or combative. The reporter is only trying to do a job. He or she has as much to gain from you as you do from them. Your relationship should involve give and take, just like any other business interaction.
 12. Be enthusiastic. Stress key points by raising your intensity level, not your voice. Vary your pitch and tone, especially for TV or radio interviews.

THE INTERVIEW PROCESS

1. Stay on message. Be sure to state your message in 45 seconds or less up-front. There is no time during a media interview to save your bottom line argument for last (see “Using the Message Triangle” on page 8).
2. Simplify your language, be conversational and use language the audience will understand.

CONTROLLING THE INTERVIEW

Although you have no direct control over the story's editing, you do have control over the message and the strength with which you deliver it. Remember that how you deliver your message is as important as what you say. Effective delivery includes beginning with the message you want to convey, offering supportive points of proof and reiterating your key points in the summary of the interview.

During an interview, you may be asked difficult questions or ones that stray from the topic you agreed to discuss. Remember that you want to cultivate a relationship with the media and to be seen as a valuable resource: If the reporter asks a question you prefer not to answer, acknowledge that you heard and understand the question but use the bridging techniques explained below to transition back to one of your key messages. If you don't know the answer to a question, it is okay to say, "I don't know the answer to that question but will get back to you"; never say, "no comment."

It is important during any interview not to repeat a negative question or comment by the reporter or to refuse to answer a question. Instead, block the negative question and bridge to something that you do want to talk about.

"BRIDGE" TO YOUR KEY MESSAGES

Examples of blocking a question and bridging to your key message:

"The best way to answer that question is to tell you what we are trying to do..."

"That question raises an interesting point, but the more important point is..."

"That is not really the issue. The real issue is..."

"I can't speak to that. But what I do know is..."

"The most important matter at hand is this..."

"Let's focus on the facts..."

"Allow me to frame my answer like this..."

"Looking at that question broadly..."

You don't want the reporter to think you are simply avoiding answering his or her question. So practice choosing the right bridge phrase to turn any question into an opportunity to communicate your message.

FOLLOWING UP AFTER THE INTERVIEW

Call or email the reporter shortly after your interview. This will give you an opportunity to clarify information or facts or provide additional perspective. Ask if there is anything else you can provide, such as contact information for other suicide prevention experts or information about hotlines or other prevention resources. Also, if you failed to deliver a key message during the interview, simply say, "There is one important point I failed to mention during the interview that you should find interesting..."

USING TELEVISION TO TELL YOUR STORY

Despite the intense competition for media coverage, the number of media organizations offering news continues to grow with the explosion of online media and 24/7 news. This is true for television, radio, print and online media. While you may not get your first story on television, there are many alternatives that will help you establish credibility and build toward more news coverage over time. Don't be hesitant to consider all of your media options.

THE “VISUALNESS” OF TELEVISION

Television is a visual medium that requires appealing images that make your story come alive for the viewer. If you do not have a great visual to offer—a live event or interview, footage of people engaged in activity or a compelling graphic image—television is probably not the most appropriate medium for your story.

TYPES OF TELEVISION OUTLETS

In your community, there may be several television stations to contact with your news, such as local network affiliates, regional cable news networks, news bureaus, cable channels, university stations, public broadcasting stations and specific television programs.

- If your story is local, pitch local network affiliates or regional cable news networks.
- University and public broadcasting stations often do not have news departments, but offer programs that appeal to local audiences.
- Local television programs may be ideal for feature stories and spokesperson interviews.

Example: Television outlets in one mid-sized market: Fresno

Although the City of Fresno has a population of 495,000, it is served by numerous broadcast outlets including:

- KAIL (MyTV)
- KFRE (CW affiliate)
- KFSN (ABC affiliate)
- KSEE (NBC affiliate)
- KGPE (CBS affiliate)
- KMPH (Fox affiliate)
- KNXT (Catholic television)
- KVPT (PBS affiliate)
- KFTV and KTFF (Univision)
- KAMM (Caballero television)
- And a number of other religious, shopping or low-power stations (you can find lists of local broadcasters on websites such as www.stationindex.com or in the resources at the end of this guide)

Radio and Cable Access Stations: Ask the public information or community affairs directors at area radio stations and cable television stations about their community calendars. In most cases, you should be able to get information about your event or activity included if you get the information to the station early enough.

WHO TO CONTACT AT A TELEVISION STATION

NEWS ASSIGNMENT EDITORS

Who they are: News assignment editors choose the stories the station will cover and assign specific reporters to cover them.

When to contact: Contact the news assignment editor when you have a breaking or hard news story, or more general news that does not fall into a specific reporter's beat. Lead times will depend

on the reporter, timeliness of your news and other competing news stories. A good rule of thumb for contacting is to provide 2 to 3 weeks lead-time to schedule an on-air interview or to invite a reporter to cover your event or press conference.

Remember: There are different assignment editors for the morning, afternoon, evening and weekend shows, so make sure you talk to the correct person.

NEWS PLANNING EDITORS

Who they are: News planning editors assign reporters to long-lead stories. They also list events on the station's planning calendars.

When to contact: Contact the news planning editor when you want to publicize an upcoming event. Each publication is different, but you should allow at least one month lead time for publicizing your event. The goal is to get as many people to see your event in the calendar listings as possible and to see it at least 2 to 3 times.

Remember: Stations in small markets may not have a planning editor, in which case the news assignment editor would be an appropriate contact.

BEAT/FEATURE REPORTERS

Who they are: Beat reporters cover a specific issue for the television station such as health care or business. Feature reporters cover soft news and human-interest stories.

When to contact: Contact beat or feature reporters when your story fits with their type of reporting.

Remember: Beat reporters who cover mental health are likely to be knowledgeable about the issue. Anticipate the types of questions they might ask and be prepared to provide them with accurate and detailed information.

PROGRAM PRODUCERS

Who they are: Program producers select features for specific television programs, such as talk shows.

When to contact: Contact a producer to suggest a topic or spokesperson for their talk show.

Remember: In some media markets, talk shows may have a "booker" who is solely responsible for securing guests.

Example: Suicide Prevention Week Awareness Event

- Contact the news planning editor weeks in advance to get the event listed on the station's planning calendar.
- Contact the news assignment editor days before the event with any relevant updates.
- Contact the health beat reporter to attend a breakout session about effective suicide prevention strategies.
- Contact the producer of a local public affairs program to pitch a story about suicide prevention advocates delivering a petition to your legislators.
- Contact the booker to schedule an appearance for your executive director.

