

MEDIA STATEMENT
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**A Joint Statement from the National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention to
Reporters Covering Mental Health and Suicide Prevention in the Wake of COVID-19**

*News media play an important role in building resiliency and
promoting connectedness during the pandemic*

“While we don’t know what, if any, impact the current COVID-19 pandemic will have on suicide rates in the U.S., we do know millions of Americans are reporting the pandemic is having a bigger impact on their mental health than their physical or financial health. During significant public health crises, like the current pandemic, members of the news media play a critical role in reporting significant and reliable information to the American people. In a recent [Pew Research Center survey](#), most Americans (59%) say the news media are providing them with the information they need about the pandemic, highlighting the important role the news media play during this time. In addition, research shows that the way the news media report on suicide and suicide prevention can either promote hope and help-seeking or increase hopelessness and the risk of contagion.

We urge all members of the media to carefully consider how best to cover stories involving mental health and suicide prevention to ensure those stories are contributing to an informed and prevention-focused narrative—especially during this time of increased anxiety and uncertainty. To assist news reporters in telling balanced stories, the [National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention](#) (Action Alliance), the nation’s public-private partnership for suicide prevention that recently launched the [Mental Health & Suicide Prevention National Response to COVID-19](#), developed the following suggested reporting guidance.

- **Represent data accurately, by including appropriate timeframes and context so as not to sensationalize or misconstrue data.**
 - Avoid speculating about the potential impact COVID-19 may have on suicide rates, as this can lead to normalizing suicide as a response to the current pandemic and could result in increased suicide contagion.
 - Emphasize that increased outreach to crisis services does not necessarily mean more people are suicidal. Instead, it may mean more people are being made aware of a service or are connecting to care when they need it.
 - Highlight the importance of preparing now to address the potential future mental health and suicide prevention needs as a result of the pandemic.
- **Include help-seeking information and highlight the fact that help is available.**

- Feature information about local and national crisis services in any news stories about mental health and suicide prevention.
 - For emotional support specifically related to COVID-19, call the Disaster Distress Helpline (800-985-5990), or text TalkWithUs to 66746.
 - For those experiencing a suicidal crisis, call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (800-273-8255), or text the Crisis Text Line (text 'HOME' to 741741).
 - For those who identify as part of the LGBTQ community, call the TrevorLifeline (866-488-7386) or text START to 678-678.
 - For Veterans who are in crisis, call the Veterans Crisis Line (800-273-8255 and press 1) or text 838255.
 - For frontline workers dealing with anxiety, stress, fear, isolation, or other difficult emotions, text FRONTLINE to 741741.
- Highlight that while some populations, including LGBTQ youth, minorities, frontline workers, or those experiencing job loss and financial strain, may be experiencing increased mental health challenges as an effect of the COVID-19 pandemic, help is available.
- **Promote stories about connectedness and actions everybody can take to help others.**
 - Highlight that research shows a sense of belonging and social connectedness improves physical, mental, and emotional well-being. In fact, connectedness is a proven protective factor against suicide.
 - Remind your audience that it is possible to remain socially connected to others while practicing physical distancing. There are [resources available](#) to help us stay connected, even during this time.

Please refer to the suicide prevention field's full consensus guidelines on reporting on suicide, which can be found at [ReportingOnSuicide.org](#). In addition, specific guidance related to reporting on suicide during the COVID-19 pandemic is available [here](#).

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FOR MEDIA PARTNERS:

Research shows that the media may influence suicide rates by the way they report on suicide. Evidence suggests that when the media tell stories of people positively coping in suicidal moments, more suicides can be prevented. We urge all members of the media working on these stories to refer to the [Recommendations for Reporting on Suicide](#) for best practices for safely and accurately reporting on suicide (such as including the [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 800-273-TALK \[8255\]](#)). For stories of persons with lived experience of suicidality and finding hope, refer to [www.lifelineforattemptsurvivors.org](#).

NATIONAL ACTION ALLIANCE FOR SUICIDE PREVENTION:

The [National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention](#) is the public-private partnership working to advance the [National Strategy for Suicide Prevention](#) and make suicide prevention a national priority. The [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration](#) provides funding to [EDC](#) to operate and manage the Secretariat for the Action Alliance, which was launched in 2010. Learn more at [theactionalliance.org](#) and join the conversation on suicide prevention by following the Action Alliance on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [YouTube](#).

MENTAL HEALTH & SUICIDE PREVENTION NATIONAL RESPONSE TO COVID-19:

The Action Alliance's [Mental Health & Suicide Prevention National Response to COVID-19](#) (National Response), brings together influential national organizations to address mental health and prevent suicide during and in the aftermath of the pandemic. Learn more at [NationalMentalHealthResponse.org](#).