



STATE OF MICHIGAN

GRETCHEN WHITMER
GOVERNOR

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
LANSING

ELIZABETH HERTEL
DIRECTOR

Dec. 22, 2021

Dear Public Health and Media partners,

Suicide is a hard topic to discuss and report on, and a complex public health issue. Recently, a major news outlet published a news story that contained potentially harmful messaging for individuals at-risk of suicide. Due to the circulation of that story within our state, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) is reaching out to our media and public health partners to share current Suicide Prevention Media Resources with you.

We respect and encourage the autonomy of the media. We also believe in sharing best practices within a public health context as it relates to the coverage of suicide. When crafting your messages about suicide prevention and reporting on a death by suicide, we urge you to make sure they align with safe and effective messaging recommendations.

Worldwide studies have found that certain types of news coverage can increase the likelihood of suicide in vulnerable individuals. Word choice matters and responsible reporting that encourages help-seeking can reduce the risk of additional suicides.

Media Resources for Suicide Prevention Reporting Toolbox

The American Association of Suicidology toolkit, [Media as Partners in Suicide Prevention](#) was generated by extensive consultation with journalists and those with lived experience of suicide attempts and thoughts. It contains critical information for all media professionals looking to effectively report on suicide as a topic.

[Recommendations for Reporting on Suicide](#) is a two-page document that was developed with worldwide suicide prevention agencies. It offers specific reporting strategies that could help prevent another suicide or encourage someone to seek help.

[The National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention](#) offers several resources on its media messaging page, including "Real Stories" which helps media tell positively framed news stories. The National Action Alliance also has several other categories of information, including a framework for successful messaging which aims to inform organizations how to craft media content about suicide.

There are also Michigan-based coalitions, crisis lines, fact sheets, trainings and events listed on the MDHHS website at [Michigan.gov/suicideprevention](https://michigan.gov/suicideprevention).

The [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#) number, 800-273-8255, should be included with any news media materials that talk about suicide.

As many of you know, I am deeply passionate about this issue having lost my former legislative roommate and many fellow Marines to suicide. I hope you might receive this message in the spirit with which it is intended: to share best practices and to increase positive outcomes for all Michiganders. Thank you for your work on this important public health issue. Together we can make a difference in Michigan.

Sincerely,
David Knezek
Senior Chief Deputy Director
Michigan Department of Health and Human Services