Radio can be a great medium to get your message out because there are many local and national radio programs that address specific issues, such as health care, that are of concern to the stations' listeners. Radio is a particularly valuable form of media in rural areas.

USING RADIO TO TELL YOUR STORY

There are many different types of radio programs that you should consider as a medium to convey your message and to communicate news about your organization:

- News segments: Provide a quick and timely update of the day's news as it happens.
- Listener call-in programs: Focus on a specific topic of discussion and solicit listener feedback.
- Morning and afternoon “drive-time” programs: Feature a mix of light chat, news, traffic and weather updates, often interspersed with music.
- Talk shows: Offer the viewpoints of a radio personality and often feature interviews with a variety of guests.
- Public affairs programming: Focus on local government and community events, often pertaining to specific issues such as health care. Many public affairs programs offer opportunities to position your organization's spokesperson as a panel speaker.

WHO TO CONTACT AT A RADIO STATION

NEWS ASSIGNMENT EDITORS OR NEWS DIRECTORS

Who they are: News assignment editors generate story ideas and assign stories to reporters. News directors choose the stories the station will air.

When to contact: Contact the news director with a breaking or hard news story. Contact the news assignment editor with soft news, a feature story or an interview opportunity.

Remember: In small markets, a radio station may only have a news director or news assignment editor—not both—who plays a dual role.

REPORTERS

Who they are: Reporters cover news and events for the station, often on location.

When to contact: Contact reporters directly when they are assigned a specific beat relevant to your issue or location.

Remember: Radio stations have limited resources and may have only one or two reporters to cover many issues. Assignments are sometimes based on schedule and availability more than individual beats.

PROGRAM PRODUCERS

Who they are: Program producers develop ideas, manage requests, line up guests and brief the program host.

When to contact: Contact the producer to suggest a topic for a program or to offer an expert to serve as a guest.

Remember: In smaller markets, the host of a radio program may also serve as the producer or be the only contact for the show. Radio programs often have a highly targeted focus, so make sure your news is relevant.

Example: County Hosts Conference on Suicide Prevention

- Contact the news director at your local talk radio station to pitch hard news regarding the conference, such as the release of new, groundbreaking research.
- Contact the news assignment editor to ask if the station is interested in interviewing a representative from your organization to discuss the importance of suicide prevention and what your organization is doing to raise local awareness
- Invite a reporter to attend a conference session featuring a prominent speaker.
- Contact the producer of a program that addresses health issues to suggest suicide prevention as a show topic; offer a spokesperson from your organization to discuss warning signs and community resources.

USING PRINT MEDIA TO TELL YOUR STORY

Print media provides numerous opportunities to convey your messages to targeted audiences. In addition to daily and weekly newspapers, consider the number and variety of venues available to communicate your messages through print media. Most print media also maintain websites, providing you with even greater reach for your stories.

EXAMPLES OF PRINT MEDIA ARE:

- Health magazines such as *Prevention*
 - Publications that address issues of concern to older adults such as *Sacramento Senior Spectrum*
 - Parenting magazines such as *Bay Area Parent* and *Growing Up Chico*
 - College and university papers such as *Humboldt State Now*
 - Magazines geared toward women and women's issues such as *Valley Women*
 - Newsletters and magazines of industry and trade associations such as the California Mental Health Counselors Association or the San Diego County Medical Society
 - National, local and regional newspapers
 - Regional magazines such as *Monterey County Magazine* and *Inland Empire Magazine*
- Provide reporters with warning signs and offer tips on how and where people can receive treatment or help.
 - Encourage reporters to consider significant trends: "Researchers Find that Safely Storing Firearms Saves Young Lives."
 - Provide reporters with local human-interest stories: "Local Family Hosts Fundraiser to Support Crisis Hotline."

It is unlikely that one reporter would cover all of these issues. Identify and establish a rapport with a variety of local reporters who may be interested in some aspect of your cause such as:

- Health reporters
- Business reporters
- Religion reporters
- Community reporters
- Education reporters

MAGAZINES

With thousands of magazines in circulation in the United States, magazines provide opportunities to reach key segments of your target audience such as youth, seniors, parents, teachers, veterans, faith leaders and health care workers, to name a few. The large number of health-related and special interest magazines in the United States provides numerous opportunities for articles and feature pieces on issues related to suicide prevention. Magazines cover hard news, soft news, general interest, human interest, profiles and other feature stories.

One drawback of monthly magazines is their deadline. They have a long lead-time of approximately three months. That means if you want to pitch a story for the December issue, you need to have your story to them in August or September. You might plan to pitch a story by linking it to a public health observance such as Suicide Prevention Week or

NEWSPAPERS

Major daily newspapers and weekly community newspapers all offer great variety in the types of stories they cover. From in-depth interviews with local business and community leaders to announcements about local community events, newspapers strive for balance and variety. To provide balance and variety, you can:

- Consider providing a local or regional perspective on suicide prevention that highlights groundbreaking activities of organizations in your area.

World Suicide Prevention Day. **The National Health Information Center** maintains an annual calendar of monthly and weekly public health observances at <http://healthfinder.gov/nho/nho.asp> that can help you plan ahead for mental or public health stories.

NEWS WIRES

News wires, such as AP, UPI, Reuters, Bloomberg and Dow Jones, write news articles that are distributed to newspapers all across the country. Often, they are first to break a major news story. Wire services are appropriate to only pitch breaking news and only if a local story has some national appeal.

WHO TO CONTACT AT PRINT PUBLICATIONS

SECTION EDITORS

Who they are: Editors decide which stories will run and oversee the content for a specific section of the publication.

When to contact: Contact health editors with news about suicide prevention. Contact city or metro editors with information about an upcoming local event. In a smaller media market, there may only be one general news editor who oversees the content for the entire publication.

Remember: At large publications an editor is usually not the best first point of contact. Although editors do assign stories to reporters, it is better to pitch a specific beat reporter, who will then pitch the story to the editor. The pitch is more likely to be successful coming from someone within the publication.

BEAT REPORTERS

Who they are: Beat reporters focus on specific issues. You may want to contact health, community affairs, local interest, political or business reporters depending on your story.

When to contact: Contact a beat reporter when you have news or information that is relevant to the issues they cover.

