# Suicide Prevention Messaging & Social Media Done Safely

Using today's media tools to communicate safely and effectively

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**Why we need to Talk about suicide**

Reduce stigma of mental health disorders

Raise Awareness of the social and economic burden

Educate the public of warning signs, risk/protective factors

Change attitudes

Create a culture of understanding

# Why we need to **Talk** about suicide

## Safely

Some messages can increase risk among vulnerable individuals, causing untoward or counterproductive effects

**Undermine Prevention**

**Werther Effect**

**Propagate Stereotypes**

Also referred to as "Suicide Contagion" is a spike of emulation or "copy cat" suicides after a widely publicized suicide is known

Talking about suicide can often unintentionally propagate negative stereotypes about people who die by suicide or the surviving family members

Research supports the

Papageno Effect

Coverage of positive coping in adverse circumstances, as covered in media items about suicidal ideation, may have **protective effects**

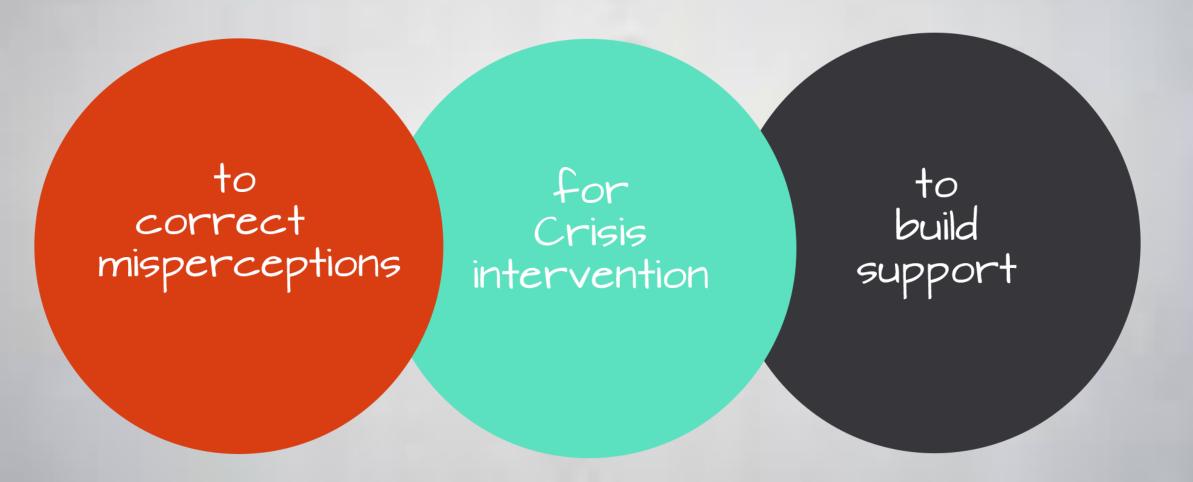"I called the Lifeline and I got the help I needed to begin my journey to recovery."

Call the Lifeline.

Mass Media requires caution

but...

... also creates **Opportunity**

to correct misperceptions

for Crisis intervention

to build support

# 5
## tools to have
### in your belt

# Best Practices
## For Online Technologies

preventtheattempt.com

1

User-friendly website developed by suicide prevention experts in partnership with tech companies

Color-coded arrows indicate a variety of good, better and best policies, procedures and standards for tech companies to implement

Better equip tech companies to detect and react to suicidal content posted on the company's platform

Google/YouTube

Facebook

Microsoft

Lifeline

Wordpress

Suicide Awareness
Voices of Education
(SAVE)

University of Vienna
Medical School
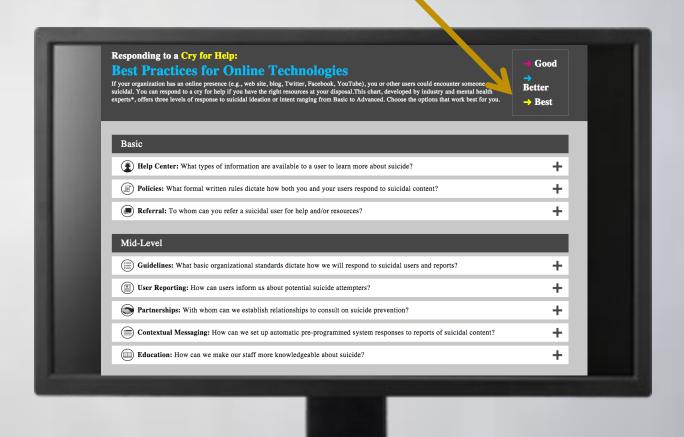
SAMHSA

Twitter

Yahoo

Tumblr

Individual Experts

**Partners**

# How it Works
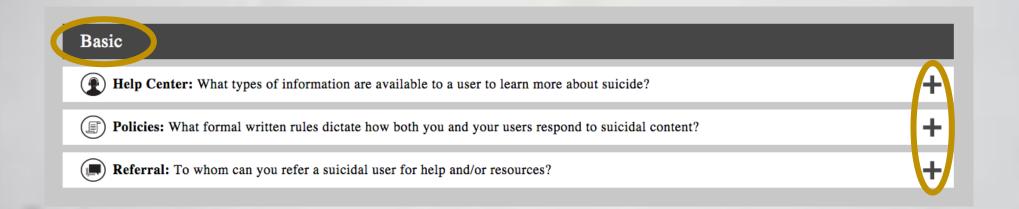
Within the three levels are **Good**, **Better**, and **Best** solutions to managing cries for help.

