Suicide is a national health issue in Trinidad and Tobago. The media perform an integral role in the responsible reporting of this issue. The way in which suicide is reported can either contribute to suicide contagion or encourage ‘individuals in vulnerable conditions to seek help. Suicide Contagion or “Copycat Suicide” occurs when one or more suicides are reported in a way that contributes to further suicides.

Points to Note when Reporting Suicide

1. Suicide is preventable.
2. Always include a message of hope at the end of all media reports.
### 10 BEST PRACTICES FOR RESPONSIBLE SUICIDE REPORTING BY THE MEDIA

#### INSTEAD OF THIS

1. Describing details of the method or location of death or including video/photographs that might be painful to loved ones.
2. Providing a simplistic explanation for suicide or attributing it to a single cause or common life events (such as stress or job loss).
3. Portraying suicide as heroic, romantic or honourable.
4. Normalising suicidal behaviour as an acceptable or common response to life's hardships.
5. Using sensational headlines or prominent placement in newscasts.
6. Using stigmatising language such as referring to a suicide as “successful” or “unsuccessful” or a “failed attempt” or “committed” suicide.
7. Describing suicide as an “epidemic” or using strong words like “increasing rapidly.”
8. Reporting the content or details of a suicide note.
9. Speculating and quoting the opinions of first responders on the reason for the suicide.
10. Repeating stories about high profile suicides.

#### DO THIS INSTEAD

1. Avoid the explicit description of the method used in a completed or attempted suicide. Limit facts on suicide. Protect the identity of minors; do not publish images of them.
2. Explain the complexity of suicide including the warning signs and risk factors. Do not portray suicide as heroic or romantic.
3. Explain that suicide is a national health problem and most individuals facing adversities do not die by suicide.
4. Inform the audience of the event without sensationalising the suicide.
5. Use phrases like “died by suicide” or “killed himself/herself.”
6. Research data from credible sources such as the World Health Organization (WHO) or Central Statistical Office (CSO) and use non-sensationalist words like “rising” or “changing.”
7. Share that a note was found and is being examined by the police.
8. Provide facts and seek information or advice from the Mental Health Unit, Ministry of Health.
9. Show due consideration for people bereaved by suicide, recognise that media professionals may also be affected by such stories. Provide information on where to seek help.

### ADDITIONAL MEDIA RESOURCES ON SUICIDE REPORTING

1. **Ministry of Health**
   a. [http://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/suicide](http://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/suicide)

2. **Pan American Health Organization (PAHO)**

3. **World Health Organization Suicide facts sheets**

4. **Social Media**
   a. [www.bloggingonsuicide.com](www.bloggingonsuicide.com)
   c. [https://www.facebook.com/help/contact/305410456169423](https://www.facebook.com/help/contact/305410456169423)
   d. [https://help.instagram.com/553490068054878](https://help.instagram.com/553490068054878)