Remember: Beat reporters have a deeper understanding of their issue. Be prepared to answer specific questions. As the mental health and/or suicide prevention expert, it is your job to provide a reporter with as complete a story as possible. Be sure to include the Who, What, When, Where, Why components and include quotes and data or facts to back up your story.

CALENDAR AND DAYBOOK EDITORS

Who they are: Calendar and daybook editors manage a listing of regional events.

When to contact: Contact calendar editors at newspapers and magazines when you have an event that is open to the community. Contact a daybook editor at a news wire when you host a media event.

Remember: Contact calendar and daybook editors far enough in advance of your event to help maximize attendance. A good rule of thumb is to submit your calendar listing at least one month prior to your event.

Some Additional Contacts: Bureau chiefs manage a branch of the newspaper or wire service located outside the publication's home city and prioritize what needs to be covered in that city. For example, many regional newspapers such as the *Los Angeles Times* also have a bureau chief in Washington, D.C., to cover Congress and the White House. Contact a bureau chief only when something happening in your area has national relevance. Many California newspapers have capital bureau reporters in action during legislative session. If you are conducting policy and advocacy work, it is beneficial to make contact with these specific reporters for your cause.

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- Some print outlets, especially wire services, may also have an assignment editor who assigns day-to-day responsibilities. Contact the assignment editor when there is not a specific editor or reporter assigned to your issue.
 - Columnists write opinion pieces and are often syndicated in newspapers across the country.

Columnists are good contacts for lending a well-known and widely read voice to your issue, if they agree with your views. Be sure you know their perspectives before pitching a story idea to a columnist. The same applies for an Editorial Board when you want to submit an Op-Ed (see page 36).



INFORMING THE MEDIA WITH A PRESS RELEASE

Press releases should be an important component of a media outreach program, but they should never substitute for a comprehensive media campaign. Many organizations rely too heavily on the press release to achieve their media objectives.

WHEN TO USE THE PRESS RELEASE

Journalists receive thousands of press releases every day. To stand out, yours must be relevant to the journalist's beat, contain newsworthy information and be timely. Examples of what makes a press release newsworthy include:

- Hard or breaking news
- Release of a new study
- Statement outlining your organization's position on passage of legislation
- Announcement of a new partnership, program or campaign for your organization

Soft news, human-interest or feature stories rarely merit a press release. Those are better conveyed to journalists through pitch letters and phone calls.

TIPS FOR WRITING A PRESS RELEASE

- Grab the reporter's attention with a hard-hitting headline in boldface type.

- Include a strong lead paragraph, which persuasively conveys your key messages.
- Write in short, concise sentences and paragraphs—provide essential information, data and statistics, but avoid extraneous details.
- Emphasize the local angle when applicable.
- Always include a quote from your organization's spokesperson or other issue expert. Reporters frequently lift quotes from a press release to use in a news story.
- Present the information in order from the most important to the least important facts.
- Be sure to answer the basic questions: who, what, when, where, why, and how.
- Keep it to one page, but never more than two pages.
- Include contact information and your website.
- Don't forget to include the date.

Never send your press release as an attachment. Always send it in the body of an email. Reporters are often suspect of attachments, which may contain computer viruses, and will delete email attachments without reading them.

An example of a press release follows.

SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE



Nov. 7, 2011

Media contact: Heather Shelton, 441-5547 and hshelton@co.humboldt.ca.us

Suicide prevention training teaches people to ‘Question, Persuade and Refer’

Every 15 minutes, someone in the United States dies by suicide, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

A new report released by the CDC finds that for every person who dies, there are many more who think about, plan or attempt suicide.

A Humboldt County Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Public Health Branch training program called “Question, Persuade and Refer” (QPR) is helping to break down the stigma surrounding suicide and, at the same time, is teaching community members about the warning signs of suicide and about what to do if someone they come in contact with is exhibiting these behaviors.

“Suicide is a community problem,” said DHHS Public Health Branch Director Susan Buckley. “We have to work together as a community to find a solution.”

The CDC study, released in late October, is the first to present state-by-state data specifically focused on suicidal thoughts and behavior among U.S. adults. It is based on findings from the 2008-2009 National Survey on Drug Use and Health.

The CDC report reveals that suicidal thoughts and behaviors vary broadly by region. Of the 92,264 people polled, the number of adults who said they had had serious thoughts of suicide ranges from 1 in 50 in Georgia (2.1 percent) to 1 in 15 in Utah (6.8 percent). For suicide attempts, the range is from 1 in 1,000 adults in Delaware and Georgia (0.1 percent) to 1 in 67 in Rhode Island (1.5 percent).

According to the CDC, in California, 1 in 29 adults (3.4 percent) surveyed said they had seriously thought about suicide. One in 111 (0.9 percent) reported that they had gone on to create a suicide plan and 1 in 250 (0.4 percent) of the adults questioned said they had attempted suicide.

According to the CDC, suicide rates are consistently higher in the western states than other areas around the country. The “County Health Status Profiles 2010” report, put out by the California Department of Public Health every year, shows that the 2010 suicide rate in Humboldt County was 24.8 suicides per 100,000 persons, which is comparable to other small rural counties.

“Suicide is a tragedy for individuals, families and communities,” said Dr. Thomas M. Frieden, CDC director. “This new report by the CDC highlights that we have opportunities to intervene before someone dies by suicide. Most people are uncomfortable talking about suicide, but this is not a problem to shroud in secrecy.”

Humboldt County’s QPR training is designed to help raise awareness about warning signs around suicide. A simple educational program, QPR teaches ordinary citizens how to recognize at person at risk. The program is funded by Mental Health Services Act-Prevention and Early Intervention Suicide Prevention.

“The idea behind this training is to empower people to reach out and assist someone who may be thinking about suicide,” said Kris Huschle, a Public Health Branch health education specialist who presents QPR trainings locally.

Just as people trained in CPR help save thousands of lives each year, she said, people trained in QPR can save lives, too.

“In CPR, the public is educated about the classic signs of a heart attack and how to respond,” Huschle said. “In QPR, the public is educated about the warning signs of a suicide crisis — expressions of hopelessness, depression, giving away prized possessions, talking of suicide, securing lethal means — and how they can respond.”

QPR stresses the importance of good communication and listening skills when dealing with a crisis situation.

“Asking questions can really help us identify where that person is on the spectrum of suicide ideation,” Huschle said. “It helps us know what we can do. Do we call 911 or, more likely, help the person in distress identify people in their life that care and will listen and be there for them? It helps us gauge what that person needs and how we can best get them to seek the help that they need.”

