Pain Isn’t Always Obvious

Making the Recommendations for Reporting on Suicide work in small counties

November 14, 2012
Welcome!

• Please mute your line
• If you have a question, please type it into the “Questions” box or “raise your hand” by clicking the hand logo on your control panel
The *Know the Signs* Campaign

**Know the Signs**

**Find the Words**

**Reach Out**
(Some of the) *Know the Signs* team

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Who is receiving Small County TA?

20 counties receiving TA from Know the Signs:

- Amador
- Butte
- Calaveras
- Colusa
- El Dorado
- Glenn
- Humboldt
- Kings
- Lake
- Madera
- Mono
- Napa
- Nevada
- Shasta
- Sierra
- Sutter
- Trinity
- Tuolumne
- Yolo
- Yuba
Raise your hand

Did you participate in the November 8\textsuperscript{th} webinar on the Media Outreach Toolkit?
Media Outreach Toolkit

- 3 copies sent to each county MH Director, PEI Coordinator, or other MHSA Coordinator
- Encouraged to share with your PIO or others who interact with news media
- Available in Resource Center on YourVoiceCounts.org
A Desired Outcome for the Campaign:

More news media know about the Recommendations for Reporting on Suicide and how to adhere to them.
Recommendations for Reporting on Suicide

Recommenda3ons	
  for	
  Repor3ng

Suicide is a public health issue. Media and online coverage of suicide should be objective, responsible journalism. Facts about suicide deaths may be necessary. However, the way media reports suicides can influence behavior negatively, by contributing to confusion or assisting in encouraging help-seeking.

Recommendations and additional information can be found at www.reportingonsuicide.org.

IMPORTANT POINTS FOR COVERING SUICIDE

- More than 60 research studies worldwide have found that certain types of news coverage can increase the likelihood of suicide in vulnerable individuals. The magnitude of the increase is related to the amount, duration and prominence of coverage.
- Risk of additional suicides increases when the story explicitly describes the suicide method, uses dramatic/self-injurious headlines or images, and repeated/ancillary coverage sensationalizes or glamorizes a death.
- Covering suicide carefully, objectively, can change public misperceptions and correct myths, which can encourage those who are vulnerable at risk to seek help.

Recommenda3ons	
  for	
  Repor3ng

Recommended version (2011)

Research based

Consensus based

Approved by Journalists

Nationally distributed

Available in English & Spanish

Know the Signs >> Find the Words >> Reach Out

Found on www.YourVoiceCounts.org or www.reportingonsuicide.org
POLL

How satisfied are you with how your local news media are covering suicide deaths?
How satisfied are you with how your local news media are covering suicide prevention?
Why improve news reporting?

• News outlets are *community influencers*
• Decrease potential contagion
• Contributing to misinformation & stigma
• Missing opportunities to share resources & promote prevention
Recommendations: **DO...**

- ...Emphasize help-seeking
- ...Provide information on finding help
- ...Emphasize prevention
- ...List warning signs
- ...Seek advice and quote suicide prevention experts
- ...Highlight effective treatments
Recommendations: **DON’T...**

- ...Glorify or romanticize suicide
- ...Normalize suicide by making it sound common
- ...Use sensational language
- ...Oversimplify the causes of suicide
- ...Provide information about the suicide method
A real story about suicide
What are the implications?

... A man was found dead in San Andreas in a parking lot between Turner Park and Community Covenant Church

... “I saw blood trickling down from a hole in his right temple” – quote from bystander

... Sgt. Villegas was not able to release additional information
Some good examples!

Out of Darkness effort raises funds, awareness

Redding Record Searchlight, November 2012

... “People don’t realize it’s not just an impulsive decision... Most have talked about it before they do it” - Survivor

Woman’s body found in El Dorado Hills Town Center

Mountain Democrat, November 2012
How is California media doing?

• We analyzed over 200 California-based articles and TV broadcasts on suicide and suicide prevention between July and December 2011

*The Baseline Media Analysis Report is available on Your Voice Counts
What we found...

