



Introductions

Subject-Matter Experts

- **Kevin Hodgson**, Manager of Programs, Hockey Education Reaching Out Society (HEROS Hockey). His 15-year career in the Human Services sector has exclusively focused on marginalized children and youth. He is also a Consulting Trainer for the Centre for Suicide Prevention.
- **Linda Scurr, MEd**, counselling program supervisor with Adult Addiction Services Calgary, Addiction and Mental Health (formerly AADAC), Alberta Health Services. As the supervisor of the Calgary AADAC Enhanced Services for Women program Linda was awarded the Premier's Award of Excellence 2005. She is a Consulting Trainer with Centre for Suicide Prevention and has taught suicide intervention training since 1975.
- **Dave MacLeod, MSc RPsych**, founding clinical psychologist with Western Psychology Services in Calgary, now the overseer of the WPS co-operative. Dave began work in suicide prevention in the late 1970s as a volunteer with the Distress Centre/Drug Centre and has, since then, worked in a variety of adolescent treatment centres around the world. Dave is a Consulting Trainer with the Centre for Suicide Prevention.

Secondary Research

- **Robert Olson, BA, MLIS**, Librarian, Centre for Suicide Prevention, provides secondary research and presents this webinar.



Co-sponsoring Organizations

Alberta Centre for Injury Control & Research (ACICR)

A provincial organization committed to advancing the impact or prevention, emergency response, treatment and rehabilitation of injuries in Alberta. ACICR is part of the School of Public Health, University of Alberta. For more information, visit us at www.acicr.ca

Centre for Suicide Prevention (CSP)

An education centre committed to reducing suicide through education: information services, workshops, presentations and now webinars. CSP is a branch of the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA). For more information, visit us at www.suicideinfo.ca





The 5 Things We Wish ALL Teachers Knew About **Social Media, Suicidal Contagion and Suicide Clusters**

Definitions

- **Contagion:** sometimes referred to as “*copycat suicides*” or “imitative suicides” can lead to suicide *clusters*
- **Cluster:** multiple suicidal behaviours or suicides that fall within a particular time frame and sometimes within a defined geographical area

Fact #1:

Some suicides create contagion and clusters and others do not

- “Werther Effect”
- Marilyn Monroe, 1962
- Kurt Cobain, 1994



Fact #1:

Some suicides create contagion and clusters and others do not

- Conflicting opinions about whether media coverage causes contagion
- Recent suicides in Canadian military?
- NHL suicides in 2011?



Fact #2:

There are media guidelines for reporting suicide

- **Pro**
 - Canadian Psychiatric Association; World Health Organization; Center for Disease Control
- **Con**
 - Dr. Goldbloom, Mental Health Commission of Canada; Andre Picard, journalist Globe and Mail
 - Feel they are inadequate/irrelevant
 - Call to include guidelines regarding behaviour on social media



CPA Media Guidelines (selected)

- **Avoid:**
 - Details of the method
 - Admiration of the deceased
 - Repetitive or excessive coverage
 - Front page coverage
 - Exciting reporting
 - Simplistic reasons for the suicide
 - Photos of the deceased

Fact #3:

Social media is pervasive in the lives of youth

- Case of Amanda Todd
- Social media cannot simply be suppressed
- Is absolutely **Everywhere!** Affects all



Fact #3:

Social media is pervasive in the lives of youth

- Educate youth of potential pitfalls of social media use
- Punitive measures are useless
- Too difficult to 'police'
- More effective to teach kindness and discernment (when to involve adults)



Fact #4:

Social media can be a negative catalyst

- Reteah Parsons, 2013
- Alexis Pilkington, 2010
- University of Guelph incident, 2013

Fact #4:

Social media can be a negative catalyst

- Host of social media sites need to be accountable!



Fact #5:

Social media can be a positive catalyst

- Red Deer Facebook page
- New opportunities for intervention
- More conversations can help reduce stigma



Take-away for Schools

- Being exposed to suicide heightens risk of contagion
 - Postvention is critical
- Schools need to:
 - Respond to grief but be cognizant of other students who may be vulnerable as a result of the death
 - Step up efforts to identify those students who may be vulnerable
 - Allow for grieving opportunities, BUT
 - Avoid glorifying, romanticizing or sensationalizing suicide



Take-away for Schools

- Whole-school memorials may communicate suicide as an appropriate or desired response to vulnerable youth and are therefore NOT recommended.
- Establishing permanent memorials is NOT recommended
- Many school systems have developed policies and protocols to guide their staff after a death has impacted their students.



Find more information at...

- Visit our website: www.suicideinfo.ca
- Check out our cyberbullying feature at:
 - <https://suicideinfo.ca/Library/Resources/SpecialFeatures>
- Check out our articles on:
 - iE10: Suicidal Contagion and Clusters
 - iE1: Suicide Threats on Social Networks
 - <https://suicideinfo.ca/Library/Resources/IEInfoExchange.aspx>
- SIEC Alert #54: *School Memorials After Suicide: Helpful or Harmful?*
<http://suicideinfo.ca/Library/Resources/SIECArtAlertArchive.aspx>

Thanks for tuning in! More questions?

Contact us at: csp@suicideinfo.ca



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Alberta Centre for Injury Control & Research