To date, more than one million Americans have been trained in QPR by certified QPR instructors like Huschle. About 500 people have been trained in Humboldt County since the program started in November 2009.

QPR training is available to anyone in the community. For more information about scheduling a QPR training for your workplace, organization or group, call Huschle at 441-5554. The training session runs about 90 minutes, although Huschle can present a shorter or longer program depending on a group’s specific needs and interests. Early morning, evening and weekend presentations can be arranged.

“This is a community program and the community doesn’t always operate on an 8 to 5 schedule, so I am available to give presentations at different times,” Huschle said. “The most important thing here is to get the word out. We can all make a difference and through the QPR training, possibly save someone’s life.”

CREATING A MEDIA ADVISORY

A media advisory is used to inform reporters about an upcoming event. The media advisory should be sent to the media about two weeks prior to an event.

TIPS FOR WRITING A MEDIA ADVISORY

- Include details of the event such as when and where it is taking place, featured speakers and topics that will be discussed.
- Answer the basic “who, what, when, where, why, and how” questions.
- Include a contact person who can field media calls, provide background information and schedule interviews with your organization’s spokesperson.
- Some reporters (especially broadcast) prefer to have advisories faxed to them, while others prefer email. Try to determine the best approach prior to sending the advisory so that you don’t start off on the wrong foot.
- Follow-up is essential: Call reporters on the day you send the advisory to see if they received it, determine their interest in attending and of

covering the story even if they cannot attend. If they cannot attend, ask for the name of another reporter at their organization who might be interested in covering the event.

- Send out a reminder advisory a week to a few days prior to the event.
- Send out a reminder advisory the morning of the event and call the reporters on your list to follow up again after you have sent the reminder.
- Send a press release following the event to all reporters who received the advisory, including those who did not attend.

The media availability is a variation of the media advisory that is meant to inform the media that your organization’s spokespersons are available at a specific date and time for interviews regarding a hard or breaking news issue.

An example of a media advisory follows.

SAMPLE MEDIA ADVISORY



HHSA
tularehhsa.org

**PRESS
RELEASE**

EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE UNTIL AUGUST 31, 2010

Media Contact: Allison Lambert, Media Specialist, 559-624-8000

****PRESS ADVISORY** **PRESS ADVISORY** **PRESS ADVISORY****

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS PROCLAIM SEPTEMBER 5TH – 11TH AS SUICIDE PREVENTION WEEK IN TULARE COUNTY

WHO: Tulare County Board of Supervisors, Tulare County Health & Human Services Agency and the Tulare County Suicide Prevention Task Force.

WHAT: The week of September 5th – 11th is declared Suicide Prevention Week in Tulare County by the Tulare County Board of Supervisors. The Tulare County Suicide Prevention Task Force will give a presentation on prevention and outreach efforts.

WHEN: 9 a.m. on Tuesday, August 31, 2010.

WHERE: Board of Supervisors Chambers, located at 2800 W. Burrel Ave., in Visalia.

WHY: Since January 1st 2009, Tulare County has lost 70 of its community members to suicide, with 30 of these deaths occurring since January 1st 2010. The proclamation of September 5th – 11th as Suicide Prevention Week in Tulare County will continue the goal of Suicide Prevention Awareness Week as it raises awareness that suicide is a public health problem that is preventable. This week runs concurrently with “National Suicide Prevention Awareness Week,” and features activities in numerous communities around our country.

A number of events will celebrate Suicide Prevention Awareness Week in Tulare County. These include the Festival of Hope held on September 4th & 5th, which is designed for public awareness and engagement, and will kick-off the week. This event features professionals who will create chalk murals, live music by local bands, chalk murals by community organizations, activities for children, resource and information booths relating to health, mental health, and substance abuse treatment, and documentary presentations. Two sessions of Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) will be held during the week. ASIST is an internationally recognized training to enhance the skills and abilities of trained individuals to intervene during a suicidal crisis.

Media Contact:

Allison M. Lambert, Media Specialist

Health & Human Services Agency

559.731.5085

alambert@tularehhsa.org

PITCHING YOUR STORY

While you may believe that your story is important and warrants media coverage, reporters are inundated with story ideas from businesses, nonprofits and other organizations that feel that their stories are also important.

Convincing a reporter to cover your story takes careful planning and preparation. Even if you are successful in encouraging a reporter to report your news, he or she must then sell the story, or convince their editor or producer that the story will be of interest to the publication's readers or to the station's viewers.

Reporters can be pitched over the telephone, in person or with a pitch letter via email. An emailed pitch letter followed by a phone call is an effective way to communicate a story idea to the media. Different media outlets prefer to receive pitch letters in different manners. Always call to determine their preferred method. When emailing anything to a reporter, remember that they often will not open attachments. Copy and paste the text of your pitch letter (or press release or media advisory) into the body of an email.

THE MAKING OF A GOOD PITCH LETTER

A good pitch letter will immediately grab a reporter's attention and cause him or her to give serious consideration to your story idea. To achieve this, your letter must:

- Pique the reporter's interest in the first sentence by offering something new or creative.
- Get to the point quickly within the first paragraph.
- Be no longer than one page (250–500 words maximum).
- Convince the reporter that the story matters to his or her readers, or has local relevance.
- Briefly outline evidence that supports your main point.

Remember, also:

- Pitch letters should always be followed up with a phone call.
- Be sure to thank the reporter for considering your story idea and provide your contact information for follow-up purposes.

TAILORING YOUR PITCH

Example: County Suicide Prevention Advocates gather for a rally in support of a ballot measure to protect state mental health funding.

- **Mental Health Reporters:** Focus on the coming together of suicide prevention advocates and mental health organizations to achieve a common goal: raising awareness about suicide and eliminating the stigma associated with mental illness.
- **Health Reporters:** Focus on the idea that mental health is essential to overall health and recent trends related to mental health parity.
- **Congressional Reporter:** Focus on the role of grassroots advocacy in encouraging legislation that recognizes mental health as a public health priority.

An example of a pitch letter follows.

SAMPLE FEATURE STORY PITCH LETTER

[Recipient Address]

[Date]

Dear [Mr./Ms. Reporter's Name]:

Joe Black is an education counselor, a husband and a father. He also happens to be a survivor of suicide loss: His father died by suicide five years ago. Today, Black leads a local bereavement support group for people who have lost someone to suicide death.

