

In light of the youth who have recently died by suicide here in Nova Scotia and the media & social media coverage that has followed, I am writing with a request for your attention to, and sharing of, the following information:

Whether we are talking about social media or professional journalism, we all have a responsibility when reporting/twittering/facebooking about suicide. Please follow the guidelines set by the Canadian Psychiatric Association for reporting and writing about suicide. The purpose of these guidelines is to control contagion (more suicides because of the unsafe reporting of the initial suicide(s)). The risk for contagion is especially high when it comes to youth suicide.

We all have a part to play in the messages we are providing to our youth and others in our community. This includes our posts on social media sites, including simplifying the reasons for the suicide, as well as posting links to media coverage that does not follow the guidelines.

We all have a part to play in preventing further suicides. A Summary of the *Do's and Don'ts*:

AVOID

- Details of the method
- The word "suicide" in the headline
- Photo(s) of the deceased
- Admiration of the deceased
- The idea that suicide is unexplainable
- Repetitive or excessive coverage
- Front page coverage
- Exciting reporting
- Romanticized reasons for the suicide
- Simplistic reasons for the suicide (ie suggesting the suicide happened simply because of bullying)
- Approval of the suicide

TALK ABOUT

- Alternatives to suicide (i.e. treatment)
- Community resource information for those with suicidal ideation
- Examples of a positive outcome of a suicidal crisis (i.e. calling a suicide hotline)
- Warning signs of suicidal behaviour
- How to approach a suicidal person

The full version of the CPA Guidelines is available at: <http://publications.cpa-apc.org/media.php?mid=733&xwm=true>

Please contact me if you have any questions about the Guidelines or I can support you, or your community, in any way.

Angela Davis, Coordinator, Communities Addressing Suicide Together
Canadian Mental Health Association - Nova Scotia Division
63 King Street
Dartmouth, NS B2Y 2R7
(902) 466-6600
(902) 401-8070 (mobile)
1(877)466-6606 (toll-free)
(902) 466-3300 (fax)
davisacmhans@eastlink.ca