- **Doing well in:**
  - Using non-sensational language

- **Could improve in:**
  - Addressing warning signs & risk factors
  - Avoiding focus on a single event or “cause”
  - Avoiding descriptions of method and details

- **Lots of room for improvement in:**
  - Providing resources
  - Quoting suicide prevention experts
How can you use these Recommendations and support responsible reporting on suicide and suicide prevention?
Raise your hand

If you work for a county agency, are there restrictions on having contact with the media?
Preparing to use the Recommendations

• Identify someone who can be the contact for the media

• Become familiar with contents of the Recommendations and how they can be applied

• Develop your agency’s prevention message, and make sure you know how to speak to it during interviews
Customize with local resources

MORE INFORMATION AND RESOURCES AT:  
www.ReportingOnSuicide.org or the following local resources:

If you need help, contact Suicide Prevention and Crisis Services of Yolo County: 1-530-666-7778

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.

Counties can include their own information, such as a local crisis hotline or another local resource

Recommendations already comes with information for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

Know the Signs >> Find the Words >> Reach Out
The *Know the Signs* Campaign will distribute copies throughout the state. You can distribute copies to your local media outlets and encourage its use.
Follow up with media outlets

• Are the Recommendations useful for the media?
• Do they require clarification?
• Remember to **praise** when media adhere to the Recommendations!
• Be mindful of **over-criticizing** – fostering partnerships and support systems for the media is **key**.
Three important tips

1) **Have your message ready** along with evidence or background information to support it.

2) **Be Proactive.** Get the local media interested.

3) **Be available** to help meet media deadlines and **thank them** when they get it right. Or even close.
Media Outreach in Rural Areas

• Challenges:
  – Larger media outlets may dominate
  – Limited resources and services

• Advantages:
  – May be easier to form personal relationships
  – Less “competition” for coverage
  – Outreach beyond the news media can be even more effective
Consider your Target Audiences

- Identify the target audience you want to reach
- Have your message and tailored talking points ready
- Consider whether you are speaking directly to the audience (i.e., older white men) or their helpers (i.e., wives of older white men)
Thinking beyond the news media

Getting your message out

– Community events
– Signboards and bulletin boards
– Stores and social gathering places
– Insert
– Influential or inspirational community champions
– Newsletters, bulletins, and free papers
3 Template Articles

• Older Adults: *When “The Golden Years” Don’t Glow*
• Means Restriction: *Take Action – Save a Life*
• Rural Communities: *Lending a Helping Hand to Prevent Suicide*

What other article topics would you like to see?
Applying the Campaign Locally: Butte County

Butte County’s Suicide Rates In State Context

CALIFORNIA SUICIDE STATISTICS, 2010:
- Suicide deaths: 3,323 (19,038,000)
- Non-fatal hospitalizations due to self-inflicted injuries: 14,059 (19,038,000)
- Non-fatal emergency department visits due to self-inflicted injuries: 28,730 (19,038,000)

BUTTE COUNTY SUICIDE STATISTICS, 2010:
- Suicide deaths: 51 (122,779,000)
- Non-fatal hospitalizations due to self-inflicted injuries: 151 (122,779,000)
- Non-fatal emergency department visits due to self-inflicted injuries: 275 (122,779,000)

CALIFORNIA SUICIDE TRENDS DOWNWARD:
- In 1991, the suicide rate was 11.0/100,000; in Butte County, the suicide rate was 9.0/100,000.

BUTTE COUNTY SUICIDE TRENDS UPWARD:
- In 1991, the suicide rate was 17.4/100,000; in 2010, the suicide rate was 22.2/100,000.

All data collected from California Department of Public Health, Safe and Active Communications Branch.

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The SUICIDE PREVENTION Task Force

Pain Isn’t Always Obvious

KNOW THE SIGNS

Suicide Is Preventable

www.CareEnoughToAct.org

A SPECIAL ADVERTISING SUPPLEMENT TO CN&R

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Betsy Gowman, manager of Program Development for Butte County Behavioral Health, has long recognized the need for a county-wide suicide prevention task force with a particular focus.

