



News and Entertainment Play Important Role in Shaping National Suicide Narrative

A statement from the National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention to reporters regarding the important role the media has in helping to prevent suicide.

With millions of Americans turning daily to various news media outlets or entertainment programming, the [National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention \(Action Alliance\)](#) – the nation’s public-private partnership for suicide prevention aimed at advancing the [National Strategy for Suicide Prevention](#) – encourages media to use best practices to cover stories that are accurate, hopeful, action-oriented, and life-changing—especially in September during National Suicide Prevention Month.

[Research](#) shows that suicidal behavior can be influenced by newspaper and television reports of actual suicides, film and television portrayals of suicides, and suicide in literature. The Action Alliance’s Changing the Conversation priority leverages the news media (print, online, and broadcast) entertainment industry, and suicide prevention messengers (anyone messaging to the public) to change the national script around suicide and suicide prevention to promote help, connectedness, social support, resilience, and treatment. This priority aims to transform attitudes and behaviors relating to suicide and suicide prevention from ones of despair to ones of hope and recovery.

“The news media plays an important role in educating and informing the general public about suicide prevention,” said Dr. Dan Reidenberg, Executive Director of Suicide Awareness Voices of Education and Changing the Conversation Priority Workgroup Member with the Action Alliance. “By ensuring news coverage is accurate and highlights real-life stories of individuals who struggled with suicidal thoughts who went on to recovery can help to inspire, educate, and encourage help seeking.”

“The entertainment sector is another important partner in efforts to shape the national narrative regarding suicide and suicide prevention,” Marie Gallo Dyak, Chief Executive Officer of the Entertainment Industries Council and Executive Committee Member and Changing the Conversation Priority Workgroup Member with the Action Alliance. “There have been, and I hope to continue to see, accurate and powerful depictions of suicide prevention and recovery by the entertainment industry that help promote hope and dispel misconceptions.”

During National Suicide Prevention Month and [National Suicide Prevention Week](#), the Action Alliance and its 250+ partner organizations, encourage members of the media to consider positively elevating awareness of this preventable public health issue by highlighting stories that underscore: prevention

works, resilience and recovery are possible, effective programs and services exist, help is available and hope is a reality.

“Accurate and positive portrayals of suicide and suicide prevention in the news media and entertainment programming can be powerful conversation starters and can help to connect people who might be struggling or in crisis to the help they deserve,” said Kim Torguson, Associate Director of Communications for the Action Alliance Secretariat. “It is our goal to work closely with the news media and entertainment industry to accurately portray suicide, and highlight stories of survival and recovery that have the power to educate the public—and ultimately save lives.”

The Action Alliance encourages media working on stories about any upcoming shows or other related stories about suicide or suicide prevention – to refer to the [Recommendations for Reporting on Suicide](#) for best practices for safely and accurately reporting on suicide. The Action Alliance encourages that all news outlets consider the following key elements:

- Inform the audience without sensationalizing the suicide and minimize prominence. (For example, thoughtfully consider the value/purpose of covering the story and consider using it as an example to depict real life recovery stories of individuals who struggled with thoughts of suicide and went on to get the necessary help and/or treatment.)
- Include the “Warning Signs” and “What to Do” (see page 2 of [recommendations](#)) (For example, include the warning signs in the sidebar of your print article or on the lower-third of your screen).
- Include the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 800-273-TALK (8255) – a free, 24/7 service that can provide people who are suicidal or those around them with support, information and local resources.
- Avoid misinformation and offer hope. Suicide is complex. There are almost always multiple causes, including psychiatric disorders which may not have been recognized or treated. However, it’s important to note in your article that these disorders *are* treatable.
- Avoid covering or reporting that death by suicide was preceded by a single event, such as a recent job loss, divorce or bad grades. This leaves the public with an overly simplistic and misleading understanding of suicide.
- Do not refer to suicide as “successful” or a “failed attempt.” Instead describe as “died by suicide,” or “killed him/herself.”

Please refer to the suicide prevention field’s full consensus guidelines on reporting on suicide as a resource as you prepare your news content on this event: <http://reportingonsuicide.org>.

If you are interested in speaking to someone representing the Action Alliance, please contact ktorguson@edc.org.

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FOR MEDIA PARTNERS:

Research shows that the media may influence suicide rates by the way they report on suicide. Evidence suggests that when the media tell stories of people positively coping in suicidal moments, more suicides can be prevented. We urge all members of the media working on these stories to refer to the [Recommendations for Reporting on Suicide](#) for best practices for safely and accurately reporting on suicide. For stories of persons with lived experience of suicidality and finding hope, refer to www.lifelineforattempt survivors.org.

NATIONAL ACTION ALLIANCE FOR SUICIDE PREVENTION:

The [National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention](#) is the public-private partnership working to advance the National Strategy for Suicide Prevention and reduce the suicide rate 20 percent by 2025. Support for Action Alliance initiatives comes from the public and private sector. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration provides funding to EDC to operate and manage the Secretariat for the Action Alliance which was launched in 2010. Learn more at actionallianceforsuicideprevention.org and join the conversation on suicide prevention by following the Action Alliance on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [YouTube](#).

A key priority of the *National Strategy for Suicide Prevention* is recognizing journalists and the entertainment industry for safe and responsible reporting of suicide and suicide prevention. We encourage journalists to consider applying for the [SAVE Award for Excellence in Reporting On Suicide](#) and entertainment representatives to apply for the Entertainment Industries Council's [PRISM Awards](#).