Three levels of response to suicidal ideation or intent

Basic

Mid-level

Advanced

**Responding to a Cry for Help:**
**Best Practices for Online Technologies**

If your organization has an online presence (e.g., web site, blog, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube), you or other users could encounter someone suicidal. You can respond to a cry for help if you have the right resources at your disposal. This chart, developed by industry and mental health experts*, offers three levels of response to suicidal ideation or intent ranging from Basic to Advanced. Choose the options that work best for you.

→ Good
→ Better
→ Best

## Basic

**Help Center:** What types of information are available to a user to learn more about suicide?   +

**Policies:** What formal written rules dictate how both you and your users respond to suicidal content?   +

**Referral:** To whom can you refer a suicidal user for help and/or resources?   +

## Mid-Level

**Guidelines:** What basic organizational standards dictate how we will respond to suicidal users and reports?   +

**User Reporting:** How can users inform us about potential suicide attempters?   +

**Partnerships:** With whom can we establish relationships to consult on suicide prevention?   +

**Contextual Messaging:** How can we set up automatic pre-programmed system responses to reports of suicidal content?   +

**Education:** How can we make our staff more knowledgeable about suicide?   +

# step 1

Company X logs on to preventtheattempt.com and determines which level to implement on their own site (Basic, Mid-level, Advanced)

**Basic**

(icon) **Help Center:** What types of information are available to a user to learn more about suicide? +

(icon) **Policies:** What formal written rules dictate how both you and your users respond to suicidal content? +

(icon) **Referral:** To whom can you refer a suicidal user for help and/or resources? +

**The + symbol expands each listed item for Good, Better and Best options.**
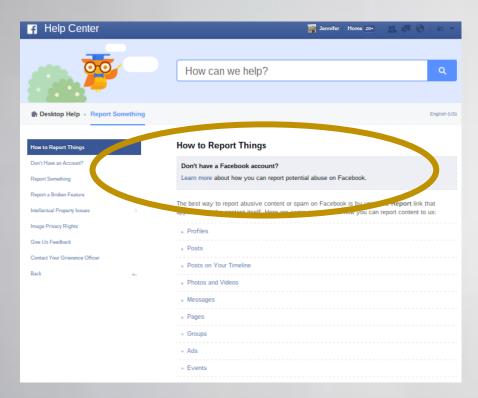
# Step 2

Company X selects hyperlinks for a color-coded list of best practice examples (pink=good, blue=better, yellow=best)

## Mid-Level

**Guidelines:** What basic organizational standards dictate how we will respond to suicidal users and reports? +

**User Reporting:** How can users inform us about potential suicide attempters? +

→ Provide option for users to report suicidal remarks/insinuations

→ Allow users to submit various media (e.g., tweets, status updates, pictures) to report suicidal remarks/insinuations

→ Design a submission system specifically for suicidal reporting

**Partnerships:** With whom can we establish relationships to consult on suicide prevention? +

**Contextual Messaging:** How can we set up automatic pre-programmed system responses to reports of suicidal content? +

**Education:** How can we make our staff more knowledgeable about suicide? +

# step 3
Company X implements prevention response(s) appropriate for their platform.

## Mid-Level

**Guidelines:** What basic organizational standards dictate how we will respond to suicidal users and reports? **+**

**User Reporting:** How can users inform us about potential suicide attempters? **+**

→ Provide option for users to report suicidal remarks/insinuations
→ Allow users to submit various media (e.g., tweets, status updates, pictures) to report suicidal remarks/insinuations
→ Design a submission system specifically for suicidal reporting

**Partnerships:** With whom can we establish relationships to consult on suicide prevention? **+**

**Contextual Messaging:** How can we set up automatic pre-programmed system responses to reports of suicidal content? **+**

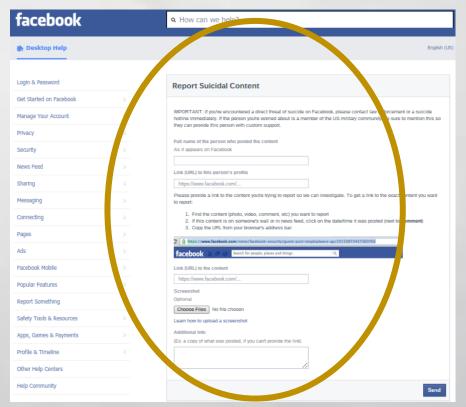**Education:** How can we make our staff more knowledgeable about suicide? **+**