Like many other Americans who have lost a loved one to the tragedy of suicide, one of Black's toughest battles has been against stigma. Countering the aura of shame and blame associated with suicide is critical, especially to those who struggle with mental health problems that can lead to thoughts of suicide and those who care about them.

People who have struggled with thoughts of suicide, and even those who have attempted suicide, can and do recover and go on to lead full and active lives. But stigma about suicide and mental health problems inhibit too many from seeking the life-saving help that is available. Friends and family members also suffer from this stigma, too often feeling guilt and shame in the bereavement.

Reducing the stigma associated with suicide is critical in helping more people recognize the signs of suicide and how to seek help for themselves or a loved one, and to be willing to take the steps to receive this help. We have joined a new State initiative the goal of which is to educate people about the signs of suicide and how to help. This initiative includes a social marketing campaign and educational materials. [Add a line here about your local campaign.] We need your help to get this message out to our community.

[Local organization or program] has several spokespeople like Joe Black who are dedicated to sharing their personal stories as a way to ensure that others will not have to experience their pain. They are available to share their stories and discuss suicide prevention in our community.

Please give me a call if you would like more information or want to set up an interview. For more information on suicide prevention, please visit [insert website address here]. I hope you'll help us spread the word that suicide is preventable.

Sincerely,

[Name]

[Organization]

[Phone Number]

CONTROLLING YOUR MESSAGE WITH AN OP-ED

Op-eds derive their name from the fact that they appear opposite the editorial page in a newspaper. They are opinion pieces that express the writer's position on an important issue. Op-eds are normally written and submitted by someone who is considered an expert on the issue.

It is not easy to get an op-ed published since a newspaper contains far fewer op-eds than news stories on any given day. You have a better chance of getting your op-ed published if it's written by a subject area expert who is well-known in the community and if the topic is receiving a lot of attention in the media. For example, you may be more likely to get an op-ed on suicide prevention placed immediately following a well-attended community event such as a rally or walk, or after the death of a well-known individual.

WRITING AN OP-ED

When drafting an op-ed, assume the reader has little or no knowledge of the issue. Make sure the op-ed is timely, clearly written, expresses a strong argument and backs that argument up with hard facts. Be brief, clear and conversational. Follow a simple structure:

- Express your opinion; editors often look for op-eds that express opinions that have not been articulated elsewhere in the publication.
- Support your opinion with facts, data, examples or statistics.
- Include personal experiences, particularly as they relate to the issue.
- Conclude by summarizing your position and hooking the reader into wanting to know more.

SUBMITTING AN OP-ED

Most op-eds are between 600 and 800 words. Since most publications have special requirements, call the publication before you write or submit an op-ed to determine word length and submission requirements. Guidelines for submitting op-eds can often be found by visiting the publication's website.

Include a short letter or email with the op-ed, asking the editor to consider the article and to contact you if they use it or if they need more information. Include your complete contact information. If the issue is time sensitive, mention that in your letter. For example, "This article is particularly timely in light of the upcoming World Suicide Prevention Day on September 10."

If you send an op-ed to a large statewide newspaper such as the *Los Angeles Times*, these newspapers generally require an exclusive, so do not send it to more than one paper at the same time. If your submission is rejected, you should send it to another paper for their consideration.

If you submit your op-ed to a small local newspaper, it is generally acceptable to send it to other small newspapers as long as they are not in the same media market. Call the newspaper to determine their rules.

An example of an Op-Ed follows.

SAMPLE OP-ED

Printed in the Contra Costa Times, June 11, 2012

In the Aftermath of Suicide

By John Bateson and Judi Hampshire, LMFT

Our hearts go out to the family members and friends of the 15-year-old Danville girl who died by suicide recently, as well as to everyone else who has lost a loved one this way. Their pain is great.

At the same time, we want to point out four things that have been absent from media coverage. First, there have been no side-bar stories on suicide warning signs. These signs are easy to miss if a person isn't looking for them, and also easy to misinterpret. Ongoing expressions of helplessness, hopelessness, feeling intolerably alone, and being a burden to others are significant signs, as is talking about death and suicide. Other signs are dramatic changes in eating and sleeping patterns, the giving away of prized possessions, loss of interest in activities once enjoyed, increased use of alcohol or drugs, themes of death in written work, and withdrawal from others.

Second, there has been no information on what to do if someone exhibits warning signs of suicide. Don't leave the person alone. Remove any object that could be used in a suicide attempt such as a gun, sharp knife, razor blade, or drugs. Take the person to an emergency room or seek help from a mental health professional. Call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (800-273-TALK); all local calls are answered 24-7 by trained counselors at the Contra Costa Crisis Center and are treated confidentially.

Third, there hasn't been any information to help parents talk with their children following the suicide of a friend or classmate. Provide reassurance that your child is loved and supported. Spend extra time with him or her to create a sense of security and presence should they need to talk or cuddle. Be trustworthy and calm when youths share their distress.

Also, help children express their feelings if they're struggling with what to say. Answer questions to the best of your ability, but remember that it's okay to say, "I don't know" (teens respect adults who don't know everything). Speak openly, using the words "suicide," "killed herself," and other frank terms to show that you're willing to talk seriously about tough topics.

Most importantly, LISTEN. Even when it's painful or frightening to hear: LISTEN. Don't leap to problem solving and advice giving. In most instances, youths just need to be heard and their feelings respected.

The fourth and final thing that has been missing is any mention of resources to turn to when you or someone you love is mourning a death. The Crisis Center's grief counseling program includes individual counseling and support groups for youths and adults, as well as grief response teams and a 24-hour grief line (800-837-1818). All services are free and confidential.

By focusing on help and prevention, all of us can work to heal our community when tragedies like this occur, and also reduce the likelihood of them happening in the future.

John Bateson is executive director of the Contra Costa Crisis Center. Judi Hampshire is the crisis line/211 director at the center.

REINFORCING YOUR MESSAGE WITH LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Most newspapers and magazines welcome letters from readers. A letter to the editor offers your organization the opportunity to respond to positive or negative coverage that has already appeared in the publication. A letter can also be used to correct inaccurate or misleading statements or omissions of key facts made in previously published stories.

