

Tips for Communicating About Suicide

Together we can help prevent suicide. Public awareness, education and communication strategies are designed to target beliefs, attitudes and behaviours.

Safe and effective suicide prevention messages...

- ✓ **Promote help-seeking** Identify the desired help-seeking behaviour such as calling a hotline, visiting a health provider or downloading a mental health app.
- ✓ **Address stigma** Use personal stories of resilience and recovery – examples of people who sought help and benefitted. Emphasize hope when talking about someone who experienced a suicidal crisis.
- ✓ **Raise awareness** Identify common **warning signs** (talking about wanting to die, mood changes, feeling hopeless, helpless or worthless), **risk factors** (a previous attempt, mental illness, history of trauma or abuse, isolation), and **protective factors** (strong connections to family and community support, a sense of belonging, strong coping skills).

Use the following tips when talking or writing about suicide:

Avoid...	Try...	Why?
using 'committed suicide' as this implies a criminal offence.	using 'died by suicide', which describes the facts.	Simple, non-judging language helps reduce stigma surrounding suicide.
suggesting suicide is inevitable or common, and that it can't be prevented.	emphasizing that suicide is preventable and help is available.	We can help prevent suicide by connecting with individuals, talking about suicide and removing barriers to getting help.
using words or images that reinforce stereotypes, myths or stigmas, such as once someone is suicidal, they will always be suicidal or that someone having thoughts of suicide is determined to die.	showcasing images of support and hope, and expressing that recovery is possible – use positive examples and promote positive program or service stories.	People can have thoughts of suicide without wanting to die. Asking and talking about suicide and suicidal thoughts can help someone who is struggling.
suggesting suicide is simple or an individual problem.	talking about suicide as a complex issue.	There are many complex factors that contribute to suicide, including individual, social and environmental factors.

Make sure you always include resources about how to get help, including hotlines and local organizations that provide suicide intervention.

For more information on AHS suicide prevention resources please email: injury.prevention@ahs.ca

Resources to Promote

Crisis Support

All Ages

- Health Link: 811
- AHS Mental Health Line: 1-877-303-2642
- Hope for Wellness: First Nations & Inuit Populations: 1-855-242-3310
 - Online chat: www.hopeforwellness.ca
- Canada Suicide Prevention Service: 1-833-456-4566
 - Text: 45645 (available 2pm-10pm MT)
- Transgender Suicide Hotline (Canada): 1-877-330-6366

Children & Youth

- Kids Help Phone: 1-800-668-6868
 - Online chat: www.kidshelpphone.ca/live-chat/
 - Text “CONNECT” to 686868
- Youthspace.ca
 - Online chat: www.youthspace.ca (available 7pm-1am MT)
 - Text: 778-783-0177
- Calgary ConnecTeen (available Monday-Friday 3pm-10pm & Saturday, Sunday 12pm-10pm MT)
 - www.calgaryconnecteen.com
 - Text: 587-333-2724

Websites and Resources on Messaging

Alberta Health Services

- www.ahs.ca/preventingsuicide

Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention

- www.suicideprevention.ca

Centre for Suicide Prevention

- www.suicideinfo.ca

Mental Health Commission of Canada

- <https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/>

MyHealth.Alberta.ca, search for:

- Warning Signs of Suicide
- Overview of Suicide

Public Health Agency of Canada: Language Matters

- www.canada.ca/en/public-health.html, search for ‘suicide language’

Canadian Psychiatric Association: Media Guidelines for Reporting on Suicide

- <https://www.cpa-apc.org/wp-content/uploads/Media-Guidelines-Suicide-Reporting-EN-2018.pdf>

Government of Manitoba: Guidelines for Public Awareness and Education Activities

- www.gov.mb.ca/health/mh/docs/spg.pdf

Resources to Order

To order Suicide Prevention resources, an individual or program area needs a DATAOnline (DOL) account.

Users with an account, go to <https://dol.datacm.com>, log in and select the **Injury Prevention catalogue** to find:

- **Suicide Prevention postcards** 10 versions (items 105026, 105042, 105043, 105044, 105045, 105046, 105047, 105048, 105049 and 105050), 1 package of 50 cards = \$6.45.
 - All postcards identify “Suicide is preventable. Help is available, call Health Link at 811”.
 - Images and messages vary to target different groups.
- **Hope and Healing** (item 104966) and **Healing Your Spirit** (item 104967) bereavement resources.

To register for an account or for more information, contact DATA’s AHS Help Desk at:

- ahsedmonton@datacm.com or 780-577-8295 for Edmonton and North Zones
- ahscalgary@datacm.com or 403.207.6631 for Calgary, South and Central Zones

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