Design a submission system specifically for suicidal reporting

Allow users to submit various media (e.g., tweets, status updates, pictures) to report suicidal remarks/insinuations

Provide option for users to report suicidal remarks/insinuations

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Social Media Guidelines

For Mental Health Promotion & Suicide Prevention

Publication establishing tips for individuals and organizations using social media for prevention-focused communications

Developed by TEAM Up (Tools for Entertainment and Media)- a project of the Entertainment Industries Council in partnership with the State of California

Recommendations focus on an array of important criteria. Full text publication available online at EIConline.org
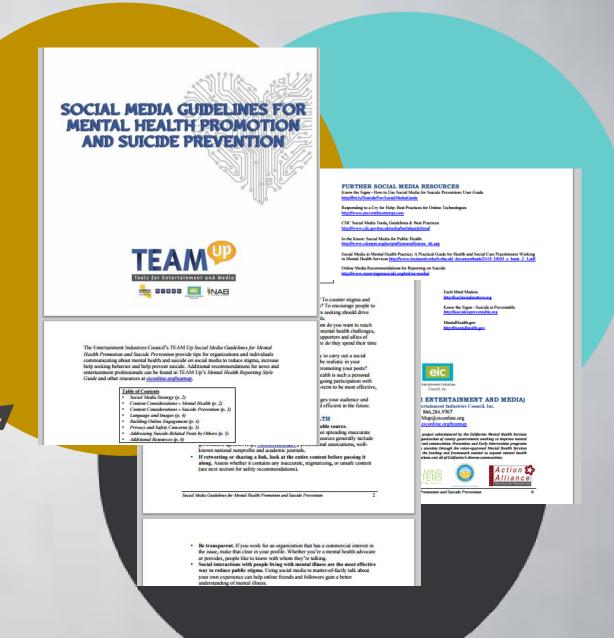
# partners

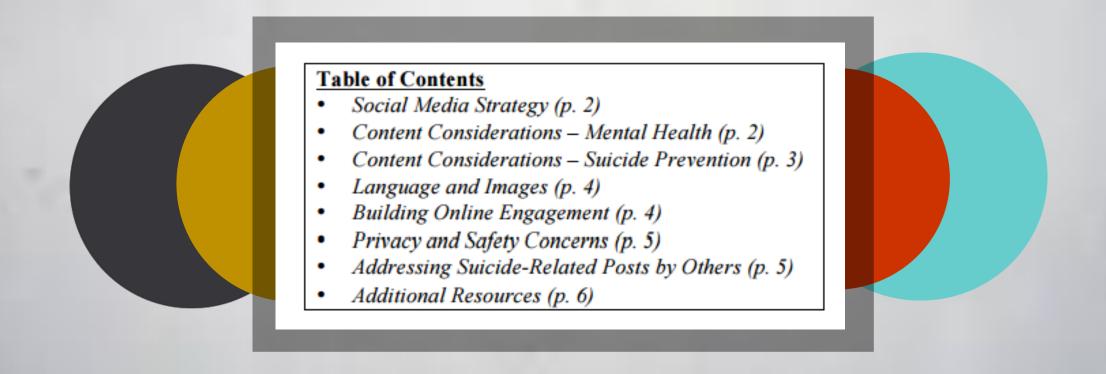Created by the Entertainment Industries Council (EIC)

Advisors: Dr. Dan Reidenberg (SAVE), Rita (Facebook), Marcellus Alexander (National Assoc of Broadcasters); Derrick Hinds (Radio Television Digital News Assoc).

# How it Works

Download the PDF publication at:
http://www.eiconline.org/teamup/wp-content/files/teamup-mental-health-social-media-guidelines.pdf

Navigate to the Table of Contents at the beginning of the publication. Be sure to read each section BEFORE creating your message. Double check the suggestions/recommendations in each section before posting your own message.

**Table of Contents**

The Counseling Center at Northwestern University held a Twitter Chat on May 12.



#BreakTheStigma

JOIN US FOR A TWEET CHAT
MAY 12 AT 5PM PT/8PM ET

—

@CounselingatNU

How do YOU break the stigma around Mental Health?

Included input from 50 suicide prevention experts and organization in the Twitter Chat

Overarching message was prevention-focused and specifically on early-interventions like counseling and other help-seeking measures

Tweets leading up to Twitter Chat uses appropriate graphics and language surrounding the topics of mental health and suicide

Facebook page for the Pyramid Lake Garrett Lee Smith Youth Suicide Prevention Project: "Kwetso'ina Numu" (People of Life) that is focused on promoting engagement and bringing messages of future, hope, and life to the community.