Letters to the editor should include:

- The writer's contact information, including phone number
- A specific reference to the article you are responding to and the date the article was published
- The specific points your organization wants to convey to readers about the article and the issue

TIPS FOR WRITING A LETTER TO THE EDITOR

- Make your most important points in the first paragraph or two, because your letter may be edited by the publication.
- Limit your letter to one page, no more than 400 words.
- Respond immediately after a story appears; many publications will not print letters referencing articles more than a week old.

SUBMITTING A LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Check with the publication to find out the best way to submit your letter. Most publications will accept letters via email or fax. Many also accept, or even require, that letters be submitted via their website.

Unfortunately, not all letters to the editor are published. Don't be discouraged if yours doesn't make it into print. Your efforts will help your organization gain recognition with the newspaper as one that is genuinely interested in and knowledgeable about the issue.

An example of a letter to the editor follows.

SAMPLE LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Published: Tuesday, April 24, 2012 in the Press Democrat, Santa Rosa, CA

Reporting on Suicide

EDITOR: As a community member and child and adolescent psychiatrist, I read with concern Saturday's article about the possible death by suicide of a 15-year-old Santa Rosa resident ("SR teen's body found"). Several aspects of the article were not in keeping with national expert guidelines for the reporting on suicide in order to help prevent copy-cat acts.

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.

The prominent placement of this article, the level of detail included in the article and an online link "for more photos from the search," suggest that The Press Democrat may be unfamiliar with these statistics. It is my hope that this letter might be published with specific resources for teens and families in distress:

Sonoma County Psychiatric Emergency Services, 576-8181.

U.S. National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, 800-273-8255.

American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Depression Resource Center,
www.aacap.org/cs/Depression.ResourceCenter.

<http://reportingonsuicide.org>.

DR. SUSAN MILAM-MILLER

Santa Rosa

EDUCATING THE MEDIA WITH A PRESS KIT

Press kits are a key component of a media outreach program and all organizations should have one. Press kits should be prominently featured on your organization's website since most reporters who cover your organization will visit your website for additional information.

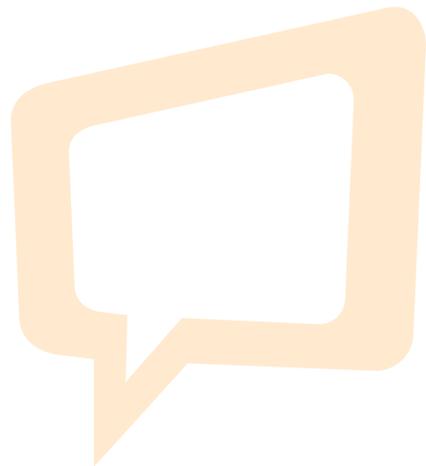
Press kits are almost always made available to reporters during events. In addition to containing information specific to the event such as speaker bios, they also include background information on the organization and the issue.

While press kit materials must provide reporters with enough information, including supporting facts and data, they should be kept brief and on message. No reporter has time to wade through mounds of unnecessary detail. Try to keep each fact sheet to a single page.

TYPICAL ELEMENTS OF A PRESS KIT

- Fact Sheet(s)—Provide background information about the organization and the issue such as:
 - About us—A brief description of your group, project or organization and its mission
 - Warning signs
 - Suicide statistics
 - Resources
 - State-specific fact sheets
 - History of the organization or chronology
 - Partners or sponsors
- Spokesperson bios—Provide background information on the organization's spokespeople and/or other third-party experts scheduled to speak at an event.
- Charts, graphs, photographs, research findings or other materials that provide a visual image and support your message.

You should also make the contents of your press kit available online. If applicable, make sure all press materials are consistently branded with logos or other recognizable elements of your program or campaign.



IDENTIFYING APPROPRIATE MEDIA OUTLETS

There are a number of online resources and published directories that will enable you to identify media outlets as well as the names and contact information for specific editors and reporters. (A list of resource guides is provided in the Appendix of this media guide.) Alternatively, your organization may choose to use a service such as PR Newswire, Business Wire or North American Precis Syndicate (NAPS), which will distribute your news for a fee. PR Newswire and Business Wire disseminate press releases to print, radio and TV newsrooms in specific geographic areas, while NAPS distributes news articles to a network of community newspapers. At other times, it may be appropriate to pay a service to distribute an audio news release or arrange a radio or satellite media tour for your organization.

There are several ways to obtain the names and contact information for reporters, editors and producers:

- Call the main contact number for the media outlet and ask for the name and contact information for the health reporter or other contact.
- Visit the media organization's website for specific reporter names and contact information.
- Obtain a media directory that lists the names of media organizations and contact information of journalists by beat. Note that these directories are not always completely up-to-date, so it is sometimes best to just pick up the phone. Media directories are available for purchase online or your local public or college library may have them in their reference sections. If your agency has a public information officer, he or she may also have access to contact lists.

PLANNING AND HOLDING A PRESS CONFERENCE

First and foremost, be clear about your reasons for staging a press conference. Press conferences should be reserved for major turning points in a program or campaign, developments with wider community implications, issues of interest to a large section of the population or unique events. For anything else, a press release is likely more appropriate.

Once you've decided that a press conference is in order, develop your overall theme/central message:

- Decide what the central message will be.
- Make it clear why this issue is important to the potential audience.
- Prepare a list of questions and answers that you would anticipate and that include opportunities to reinforce your suicide prevention messaging.

Below is a list of potential items to cost out before the event:

- Printed materials including press kit folders and labels, agenda/program, talking points, media alert, press release
- Audio/visual equipment
- Professional photographer
- Visual aids (posters, banners, graphs, t-shirts, badges, signage, etc.)
- Food and beverages (catered or otherwise)
- Venue (hotel, conference room, etc.)

Decide who your main spokesperson and moderator will be:

- These individuals should be subject-matter experts or suicide prevention advocates and be experienced in speaking at such events. If not, they should be trained prior to the event to make sure they stay true to the message. More

experienced speakers can help develop your spokesperson's speech or talking points.

- Media will be more likely to come if you have an interesting or well-known speaker present such as an expert in the field, someone who has been personally affected by the issue or local officials.

Select an effective date and time:

- Set the date and time, taking into consideration reporters' deadlines. Best days are Tuesday through Thursday.
- However interesting your news is, journalists won't turn up at your conference if it's not held at a convenient time.
- If you're trying to attract journalists from daily newspapers and/or evening television news, schedule your conference in the morning to provide plenty of time for reporters to get back to the office and write their story before their afternoon deadline.

