

# If You Deal with the Media

Recognize that suicide is news. The mission of a news organization is to report information on events in the community. If a suicide is considered newsworthy, it will probably be reported. Efforts to prevent news coverage may not be effective. The goal should be to help news professionals to report responsibly and accurately.

## Talking about suicide does not cause suicides

- Communicating news of suicide deaths and reporting on or recommending suicide intervention and prevention measures is a critical function, which only the media can fulfill.
- Certain forms of reporting these tragic events have been shown to help prevent suicides.
- How you present facts and the language you use can diminish rumors and perhaps reduce the possibility of increased suicidal behavior.

## Information to convey to reporters

- Offer information about a suicide or series of suicides in a non-sensationalized, non-romanticized, non-graphic fashion. Avoid placing blame on events, friends and relatives. Acknowledge the grief process for the community.
- Provide concise factual information that increases public awareness of risk factors, warning signs and possible actions to help a suicidal person. In most cases, there are warning signs of an impending suicide. Yet, at the time of a suicide, those closest to the victim did not know about, or may not have seen, those warning signs. Finding and focusing on these warning signs can help to increase general public awareness of how to recognize and respond to help a suicidal person.
- Describe what is being done to promote safety in the aftermath of a suicide. Local crisis intervention activities usually follow a suicide. Publicizing the significant efforts under way by schools and community organizations gives options for help to community members affected by the tragedy.
- List available community resources for at-risk people. Information on available resources, including hotline numbers and other local resources, can direct at-risk individuals — and their friends and family members — to help.
- The National Suicide Helpline, 1-800-273-TALK, is an appropriate resource to include in any story related to suicide.
- Periodically share stories about people who have made it through difficult situations. Stories that present positive ways of coping with problems help prevent further suicide attempts. For vulnerable people, these stories can highlight positive role models and provide alternatives to ending one's life.
- "No comment" is not productive. Refusing to speak with the media will not prevent coverage of a suicide. Use a media request for information as an opportunity to influence the content of the story. Always provide information on state and local resources for suicide prevention and crisis intervention and other available services.