The Priority Center
Ending the Cycle of Generational Trauma

Best Practices for News Media Covering Suicide
- **From the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline**

Covering suicide is never easy, but it's very important to do it right. Research has shown that improper reporting on suicide can contribute to additional suicides and suicide attempts.

Always include a referral phone number and information about local crisis intervention services. In online coverage, include links to prevention resources to help inform readers and reduce risk of contagion.

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline toll-free number, 1-800-273-TALK (8255), connects the caller to a certified crisis center near where the call is placed.

Avoid splashy headlines such as "Kurt Cobain Used Shotgun to Commit Suicide."' Instead, inform the audience without sensationalizing the suicide, e.g. "Kurt Cobain Dead at 27."

Don't include photos of grieving family, friends, memorials or funerals.

Report on suicide as a public health issue, not a crime.

Don't quote the suicide note or describe the method used.

Instead of describing the rate of recent suicides as an "epidemic," or "skyrocketing," carefully investigate the most recent Center for Disease Control data and use non-sensational words like "rise" or "higher."

Most people who die by suicide exhibit warning signs. Refrain from describing a suicide as "inexplicable" or "without warning."

Avoid quoting police or other first responders about causes of suicide. Instead, seek advice from suicide prevention experts like the Lifeline.

Don't refer to suicide as "successful," "unsuccessful" or a "failed attempt." Use "died by suicide," "completed suicide" or "killed him/herself."

Develop policies and procedures for safe commenting and monitor for hurtful messages or comments from posters who may be in crisis. Consider posting the Lifeline information in the first comment box in any story about suicide.

For additional information, please visit: https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/media-resources/ or www.reportingonsuicide.org.

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