Location:

- Make sure your conference is held in a central venue that is easily accessible for journalists and won't take them away from their desks for too long.
- Choose a well-lit venue with little background noise and make sure it has ample electrical outlets.
- You may select a venue that has some symbolic significance or connection with your story. For example, if your story is about a new program, you may choose to hold the conference at the location that will provide the service. However, the logistical considerations listed above should take precedence. You can always use art, banners or other props to make a practical venue more interesting.

Invite media and guests:

- Prepare the background materials (media alert, fact sheets, etc.)
- Send out mailings to key media well in advance, telling them why they should attend. Follow these up with calls to check they will be attending and if they're not planning to, use it as an opportunity to try to persuade them to come.

Be visually creative: If possible, develop visual aids such as banners, posters, t-shirts and large graphs or figures. Another way is to visually suggest solidarity and enthusiasm by having confirmed attendees wear the same color t-shirts.

Offer refreshments (if possible): If your budget can afford it, providing food may give you a chance to build a relationship with journalists afterwards by encouraging participants to gather informally.

Distribute printed information to media following the press conference:

- Make sure participants remember your key messages and have information for follow-up by providing them with a press kit to take with them (see page 40).
- Email your press release with an interesting photo from the event to your master media list as soon as you return to the office.

OTHER USEFUL TOOLS AND STRATEGIES

CREATING MEDIA LISTS

Because you will be communicating with reporters on an ongoing basis, it is advisable to create a media list or several media lists that provide names and contact information for journalists. These lists enable you to contact the media quickly with news about your organization.

Because reporters change beats and jobs frequently, your media lists should be updated on a regular basis, at least twice a year. Set aside time periodically to call the media outlets on your list and ask if specific journalists are still there and still have the same beat and position. You should also update media list entries as you learn information while talking to members of the media on the phone and get inquiries from journalists not already on your list. It is better to have a media list that is too long than one that is out of date or does not include key people.

TRACKING RESULTS

Unlike advertising, there is no precise science or industry standard in the field of public relations for measuring an organization's success. The closest public relations has come to standardized measurement is to track media impressions. Tracking the results of your media efforts provides important and useful information about who is writing and what they are writing about. For example, if a reporter from your local newspaper has mentioned your organization or quoted your spokesperson in numerous stories, you should build a rapport with that reporter for a possible feature story at a later date.

Tracking your results also enables you to share examples of positive media coverage with key stakeholders such as members and potential members, donors and potential donors and your Board of Directors. It tells your stakeholders that your message is being heard and that your organization is effective in achieving results. Keep copies and screenshots of the coverage you get. These can be posted on bulletin boards, assembled into scrapbooks, included in annual reports and newsletters and used in other ways to ensure that your audience doesn't miss the results you generated.

USING SOCIAL MEDIA

The focus of this guide is traditional news media, such as newspapers, television and radio. However there is no doubt that social media is rapidly becoming an important way that news is shared between readers/viewers. There are instances where a story covered in a local newspaper "goes viral" over the internet and is viewed by people around the country or even the world. The impact of a story can grow exponentially through social media exposure. Social media can also be a powerful way to reach specific groups.

If you are interested in exploring the use of social media as part of your media outreach program, a good place to start is to review two resources developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: the Social Media Toolkit and Guide to Writing for Social Media. Both are available for download from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's website: www.cdc.gov/SocialMedia/Tools/guidelines/.

MEDIA OUTREACH IN RURAL AREAS

Rural communities have unique needs, strengths and weaknesses when it comes to engaging the media. Larger television stations, print media and radio stations are often located in metropolitan areas. Some local newspapers are part of a chain whose editor sits in an urban location far away from the rural community. Your local paper may publish once a week or less often. So you may need to be mindful of long lead times and the need to reach out to both your local reporters and to distant editors or producers.

On the other hand, it may be easier to form a personal relationship with staff of local media outlets. You may know them through shared networks or find them easy to meet. The local radio station might have very high listenership in a community with few media outlets; “everyone listens” and there isn’t a lot of competition. News and information about your program on a station like this will reach a large portion of your intended audience. Community calendars in the local paper may also be very well read.

Outreach in a rural area needs to go beyond the traditional news media and beyond the press release. Consider outreach opportunities by having an information table at community events, fairs or celebrations that bring large numbers of people together. The event may receive some media coverage and it can give you the chance to present your suicide prevention message directly to your audiences.

Many smaller towns place signboards or sawhorses at well-traveled intersections. This can be a great way to promote an event. Community bulletin boards may also be a more accessible and efficient tool to reach the public than through the media. Make a list of the bulletin boards in your area churches, synagogues, mosques, post offices, libraries, grocery stores, thrift shops and community centers. You may be able to post fliers about events you are planning or describing your program at any or all of these locations. If you have enough volunteers, you could consider handing out materials at these locations. And don’t forget about government offices. Many people have occasion to visit the county assessor’s office, department of public works or social services agency.

Finally, there may be a number of local groups that print and distribute newsletters on a regular basis. Whether a Sunday church bulletin, the Meals on Wheels update, or an insert that arrives with the district water bill, your information could be included if you follow the same outreach principles outlined here. Make your message timely and relevant, useful and interesting. Position yourselves as the expert on this topic and follow safe messaging guidelines.

For more tips on rural outreach, see the “Media Outreach Guide for Child Welfare Agencies (www.ruralsuccess.org/RSP_mediaguide.pdf). Although the topic is different, it contains information that can be useful for suicide prevention activities as well.

SUGGESTED RESOURCES FOR WORKING WITH THE MEDIA

A GOODMAN

Good Ideas for Good Causes. Online resources to support people working with nonprofits to tell their stories and engage the public. Available for download at www.agoodmanonline.com/publications/index.html.

MEDIA DIRECTORIES LIST STATIONS AND PUBLICATIONS WITH THEIR ADDRESSES, PHONE NUMBERS AND KEY CONTACTS

They are also available in an online, searchable format. Two examples are Cision and Vocus. For costs and subscription information, call Cision at **1-866-639-5087** or visit <http://us.cision.com> or Vocus at **1-800-345-5572** or visit www.vocus.com.

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF COUNTY AND CITY HEALTH OFFICIALS MEDIA OUTREACH GUIDE

Designed for local health departments but full of general information as well. Available online at www.naccho.org/advocacy/LHDcommunications/media.cfm.

NEWSLINK

A free online resource that provides links to the websites of U.S. newspapers, radio and television outlets by state and type. This tool is available at <http://newslink.org>.