Aligns with goal of broader project

Doesn't normalize suicide or provide unsafe details

Focuses on positive themes like living life well, connecting with others, and coping with challenges

Follows the "Guide to Choosing and Adapting Culturally and Linguistically Competent Health Promotion Materials" and Guidelines for Youth messaging

# Framework for Successful Messaging

**3**

Research-based online resource that outlines four key components that should be considered when communicating publicly on the topic of suicide

The Frame for Successful Messaging is a project of the National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention

Recommendations complement those for reporters and are directed at nonprofits, gov. agencies, researchers, or anyone speaking publicly on the topic of suicide

# Partners

Participants
- Madelyn Gould, Columbia University
- Anara Guard, Education Development Center, Inc.
- Courtney Knowles, JED Foundation and Love Is Louder
- Gary Kreps, George Mason University
- David Litts, National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention
- Elizabeth Neely, Reingold, Inc.
- Kenneth Norton, National Alliance on Mental Illness, New Hampshire
- Dan Reidenberg, Suicide Awareness Voices of Education (SAVE)
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- Ben Vipond, Reingold, Inc.
- Ashley Womble, National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
- Eileen Zeller, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

Facilitators:
- Emily Barocas, National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention
- Linda Langford, Suicide Prevention Resource Center and National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention
- Nedra Kline Weinreich, Entertainment Industries Council, Inc.

Project Co-Leads:
- Jack Benson, Reingold, Inc.
- Mark Weber, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

# How it Works



National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention
*Framework for Successful Messaging*

Central resource for this tool: suicidepreventionmessaging.org

Four key components make up the Framework for Successful Messaging: Strategy, Safety, Positive Narrative, and Guidelines
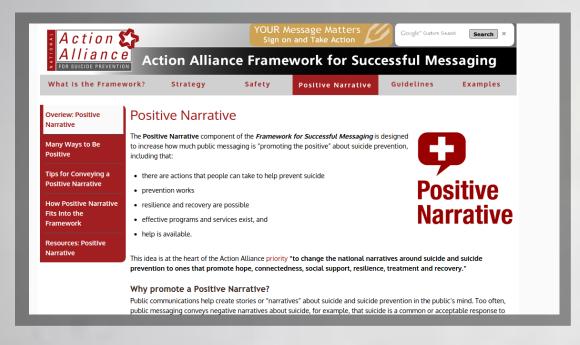
**1**

**2**

Have one

Know your target audience

Use mediums that will likely reach them

Use research-based safety recommendations

Avoid graphics

Too much detail of suicide or person, etc.

**3**



**4**



Use Messages like:

There are actions that people can take to help prevent suicide

Prevention works

Resilience and recovery are possible

Effective programs and services exist, and

Help is available

Specific guidelines may exist for your particular message

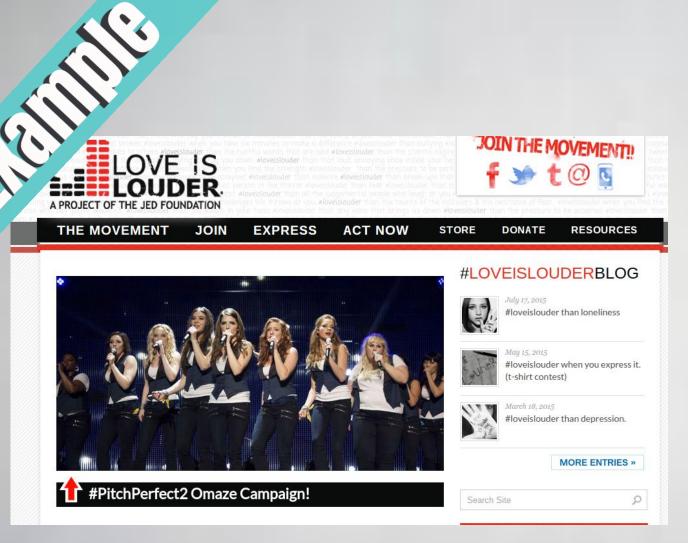Be sure to use or follow any existing guidelines

After learning the four components, review the key planning steps to assist in the development of your message: http://suicideprevention messaging.actionallianceforsuicideprevention.org/strategy/key-planning-steps

## Key Planning Steps

Numerous communications planning models exist, each consisting of a similar set of sequential steps. The table below lists some of the key considerations and decisions at each stage. For step-by-step guidance, see the excellent communications planning guides listed on the Strategy Resources page. Also see Tips for Messaging Strategically for helpful hints.

