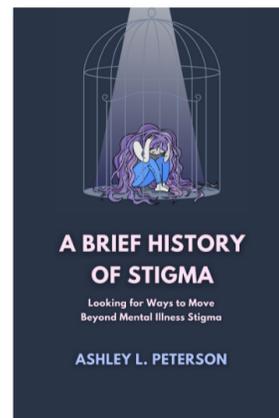




Anti-Stigma Media Advocacy Resources

mentalhealthathome.org



A Brief History of Stigma: Stigma Reduction Toolkit Anti-Stigma Media Advocacy

The media regularly reinforces learned stereotypes about mental illness. In particular, media reporting tends to highlight the perceived (and inaccurate) link between mental illness and violence. This is particularly prominent after mass shootings.

SANE Australia's [SANE Guide to Reducing Stigma](#) provides information about the harm that stigmatized media portrayals of mental illness can do.

Connecting with the Media

It's important to not just quash negative reporting, but also give the media positive, realistic messages to convey about mental illness. The voices of people with mental illness are often left out of reporting on mental health issues.

In the UK, the charity [Mind](#) has media volunteer opportunities. Many other charities provide comments on mental health issues to the media; if this is an area that interests you, get in touch with your local charities to see if you can get involved.

The US site [HARO](#) (Help A Reporter Out) connects journalists with sources. You can sign up for their email list and keep an eye out for journalists looking to speak to people about mental health issues. There isn't a way to just sign up for mental health-specific or even health-specific opportunities. The Twitter hashtag [#journorequest](#) is another way to find journalists looking for sources.

SANE Australia's [Stigma Watch](#) program monitors and responds to inappropriate media reporting. You can notify them of inappropriate reporting that you come across.

Tips on Working with the Media

If you are connecting with the media as part of your advocacy work, these sites have tips that you may find helpful:

- American Association of Pediatrics: [Advocacy Guide](#) Chapter 6: Media & Communications Advocacy
- Berkeley Media Studies Group: [Getting Started with Media Advocacy](#)
- SANE Australia: [Working with the media](#) factsheets
- University of Kansas Community Toolbox: [media advocacy](#) tips

Media Reporting on Mental Illness

Journalists are human and are raised with the same stereotypes as anyone else. Journalism programs don't necessarily include training in reporting on mental health conditions, but there is specialized training available. If you notice ongoing problematic reporting from a news source, you could consider getting in touch with an editor and letting them know about some of the training opportunities that are available.

- [Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma](#) (Columbia University, US): training related to traumatic events
- [Headlines Network](#) (UK): workshops and training, run by journalists
- Media Trust (UK): [Headlining Mental Health](#) training
- Mental Health Commission of Canada: [Reporting on Mental Health](#): online journalism modules
- [Mindframe](#) (Australia)
- [Rosalynn Carter Fellowships for Mental Health Journalism](#): offer training for journalists in the US, Latin America, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates.

Journalists are used to writing to conform to editorial expectations and style guidelines. A number of organizations have put together media guidelines for reporting on mental health. If you come across a story that concerns you, you could try passing on some of these resources:

- Canadian Journalism Forum on Violence and Trauma: [Mindset: Reporting on Mental Health](#) guidelines – there's also a [Media Guide-O-Matic](#) Wordpress plugin to support use of the guidelines
- Carter Center: [Journalism Resource Guide on Behavioral Health](#)
- Like Minds, Like Mine (NZ): [Media Guidelines](#)
- Mind (UK): [How to Report on Mental Health](#)
- [Mindframe Australia guidelines](#) for reporting on suicide and mental ill-health, stage/screen portrayals of mental ill-health and suicide, media reporting on severe mental illness in the context of violence/crime, and reporting and portrayal of eating disorders
- TEAM UP: [Style Guide: Reporting on Mental Health](#)
- YoungMinds: [Reporting on Mental Health and Young People](#)

Media Reporting on Suicides

The way that the media reports on suicides can influence public stigma, as well as the risk of suicide contagion. Contagion is a phenomenon that involves a spike in suicides following exposure to reporting on or portrayal of a suicide. Responsible reporting can help to cut down on the risk of this.

Suicide Reporting Do's:

- include local crisis line information and other community resources
- include warning signs and information about what to do
- report on suicide as a public health issue and look for links to broader social issues
- get information from suicide prevention experts
- word headlines carefully – avoid using the word "suicide" or sensationalizing
- be particularly careful when reporting celebrity suicides
- avoid printing photos of the deceased, or use only print a small, non-prominent image

Suicide Reporting Don'ts:

- use prominent placement (e.g. front page) or undue repetition
- use photos of the location/method of death or family/friends grieving
- describe a suicide as inexplicable or without warning
- characterize suicide as "successful" or "unsuccessful"/"failed"
- report specific details of the method
- speculate about or offer simplistic causes for the suicide
- normalize or romanticize suicide or present it as the solution to problems
- use melodrama, hyperboles like "suicide epidemic" or labelling locations as suicide "hot spots"
- publish suicide notes

Several organizations have put together recommendations for responsible reporting on suicide, including:

- American Association of Suicidology: [Suicide Reporting Recommendations](#)
- American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP): [Resources for journalists](#)
- Crisis Services Canada: [Guidelines for Reporting on Suicide](#)
- DART Center for Journalism and Trauma: [Recommendations for Reporting on Suicide](#)
- [Mindframe Guidelines](#)
- [ReportingOnSuicide.org](#) reporting guidelines
- World Health Organization: [Preventing Suicide: A Resource for Media Professionals](#)

Entertainment Media Resources

Besides the news media, film, television, and stage productions can also influence public attitudes towards mental illness. There are guidelines available to support responsible portrayals of mental illness, including:

- Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention: [National Recommendations for Depicting Suicide](#)
- Center for Scholars and Storytellers: [Avoiding Mental Health Stigmatizations & Encouraging Help Seeking Through Entertainment Media](#)
- [Mental Health Media Guide](#): entertainment industry guide to mental health storytelling

A Brief History of Stigma

A Brief History of Stigma has more information on what mental illness stigma is and what to do about it. You can learn more about the book on [Mental Health @ Home](#).

It's available on [Amazon](#) and [Google Play](#).

