

Responsible Reporting on Suicide



The media's coverage of suicides can influence public behavior. "Suicide contagion" refers to a phenomenon where media coverage of one suicide can lead to increased suicide attempts by others. Responsible reporting is essential to prevent contributing to this phenomenon as well as promoting stigma.

Get Clear on the Latest Data

- **Statistics (2023 CDC Report):**
 - Suicide rates increased approx. 36% between 2000–2021.
 - Suicide was responsible for **48,183 deaths in 2021**, about 1 death every 11 minutes. This includes adults and youth.
 - The number of people who think about or attempt suicide is even higher.
 - Suicide affects people of all ages although some groups have higher suicide rates than others.
- **Risk Factors:** Mental health disorders, such as depression, bipolar disorder, and schizophrenia, are significant risk factors for suicide. Substance abuse, previous suicide attempts, a family history of suicide, and a history of trauma are also important risk factors.
- **Warning Signs:** Recognizing warning signs is crucial for early intervention. These signs can include talking about wanting to die, feeling hopeless or trapped, giving away possessions, withdrawing from others, and displaying extreme mood swings.
- **Protective Factors:** Strong social support, access to mental health care, and effective coping skills are protective factors that can reduce the risk of suicide. Raising awareness about available resources and support systems is important.

Reporting Tips

- The media should adhere to responsible reporting guidelines when covering suicide. Check out reputable sources like [AFSP](#) and other [collaborative reports](#).
- Avoid sensationalizing and glamorizing suicide, don't use photos or videos of suicide or provide details around a suicide death; focus on the struggles and the positives of the life lived and hope.
- Avoid using words like "committed" and "successful". Use "died by suicide" and "attempted".
- Focus on providing helpful information, resources, and fostering understanding.
- Avoid connecting suicide with a singular cause.
- Suicide shouldn't be a feature story, this leads to copycat situations.
- Educate and ground viewers in the stats, avoid referring to an "epidemic".
- Do emphasize that help and recovery is possible.