| 1. | Set the CONTEXT | Assess the current situation as well as your overall mission and goals: What does the problem look like in your context? What is occurring versus what should be occurring? How are you working to solve the problem? |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 2. | WHY message? | Set communication objectives: How can messaging advance your broader mission and goals? What *specific* changes do you expect in the audience after they see the messages? |
| 3. | WHO to influence? | What specific audience(s) do you need to reach with messages to achieve your objectives? (Note that sometimes it's more effective to target messages to another group who can influence the population of interest.) |
| 4. | To DO what? | What concrete, realistic actions do you want your audience to take? |
| 5. | WHAT to say? | What content will increase the likelihood that THIS audience will perform THIS behavior? |
| 6. | HOW to reach them? | What delivery channels best fit your audience and message? What do they read/watch/listen to? How do they get trusted information? What other efforts are needed to help them change? |
| 7. | SO WHAT? | How will you monitor and assess whether your messages worked? |

## 1 Strategy
Aligns with broader goal of preventing suicide among college students; identified and researched audience; gave clear direction on how to take action includes the Social Media Guidelines by EIC

## 2 Safety
The movement focuses on positive messaging and avoids violating the safety guidelines; put a protocol in place to respond to upset or alarming posts on the site

## 3 Positive Narrative
Highlights that prevention and coping and recovery are possible; emphasizes the importance of sharing stories of hope

## 4 Guidelines
Relevant guideline includes the Social Media Guidelines by EIC

**Recommendations for Reporting on suicide**

reportingonsuicide.org

4

Research-based two page document containing recommendations on safer methods for journalists to report suicide.

Developed by leading sp experts in collaboration with Itn'l suicide prevention and public health organizations, schools of journalism, media organizations, key journalists, and Internet safety experts

Purpose is to change the way journalists report on suicide and mitigate untoward effects of repetitive media coverage

## Partners

American Association of Suicidology
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
Canterbury Suicide Project - University of Otago, Christchurch, New Zealand
Annenberg Public Policy Center
Columbia University Department of Psychiatry
ConnectSafely.org
International Association for Suicide Prevention Task Force on Media & Suicide
Medical University of Vienna
National Alliance on Mental Illness - NH
National Institute of Mental Health
National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
New York State Psychiatric Institute
Poynter Institute
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)
Suicide Awareness Voices of Education
Suicide Prevention Resource Center
The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
UCLA School of Public Health, Community Health Science
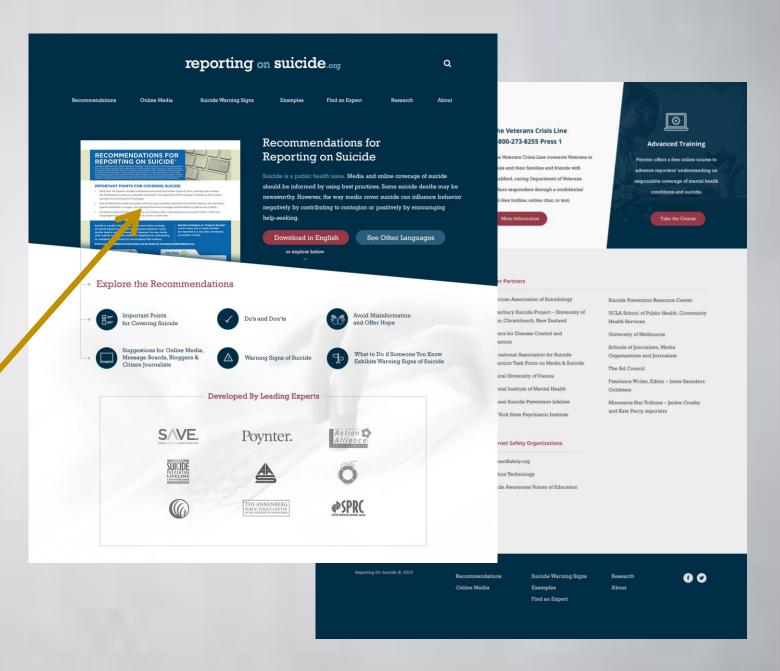University of Melbourne

## Team Project

Dan Reidenberg- SAVE
Wylie Tene- AFSP
Maddy Gould- Columbia
Ken Norton- NAMI NH
Dan Romer- Annenberg
Eileen Zeller- SAMHSA

partners

# How it Works

Access the Recommendations online at: reportingonsuicide.org

# Step 1

Follow the recommended language provided to avoid the most common mistakes reporters make when reporting on the topic of suicide

**INSTEAD OF THIS:** ❌

- Big or sensationalistic headlines, or prominent placement (e.g., "Kurt Cobain Used Shotgun to Commit Suicide").

- Including photos/videos of the location or method of death, grieving family, friends, memorials or funerals.

- Describing recent suicides as an "epidemic," "skyrocketing," or other strong terms.

- Describing a suicide as inexplicable or "without warning."

- "John Doe left a suicide note saying…".

