MESSAGING MATTERS
Tips for Safe and Effective Messaging on Suicide Prevention

1. PROVIDE A SUICIDE PREVENTION RESOURCE
   • Always include a resource such as:
     o National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: (800) 273-8255
     o 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 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)
   Framework for Successful Messaging, National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention (www.SuicidePreventionMessaging.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