



# Compassionate Reporting

A MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION OKLAHOMA

TIP SHEET

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# Person-first Language - Mental Illness

## **AVOID SAYING**

- Mentally ill
- Lunatic
- Psycho
- Schizophrenic
- Insane
- Crazy
- Bipolar

## **INSTEAD, SAY...**

- “a person with (or experiencing) \_\_\_\_ [a confirmed mental health diagnosis]
- “a person is \_\_\_\_” [disoriented, depressed, delusional, paranoid, hallucinating, etc.]
- “a person in recovery from a/an \_\_\_\_ [a confirmed mental health diagnosis]

# Violence & Mental illness

## **DO NOT...**

- Only report on mental illness in relation to a violent act

## **DO ...**

- **Spread the word that...**
- People with serious mental illness are **ELEVEN TIMES** more likely to be victims of violent crime than the general population
- Treatment may be the key to reducing the risk of violence, whether that violence is self-directed or directed at others.

# Person-first Language - Substance Use

## **AVOID SAYING**

- Addict
- Abuser
- Alcoholic
- Dirty/Clean

## **INSTEAD, SAY...**

- “a person with a substance use disorder”
- “a person who has a/an \_\_\_\_ use disorder”  
[drugs, alcohol, etc.]
- “a person in recovery from a/an \_\_\_\_ use disorder” [drugs, alcohol, etc.]

# Person-first Language - Homelessness

## **AVOID SAYING**

- "The homeless"
- Street people
- Homeless man or woman

## **INSTEAD, SAY...**

- A person experiencing homelessness
- A person who was formerly homeless
- A person without a home
- A person living on the streets

# Preferred Language - Suicide

## **AVOID**

- Do not refer to suicide as “successful,” “unsuccessful” or as a “failed attempt.”
- Saying the person “committed suicide” or “killed themselves”

## **INSTEAD, SAY...**

- Use phrases like:
- “died by suicide”
- “thoughts of suicide”
- “suicide attempt” or “suicide ideation”

# Prevent Suicide Contagion

## **AVOID**

- Presenting simplistic explanations for suicide.
- Provide sensational coverage of a single suicide.
- Give "how-to" descriptions of suicide.
- Present suicide as a tool for accomplishing certain ends.
- Glorify suicide or persons who commit suicide.

## **INSTEAD, SAY...**

- Describe the help and support available in a community
- Explain how to identify persons at high risk for suicide
- Present information about risk factors for suicide

# Key Suicide

## Prevention Resources

- **2-1-1:** Free & Confidential Service Connects People to Critical Services in their Community
- **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:** Call 1-800-273-TALK (8255). It provides 24/7, free and confidential support for people in distress, prevention and crisis resources
- **Crisis Text Line** - Text HOME to 741741 from anywhere in the US, anytime, about any type of crisis.
- **Mental Health Association Oklahoma's free QPR training:** Empowers a business, school, faith community or civic organization to effectively intervene on behalf of someone with thoughts of suicide or who is in crisis.
- **To schedule a QPR training** you may call 918.585.1213 or 405.943.3700 or email [info@mhaok.org](mailto:info@mhaok.org).
- Learn more about suicide prevention at [www.mhaok.org](http://www.mhaok.org).