- Investigating and reporting on suicide similar to reporting on crimes.

- Quoting/interviewing police or first responders about the causes of suicide.

- Referring to suicide as "successful," "unsuccessful" or a "failed attempt."

**DO THIS:** ✅

- Inform the audience without sensationalizing the suicide and minimize prominence (e.g., "Kurt Cobain Dead at 27").

- Use school/work or family photo; include hotline logo or local crisis phone numbers.

- Carefully investigate the most recent CDC data and use non-sensational words like "rise" or "higher."

- Most, but not all, people who die by suicide exhibit warning signs. Include the "Warning Signs" and "What to Do" sidebar (from p. 2) in your article if possible.

- "A note from the deceased was found and is being reviewed by the medical examiner."

- Report on suicide as a public health issue.

- Seek advice from suicide prevention experts.

- Describe as "died by suicide" or "completed" or "killed him/herself."

# step 2

Include the warning signs of suicide, what to do if someone you know exhibits the warning signs, and the Lifeline phone number to emphasize to readers that help is available

## WARNING SIGNS OF SUICIDE

- Talking about wanting to die
- Looking for a way to kill oneself
- Talking about feeling hopeless or having no purpose
- Talking about feeling trapped or in unbearable pain
- Talking about being a burden to others
- Increasing the use of alcohol or drugs
- Acting anxious, agitated or recklessly
- Sleeping too little or too much
- Withdrawing or feeling isol...
- Showing rage or talking ab... seeking revenge
- Displaying extreme mood s...

The more of these signs a pers... the greater the risk. Warning s... associated with suicide but ma... be what causes a suicide.

## WHAT TO DO

If someone you know exhibits warning signs of suicide:

- Do not leave the person alone
- Remove any firearms, alcohol, drugs or sharp objects that could be used in a suicide attempt
- Call the U.S. National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 800-273-TALK (8255)
- Take the person to an emergency

## THE NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION LIFELINE 800-273-TALK (8255)

A free, 24/7 service that can provide suicidal persons or those around them with support, information and local resources.

NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION LIFELINE
1-800-273-TALK (8255)
suicidepreventionlifeline.org

# Step 3

Review further instructions on how to avoid misinformation and offer hope and suggestions for online media and citizen journalists

## AVOID MISINFORMATION AND OFFER HOPE

- Suicide is complex. There are almost always multiple causes, including psychiatric illnesses, that may not have been recognized or treated. However, these illnesses are treatable.
- Refer to research findings that mental disorders and/or substance abuse have been found in 90% of people who have died by suicide.
- Avoid reporting that [...] single event, such as [...] Reporting like this lea[...] and misleading under[...]
- Consider quoting a su[...] and treatments. Avoid[...] sensationalistic conte[...]
- Use your story to info[...] suicide, its warning si[...] treatment advances.
- Add statement(s) abo[...] available, stories of th[...] crisis and resources f[...]
- Include up-to-date lo[...] readers/viewers can [...] advice that promotes[...]

## SUGGESTIONS FOR ONLINE MEDIA, MESSAGE BOARDS, BLOGGERS & CITIZEN JOURNALISTS

- Bloggers, citizen journalists and public commentators can help reduce risk of contagion with posts or links to treatment services, warning signs and suicide hotlines.
- Include stories of hope and recovery, information on how to overcome suicidal thinking and increase coping skills.
- The potential for online reports, photos/videos and stories to go viral makes it vital that online coverage of suicide follow site or industry safety recommendations.
- Social networking sites often become memorials to the deceased and should be monitored for hurtful comments and for statements that others are considering suicide. Message board guidelines, policies and procedures could support removal of inappropriate and/or insensitive posts.

When Service Members Need Mental Health Help

**Title**
-Avoided using suicide in title

**Language**
-Rates have been rising, did not sensationalize it by saying epidemic; used "took his life" in the Graham's story

**Data**
-Used credible source (Dept of Defense Suicide Event report), did not glamorize or over-state, and clearly set out what is known

**Action oriented**
-here's what the Dept of Defense has done including places to call, text, chat, get referrals

**Personal but real, not sensationalized**
-Graham's story includes loss of son to bomb and loss of son to suicide.

**Ends positive and provides hope**
-Today things are really good.

A Parent's Guide to Preventing Suicide

Mundo Hispánico, News Feature, Johanes Roselló, Translated by Elena Shore, Posted: Oct 16, 2014

Traducción al español

Pictured above: Alex Camacho holding a photo of his son, Brandon Xavier. The young man took his own life last year. Today, Alex and his wife Iraida are helping prevent suicide through their foundation Brandon's Key 4 Life. In addition to education and helping other families, the Camachos want to keep the memory of their son alive.

