

BREAKING THE SILENCE

SUICIDE PREVENTION FROM EVERY ANGLE

NEWS MEDIA'S ROLE IN SUICIDE PREVENTION: REPORTING THAT MAKES COMMUNITIES SAFER

Nearly 50,000 Americans die by suicide each year, and of these deaths, journalists are increasingly careful in their coverage. But at times newsrooms can overlook an important aspect of responsible reporting on suicide: the fact that nearly 10 million more seriously consider suicide — but instead find a path forward.

Thanks to the commitment of journalists that is changing. In a media-led effort known as “[Breaking the Silence](#),” newsrooms in Oregon have shown that responsible reporting about suicide prevention includes shining a light on stories of hope and resilience. Such coverage can transform how people think and talk about suicide, and connect people to resources and hope.

The National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention (Action Alliance) seeks to scale up Breaking the Silence in newsrooms nationwide — especially as Americans are experiencing risk factors for suicide—such as job loss, financial strain, social isolation, hopelessness, or misuse and abuse of alcohol or other drugs—and are reporting increased suicide-related thoughts in the wake of COVID-19.

“Silence wasn’t working, and we decided it is high time to break the silence and invest in serious reporting on suicide.”

— Therese Bottomly, Editor, *The Oregonian*

THE APPROACH: BREAKING THE SILENCE

Newsrooms across Oregon took part in a summit with suicide prevention experts and public health professionals to better understand all facets of responsible reporting on suicide and suicide prevention. This extraordinary collaboration of more than 40 print, online, and broadcast news outlets generated nearly 100 stories about hope and resiliency published in one week with the promise of long-lasting positive consequences.

9 in 10 Americans feel media has a role to play in suicide prevention in the wake of COVID-19

(Harris Poll 2020)

THE NEED: ADVANCING BREAKING THE SILENCE

The Action Alliance seeks to expand Breaking the Silence in other regional and national markets and newsrooms nationwide. As Oregon has shown, partnerships in and outside of the media sector are needed for true change and sustainable impact. This life-changing work is achievable but requires:

- Media partners to adapt the approach within their market/their news outlet, raise awareness within the industry, publish stories of hope and recovery, and strengthen newsroom reporting practices.
- Regional and national champions to help develop relationships in regional newsrooms or within national media outlets, participate in the approach, and drive change within that market or outlet.
- Regional and national organizations with a vested interest in suicide to help strengthen our program infrastructure by providing support to grow our regional and/or national approach(es).

Reporting on the full story of suicide prevention, including in-depth coverage of recovery and resilience, has the potential to save lives and transform communities across the U.S.

“When we coordinate together as media organizations, we can have a powerful impact.”

— Morgan Holm, Senior Vice President and Chief Content Officer, Oregon Public Broadcasting

To learn more, go to www.BreakingtheSilence.org or contact ktorguson@edc.org