WORLD SUICIDE PREVENTION DAY RESOURCES

Website that includes information and materials that can be downloaded for local use in planning observances: www.iasp.info/wspd/index.php.

STEPS TO DEVELOPING AN EFFECTIVE MEDIA OUTREACH PROGRAM

Note that many of the terms below were not used. Use the worksheet below as helpful reminders in developing the key elements of your organization's media outreach program. Keep in mind that these are suggestions, not a formula.

1. Define your media objectives.
2. Create a realistic timeline for achieving your objectives.
3. Identify your primary and secondary target audiences.
4. Develop key messages.
5. Identify and draft appropriate media materials.
 - Media advisory
 - Fact sheets
 - Press release
 - Suicide statistics
 - Spokesperson bios
 - Warning signs
 - About us
 - Resources
6. Identify credible spokespersons and ensure they are familiar with "Safe and Effective Messaging for Suicide Prevention" and "Recommendations for Reporting on Suicide."
7. Conduct media training as necessary and appropriate.
8. Develop one or more media lists and a plan for regularly updating them. This can be a spreadsheet or a table that includes the following types of information: Contact name and affiliation, beat/title, contact information including phone and email, physical address and notes.
9. Develop news "angles" or story ideas.
 - Change, innovation or discovery
 - Conflict
 - A surprising or disturbing trend
 - Drama
 - New report or release of
 - Funding issues data and statistics
 - Tie in with major health issues
 - Useful information
 - Angle on another story already receiving media attention
10. Identify appropriate pitch and a plan for how they will be delivered.
 - Pitch letter
 - Media advisory
 - Press release
 - Media kit
 - Phone calls
11. Make your pitch.
 - Follow up
 - Provide reporter with any additional information or resources
 - Arrange interviews
12. Track results. Develop a table or spreadsheet that documents how your story was covered and the results of the coverage as best you can determine. This could include the type of media coverage including date it ran, information about the circulation and reach of the media type; notes on your impressions of the coverage; and any changes noticed after the story ran such as phone calls or website hits to your organization, responses from the audience such as letters to the editor from a newspaper story or comments from readers of internet stories.

GLOSSARY OF MEDIA TERMS

Note that many of the terms below were not used in this guide, however it may be useful to have a general familiarity with them as you communicate with members of the media.

ASSIGNMENT EDITOR: The person who assigns stories to journalists and reporters.

AUDIO NEWS RELEASE (ANR): A 60-second radio news story, packaged to include a 15–20 second sound bite from your spokesperson, that is pitched and fed to radio stations and networks around the country.

BEAT: The territory or subject assigned to a reporter (e.g., “health care”).

BYLINE: Name of the writer or reporter, usually printed at the beginning of a story.

BYLINED ARTICLE: A manuscript written by a member of your organization to establish your spokesperson as an expert on a subject matter

B-ROLL: Rolling video of supporting pictures that play during the narration of a television news package (e.g., footage of a speaker during a news conference).

CIRCULATION: The number of subscribers to a newspaper, magazine or journal.

DAYBOOK: A daily roster of events maintained by a wire service that informs journalists of upcoming news and events.

DEADLINE: The latest time material to be used by the media can be received or approved.

EDITOR: A person who revises and corrects material for a print publication, or corrects tape or film for a broadcast outlet.

EDITORIAL: A commentary expressing the opinion of the editor or publisher of a particular publication.

FEATURE STORY: A longer, more probing special article, section, page or story (as opposed to an “objective” news item or account), in which human interest is stressed over immediacy.

LEAD: The opening sentence or paragraph of a news story.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR: Response to a news story or opinion item submitted to a publication or broadcast outlet by a member of the audience.

LOCAL AFFILIATE: A local television or radio station serving as a national network’s primary outlet for the presentation of its programs in a given market.

LONG-LEAD: Publications, such as monthly magazines, that have longer production times and therefore require the submission of materials far in advance.

MAJOR DAILIES: Major daily newspapers in national media markets such as The New York Times, Wall Street Journal, Los Angeles Times, or Boston Globe.

MEDIA IMPRESSIONS: Estimate of how many people are reached by a particular outlet or campaign.

NETWORK: Often used in the past just to refer to the "big three" broadcast networks—ABC, NBC, CBS—the term now applies to any radio or television system with local affiliates, such as Fox, Mutual Radio Network or the Public Broadcasting System.

OP-ED: A commentary featuring the opinion of someone other than the editors or publishers of a particular publication.

PASS-ALONG AUDIENCE: Individuals who do not subscribe to a publication but still access it.

PITCH: Contact with a reporter, producer or assignment editor to suggest a story idea or offer news to report.

PRODUCER: An individual who oversees the development, creation and public presentation of a program.

RATING: The size of the television audience as measured by the number of TV-equipped households watching.

READERSHIP: The total number of people actually reached by a publication; the primary and pass-along audiences together (versus circulation).

SATELLITE MEDIA TOUR (SMT): A series of pre-booked television and/or radio interviews with stations and networks across the country, conducted from one location during a set block of time.

SECONDARY MARKETS: These are media markets outside of major cities.

SIDEBAR: A short accompanying piece for a larger story, often with a human-interest angle and usually blocked off from the main text.

SOUND BITE: A 7- to 10-second statement from a spokesperson that is incorporated into a radio or television news story.

SYNDICATE: An organization that buys, sells and distributes stories, columns, features, Sunday supplements, etc. to newspapers, magazines and periodicals for simultaneous publication.

SYNDICATED FEATURE: A short audio or video program containing news, personalities, critiques, etc. that is sold to individual broadcast stations.

SYNDICATED PROGRAM: Any non-network program sold, licensed, distributed or offered to television stations' licensees in more than one market.

SYNDICATED WRITER OR COLUMN: A writer or column carried by a number of different newspapers.

TRADE PRESS: A newspaper or magazine that serves the interests of a particular industry, such as health care, design, computers, pharmaceuticals, food service, etc. Also called a trade journal, trade magazine, trade paper or trades.

VIDEO NEWS RELEASE (VNR): A packaged 90-second to 2-minute news story crafted especially for airing as “filler,” or to add impact and images in news blocks. VNRs also have B-roll, or background footage, tagged onto the end for producers who are looking for generic footage to enhance their stories.

VIEWERSHIP: A generic term for television audience in general; a term similar in scope to readership.