



Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago  
Ministry of Health

# Ministry of Health Guidelines for Reporting on Suicide

***Suicide is a national health issue in Trinidad and Tobago. The media perform an integral role in the responsible reporting of this issue. The way in which suicide is reported can either contribute to suicide contagion or encourage individuals in vulnerable conditions to seek help. Suicide Contagion or “Copycat Suicide” occurs when one or more suicides are reported in a way that contributes to further suicides.***

## **Points to Note when Reporting Suicide**

- 1. Suicide is preventable.***
- 2. Always include a message of hope at the end of all media reports.***
- 3. Include local help resources and encourage people to seek help.***



# 11 BEST PRACTICES

## FOR RESPONSIBLE SUICIDE REPORTING BY THE MEDIA

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#### INSTEAD OF THIS

#### DO THIS INSTEAD

1. Describing details of the method or location of death.	Exercise caution. You may mention that someone has died by suicide, but do not explicitly describe the method and location.
2. Including words and video/photographs that might be painful to loved ones.	Use images and words that engender hope and encourage persons to seek help.
3. Publishing the identity of minors including names, addresses and images.	Use general details such as gender and age.
4. Providing a simplistic explanation for suicide or attributing it to a single cause such as stress or job loss.	Explain the complexity of suicide by including the warning signs, risk factors and coping strategies.
5. Normalising suicidal behaviour as an acceptable or common response to life's hardships.	Explain that suicide is a public health issue and that most persons experiencing hardships do not die by suicide.
6. Using sensational headlines or prominent placement in newscasts, including describing suicide as an epidemic.	Inform the audience about the event without using emotional or dramatic headlines. Use non-sensational words like rising or changing.
7. Using stigmatising language such as successful/ unsuccessful suicide, failed attempt or committed suicide.	Use phrases like "died by suicide" or "took his/her life".
8. Reporting the content or details of a suicide note.	Share that a note was found and is being examined by the police.
9. Speculating and quoting the opinions of first responders on the reason for the suicide.	Provide facts. Research data from credible sources such as the World Health Organization or the Mental Health Unit, Ministry of Health of Trinidad and Tobago.
10. Glorifying or describing the suicide as valiant.	Present a balanced story on the person.
11. Referring to persons as 'suicidal' or 'the mentally ill'.	Use person-first language such as 'a person contemplating suicide' or 'persons living with a mental illness'.

#### ADDITIONAL MEDIA RESOURCES ON SUICIDE REPORTING

- Ministry of Health**
  - <http://www.health.gov.tt/news/newsitem>
  - <http://www.health.gov.tt/sitepages/default.aspx?id=230>
- Pan American Health Organization (PAHO)**
  - [https://www.paho.org/hq/index.php?option=com\\_docman&task=docdownload&gid=38815&Itemid=270&lang=en](https://www.paho.org/hq/index.php?option=com_docman&task=docdownload&gid=38815&Itemid=270&lang=en)
- World Health Organisation**
  - <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/suicide>
  - [https://www.who.int/mental\\_health/prevention/suicide/resource\\_media.pdf](https://www.who.int/mental_health/prevention/suicide/resource_media.pdf)
- Social Media Blogging Tools**
  - [www.bloggingonsuicide.com/www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/suicide](http://www.bloggingonsuicide.com/www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/suicide)
  - <https://help.twitter.com/en/safety-and-security/self-harm-and-suicide>
  - <https://www.facebook.com/help/contact/305410456169423>
  - <https://help.instagram.com/553490068054878>
  - <https://support.snapchat.com/en-US/a/Snapchat-Safety>
- National Suicide Prevention Hotline**
  - [https://www.lifeline.com/800-5588; \(868\) 220-3636; \(868\) 231-2824](https://www.lifeline.com/800-5588; (868) 220-3636; (868) 231-2824)