ATLANTA, Ga. – Brandon Xavier was popular in school, healthy, cheerful, good-natured, got good grades and had a family that loved and supported him. His dream was to become a physical therapist. But on Feb. 9, 2013, Brandon took his own life in his home in Peachtree City. He was 16 years old.

Today, Brandon's parents Iraida and Alex Camacho remember their son, who would have graduated high school this year. They are still trying to understand why the young man made a decision that they never saw coming.

"As parents, we think, 'My son will never do that.' We love him, he has a good home, everything he needs is here, he is always content," explained the Puerto Rican father.

**Title**
-Action oriented, positive, hopeful
**Language appropriate**
-"Took his own life"
**Realistic/relatable**
-"As parents, we think "My son will never do that."
**Balanced**
-Positive attributes and parents noticed a change in behavior, there were signs
**Includes what to do**
-**Be on the lookout for behavioral changes, parents should educate themselves, don't hide from the issue, take things seriously**
Reputable source
-**CDC for data on cultural groups**
**Included resources**
-**warning signs, advice for parents and resources sections**

SAVE certified

5

savecertified.org

Research-informed certification program for suicide-prevention focused, public communications
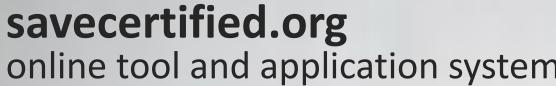
Conceived and developed by SAVE (Suicide Awareness Voices of Education)
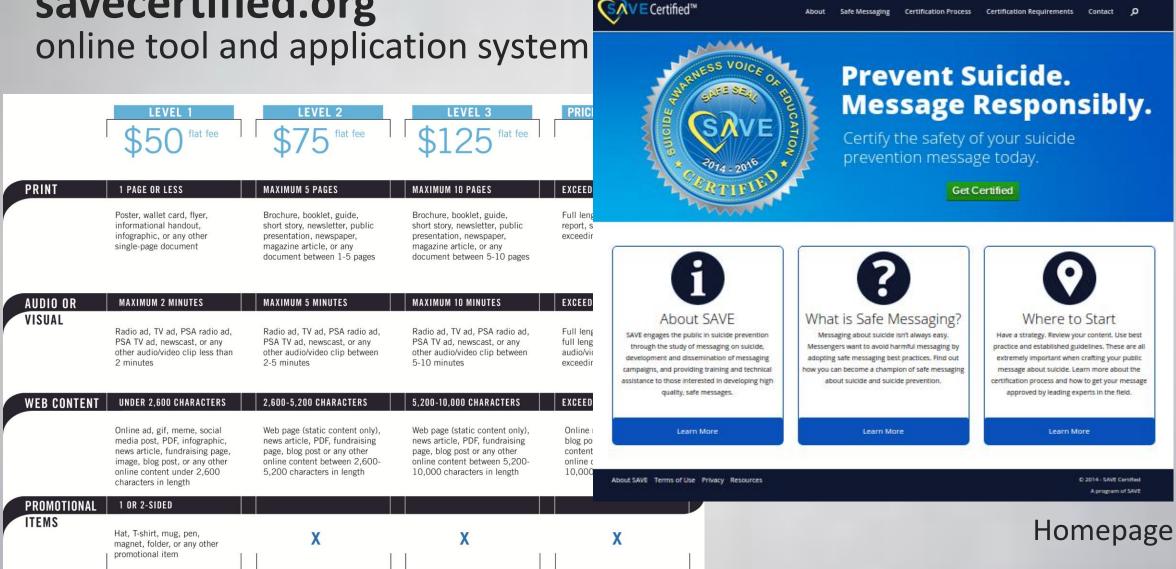
Recognizes and distinguishes messages that meet or exceed a set of rigorous criteria and review from a panel of leading suicide prevention and media experts

