

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Training on suicide reporting for the media

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Timeframe: 21 October to 13 December 2024

BACKGROUND:

Mental health is a critical component of overall well-being, yet it remains a significantly underfunded and neglected area of public health globally. Belize, like many developing countries, faces substantial challenges in addressing the mental health needs of its population. Suicide rates in Belize have shown concerning trends, particularly among young males. Recent data from the Belize Health Information System (BHIS) indicate that from 2019 to 2023, there were 176 reported suicides, with a notable male-to-female ratio of 4:1. The most common method of suicide was hanging, followed by pesticide intoxication and firearm use.

In light of this, suicide remains a significant public health concern in Belize. The sensitive and responsible reporting of suicide by journalists and media professionals plays a critical role in suicide prevention. Inappropriate or sensationalist reporting can contribute to contagion, often referred to as "copycat suicides," while responsible and informed journalism can support awareness, prevention, and mental health efforts. In alignment with the [National Suicide Prevention Plan](#) launched in early 2024, this training on suicide reporting for journalists and the media seeks to strengthen the capacity of the media sector to report on suicide ethically and responsibly. The training will equip participants with the necessary tools to reduce stigma, avoid harmful reporting practices, and foster a culture of informed and responsible communication around mental health issues.

This activity is grounded in global and regional best practices, supported by frameworks and guidelines from leading international organizations. The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) have provided clear guidance on responsible suicide reporting. These include specific recommendations for avoiding graphic descriptions,

respecting privacy, and focusing on stories of recovery rather than focusing on the method or other sensational details. The WHO's 2017 publication "Preventing Suicide: A Resource for Media Professionals" offers a practical framework that has been widely adopted across regions.

Additionally, the WHO Mental Health Action Plan 2013-2030, endorsed by countries worldwide, emphasizes the role of the media in suicide prevention through responsible reporting and public awareness efforts. Regionally, PAHO has been pivotal in advocating for public health approaches to suicide prevention and offers additional resources tailored to the specific needs of Latin American and Caribbean countries, including Belize.

The training will support the objectives outlined in Belize's Suicide Prevention Plan, which aims to build a comprehensive national strategy for suicide prevention. This initiative will ensure that media professionals in Belize are equipped to handle the sensitive issue of suicide in a manner that contributes to public safety and mental well-being. By aligning with global and regional standards, this training seeks to promote ethical reporting practices that can have a positive impact on public health outcomes in Belize.

Specific objectives of the service contract in Belize:

To improve the performance of local Journalists in reporting suicide cases in Belize.

The contractor will facilitate the training to:

- Build the capacity of local journalists to report on suicide cases responsibly.
- Enhance the capacity of local journalists to manage their own mental health when reporting on trauma situations.
- Facilitate a consultation to co-develop a monitoring and evaluation framework through consultations with the Ministry of Health and Wellness and other stakeholders.
- Conduct in-depth training for media professionals on ethical and responsible reporting on suicide and mental health.

Scope of Services:

- I.** Facilitate the training of journalists and communications personnel in responsible reporting of suicide.
 - a. Develop the training plan and agenda to guide the conduct of the two-day training workshop on ethical and responsible reporting on suicide and mental health.
 - b. Facilitate a half-day consultation to co-develop a monitoring and evaluation framework for media reporting on suicides with the Ministry of Health and Wellness and relevant stakeholders.
 - c. Conduct a two-day training course for local journalists and other professionals on ethical and responsible reporting.
 - d. Develop a summary report on the journalism workshop and the consultation session with the Ministry of Health and Wellness and other stakeholders.

Qualifications and Experience

The contractor should be the holder of a degree in Communications or Journalism or related field from a recognized College or University with 5-10 years of experience in training on mental health issues and the development of monitoring and evaluation framework for media reporting.

Deliverables:

1. Workplan outlining the schedule of activities to accomplish the deliverables.
2. Training plan and agenda on the two-day training workshop on ethical and responsible reporting on suicide and mental health and first draft of the M & E framework for media reporting on suicides.
3. Training report with list of participants.
4. Final revised draft of the M & E framework for media reporting on suicides.

Payment dates:

- 20% upon receipt of first deliverable on 28 October 2024.
- 30% upon receipt of second deliverable on 18 November 2024.
- 30% upon receipt of third deliverable on 6 December 2024.
- 20% upon receipt of fourth deliverable on 13 December 2024.

Evaluation Criteria:

- Relevant educational qualification
- Experience in curriculum development & media training
- Oral and Written Communication
- Financial Proposal