MESSAGING MATTERS
Tips for Safe and Effective Messaging on Suicide Prevention

1. PROVIDE A SUICIDE PREVENTION RESOURCE
   - Always include a resource such as:
     - National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: (800) 273-8255
     - Crisis Text Line: TEXT “Home” to 741-741
   - Describe the resources you are offering, and what to expect

2. EDUCATE THE AUDIENCE ABOUT WARNING SIGNS AND RISK FACTORS
   - Include information about warning signs and life circumstances that can increase risk (risk factors)
   - Visit www.suicideispreventable.org for a list of warning signs

3. AVOID DISCUSSING DETAILS ABOUT THE METHOD OF SUICIDE
   - Avoid details that describe the suicide including weapon/method used, the specific location, and the location of the wound

4. EXPLAIN COMPLEXITY OF SUICIDE, AVOID OVERSIMPLIFYING
   - Reference the complexity involved in suicide
   - Avoid oversimplifying “causes” of suicide or pointing to one event as “the cause” of a suicide attempt or death
   - Don’t speculate. It’s natural to want to answer the “why” involved in a suicide but rarely do we fully understand the reasons behind a suicide

5. FOCUS ON PREVENTION: AVOID SENSATIONAL LANGUAGE AND IMAGES
   - Don’t use statistics that make suicide seem overly common
   - Consider using positive statistics that highlight help-seeking such as number of calls to the local crisis line, or visits to a prevention focused website
   - Use hopeful images that show people being supported, avoid images that show people suffering alone

6. HELPFUL RESOURCES

   Know the Signs - for the public www.suicideispreventable.org
   Reporting on Suicide - for the news media www.ReportingOnSuicide.org
   Each Mind Matters Resource Center- to find and download suicide prevention resources in multiple languages and formats www.EMMResourceCenter.org

Adapted from County of San Diego Health & Human Services Agency

Fundred by counties through the Mental Health Services Act (Prop 63)