**Partners**
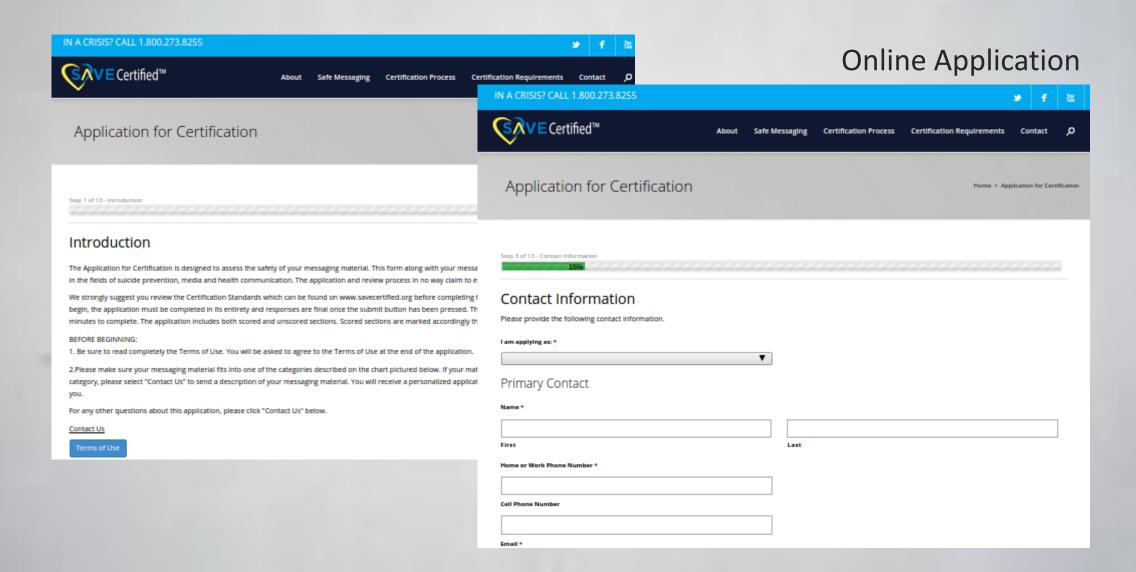
SAVE Certified received input during the development process of the certification program from an array of national and international experts and stakeholders in the suicide prevention and media fields and has garnered support from agencies like SAMHSA and the Department of Defense

# savecertified.org
## online tool and application system

Material Guide and Pricing

Homepage

**IN A CRISIS? CALL 1.800.273.8255**

SAVE Certified™

About | Safe Messaging | Certification Process | Certification Requirements | Contact

**Prevent Suicide.
Message Responsibly.**

Certify the safety of your suicide prevention message today.

**Get Certified**

About SAVE

SAVE engages the public in suicide prevention through the study of messaging on suicide, development and dissemination of messaging campaigns, and providing training and technical assistance to those interested in developing high quality, safe messages.

Learn More

What is Safe Messaging?

Messaging about suicide isn't always easy. Messengers want to avoid harmful messaging by adopting safe messaging best practices. Find out how you can become a champion of safe messaging about suicide and suicide prevention.

Learn More

Where to Start

Have a strategy. Review your content. Use best practice and established guidelines. These are all extremely important when crafting your public message about suicide. Learn more about the certification process and how to get your message approved by leading experts in the field.

Learn More

About SAVE   Terms of Use   Privacy   Resources

© 2014 - SAVE Certified
A program of SAVE

| | LEVEL 1 $50 flat fee | LEVEL 2 $75 flat fee | LEVEL 3 $125 flat fee | PRIC... |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **PRINT** | 1 PAGE OR LESS | MAXIMUM 5 PAGES | MAXIMUM 10 PAGES | EXCEED |
| | Poster, wallet card, flyer, informational handout, infographic, or any other single-page document | Brochure, booklet, guide, short story, newsletter, public presentation, newspaper, magazine article, or any document between 1-5 pages | Brochure, booklet, guide, short story, newsletter, public presentation, newspaper, magazine article, or any document between 5-10 pages | Full leng report, s exceedin |
| **AUDIO OR VISUAL** | MAXIMUM 2 MINUTES | MAXIMUM 5 MINUTES | MAXIMUM 10 MINUTES | EXCEED |
| | Radio ad, TV ad, PSA radio ad, PSA TV ad, newscast, or any other audio/video clip less than 2 minutes | Radio ad, TV ad, PSA radio ad, PSA TV ad, newscast, or any other audio/video clip between 2-5 minutes | Radio ad, TV ad, PSA radio ad, PSA TV ad, newscast, or any other audio/video clip between 5-10 minutes | Full leng full leng audio/vi exceedin |
| **WEB CONTENT** | UNDER 2,600 CHARACTERS | 2,600-5,200 CHARACTERS | 5,200-10,000 CHARACTERS | EXCEED |
| | Online ad, gif, meme, social media post, PDF, infographic, news article, fundraising page, image, blog post, or any other online content under 2,600 characters in length | Web page (static content only), news article, PDF, fundraising page, blog post or any other online content between 2,600-5,200 characters in length | Web page (static content only), news article, PDF, fundraising page, blog post or any other online content between 5,200-10,000 characters in length | Online blog po content online c 10,000 |
| **PROMOTIONAL ITEMS** | 1 OR 2-SIDED | | | |
| | Hat, T-shirt, mug, pen, magnet, folder, or any other promotional item | X | X | X |

Online Application

Certification Process

# How It works

adopt safe messaging → submit application → expert review → certification

certification renewal

Certification and the awarded Safe Seal mark assure consumers and communicators that the message complies with best practices and evidence-informed standards.

# Let's Recap

1 Best Practices for Online Technologies

2 Social Media Guidelines For Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention

3 Framework for Successful Messaging

4 Recommendations for Reporting on Suicide

5 SAVE Certified

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# THANK YOU!

Questions/Comments: dreidenberg@save.org