

Media guidelines

for reporting on Veterans, with a focus on
PTSD and Suicide

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VETERANS ARE SOMETIMES DEPICTED in a stereotypical manner in the media, often with a focus on crime or violence.

This is especially the case in discussion of issues such as PTSD. This can contribute to a climate of fear and suspicion toward Veterans in the general public, which can increase stigma towards Veterans, especially those with mental health issues. As such, it is important for journalists to report on Veterans, Veterans' issues and Veterans' mental health in a fair, balanced, and accurate manner.

To this end, we have created a set of guidelines intended to help journalists report about Veterans' issues, with a focus on mental health and suicide.

Do

- ✓ Do seek and include remarks and quotes from Veterans or figures from Veterans' organizations when reporting on any issues related to Veterans.
- ✓ Do seek and include remarks from experts on mental health, PTSD, or suicide (particularly those who specialize in Veterans), when reporting these issues.
- ✓ Do take the opportunity to educate the public (for example using current statistics) when writing about Veterans or Veterans' mental health, PTSD, or suicide.
- ✓ Do try to include references to successful stories of reintegration, resilience, and mental health recovery when talking about Veterans or their mental health.
- ✓ Do provide help-seeking resources when covering mental health issues, PTSD, or suicide (e.g., helpline numbers or webpage links to support organizations).
- ✓ Do try to discuss available treatments, interventions, and other services and supports when reporting on suicide, PTSD, and other mental health issues.

Don't

- ✗ Don't draw misleading monocausal explanations for Veteran behaviours such as "deployment causes PTSD or "PTSD causes violent behaviour." These complex issues are the result of many interacting factors that journalists should consider.
- ✗ Don't use simplistic and non-scientific slang such as "snapped" or "triggered," as these words imply that Veterans are constantly on edge and prone to violence.
- ✗ Don't go into detail about the suicide method used or the suicide location when covering a Veteran suicide.
- ✗ Don't imply that all Veterans (or Veterans from a specific conflict) have mental illness, PTSD, or issues with suicide, as Veterans are a diverse group of people. Many are leading successful and fulfilling lives, free of mental health issues.