“If you are in imminent danger to yourself or others, in patient psychiatric services are available,” Gowman said. “But if you’re having these thoughts and are struggling with long-term suicidal thoughts, there aren’t as many resources.”

Gowman and her colleagues maintain that suicide needs to be looked at as a continuum—a progression of high-risk behaviors leading up to the final act that often seems inescapable.

While emergency services for individuals experiencing mental distress are a valuable resource, Gowman believes intervention earlier in the continuum is key to saving lives.

“You have suicide completions and suicide attempts, but you have a wide range of behaviors before that point,” she said.

So after California established the Office of Suicide Prevention in 2009, Gowman and Anne Hulon, director of Butte County Behavioral Health, saw an opportunity to take advantage of the statewide campaign and address local needs. However, creating a program that would get through to all Butte County residents was a daunting task.

“Over the past years, awareness has combined with other streams and it seems challenging to a lot of people. But the suicide problem is not new, but the challenges and difficulties in suicide prevention and awareness seem more present now than they were 10 or 15 years ago,” Gowman said.

“Most people in this situation don’t want to be there, they want to end the pain. They formed a team of roughly 15 members from community agencies, including the Butte County Ombudsman, the Behavioral Health Department, and the Community Health Improvement Program (CHIP).”

The team worked together to host a suicide awareness event in 2010. It took place at the Sierra College Center in March of the year to gauge the county’s interest in a full-time suicide prevention task force.

“I thought it went really well, we would get about 100 people,” Gowman said. “We filed the conference center and had to tell people they couldn’t come in after a certain point. So, obviously, there was a big interest and want to learn more.”

At the end of the conference, attendees were split into groups to identify key issues. From those groups, the task force identified three individuals to join a steering committee, which has since produced a mission statement, logo and a name—Care Enough to Act. Moving forward, one of Care Enough to Act’s biggest challenges will be encouraging open dialogue between individuals suffering from depression and their close family and friends.

“How do you help those who are feeling so challenged and feeling so much pain they want to end their life?”

“People are afraid to talk about it—they’re afraid to ask,” Gowman said. “So, some of our goals are to educate, education and awareness, to help people understand the issues and where to find help, and to find help.”

Help is available at the Butte County Suicide Prevention website, www.CareEnoughToAct.org.

For Rich How, Care Enough to Act’s desire to spread suicide awareness throughout Butte County, is to expand and add to the website’s “nothing wrong with seeking it out” initiative to help the entire community find hope for themselves and others.

“People have deep thoughts that sometimes, I’m a failure, I’m not the mental illness,” How said. “People don’t think that if they have cancer or diabetes, even though there are likely changes you can make to prevent them. With mental illness, it can seem like a thought about our own person is wrong. For Rich,”

For Rich How, Care Enough to Act is a chance to spread the word throughout Butte County, help individuals and there’s nothing wrong with seeking it out. Help is available at the Butte County Suicide Prevention website, www.CareEnoughToAct.org, “we can offer some support to each other as a resource, let them know where the warning signs and how to get help without having to go off the deep end.”

CETA Members: Carol Childers, Mike Gonzales, Rich Davis, Betsy Gowman, & Kate McCracken

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If you have a question, please type it into the “Questions” box or “raise your hand” by clicking the hand logo on your control panel.
DEAR CALIFORNIANS,

Welcome to the Your Voice Counts Forum. The forum is part of a statewide suicide prevention social marketing campaign that is supported by county Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) funds to raise awareness of suicide, its causes, and how to help others and help yourself. Make your voice count! As a member of the Your Voice Counts Forum, you will have an opportunity to provide input on materials that are developed for the campaign, participate in workgroups and share information about suicide prevention activities in your community.
Thank you!

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Please fill out the Evaluation!

Webinar will be archived on www.yourvoicecounts.org