



You've lost a loved one to suicide. You want people to know your loved one has died but you don't know how to tell them. The decision to include this information in an obituary is a personal one that only you and your family can make. This pamphlet provides some basic guidelines and suggestions that can help you write an obituary that will honour your loved one, while protecting your family's privacy at this very difficult time.

The information in this pamphlet was adapted from information provided by the Ontario Funeral Service Association in partnership with the Waterloo Region Suicide Prevention Council.

Where to Get Help

CRISIS SUPPORT LINES

- 24-hour Distress Line:
780-482-4357 (Edmonton and area)
- 24-Hour Rural Distress Line:
1-800-232-7288 (Edmonton and area)
- Alberta Mental Health Help Line:
1-877-303-2642 (toll free)
- Health Link: Dial **811**
- Community Urgent Services Stabilization Team (CUSST): **780-342-7777**

CANADIAN MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION – EDMONTON REGION: **780-414-6300**

- Suicide bereavement support sessions for individuals and families
- 12-week suicide bereavement support group
- Debriefing sessions for family, friends and school/work settings

Drop-in Single Session Counselling.
For information, locations and times visit:
www.dropinyeg.ca

Edmonton Community Info & Referral Line:
Dial **211**



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WRITING AN OBITUARY

for a loved one who has died by suicide



Suicide Grief Support Program

780-414-6300

edmonton.cmha.ca/programs-and-services/suicide-grief-support-program/

Where to Start

You first need to decide whether or not you want to use the word suicide. It is no longer “taboo” to mention suicide in an obituary. Some people choose to name suicide as the cause of death, others may not. There is no right or wrong way.

As an alternative to naming suicide as the cause of death, you might choose to suggest a donation to a suicide prevention program or support group. This can be a positive legacy to your loved one, as it can help increase public understanding and support others who have lost someone to suicide. We can help you identify an appropriate recipient.

Why you Might Choose to Acknowledge the Suicide

- Openly acknowledging the suicide in an obituary can help you and your family in the grieving process.
- Friends and family who have also lost someone to suicide may be better able to support you and your family during this difficult time.
- Using the word suicide in an obituary might be easier than telling others directly and can help end any rumours that might surround an unexpected death.
- When people openly acknowledge suicide in an obituary, it helps to reduce the stigma associated with suicide.

Need help now? Call:
24-hour Distress Line
780-482-HELP (4357)
24-hour Rural Distress Line
1-800-232-7288



How to Include Suicide in an Obituary

Here are some examples of words you might use:

“John will always be remembered for his courage during difficult times. Unfortunately, this time the pain was too difficult, and John died by suicide on Saturday evening.”

“After a courageous and long battle with depression, the pain became unbearable and Sarah took her life.”

“Mary Lee, her life taken too soon by her own hand.”

“John Horn, who we lost due to suicide on Wednesday, April 30.”

“Jeff died by suicide on Thursday, November 10. He was no longer just sad; he was imprisoned in a powerful darkness.”

“On August 22, Trevor was only 17 years old when he died by suicide. Trevor will be forever in our hearts.”

Words or Information to Avoid

Mental health professionals encourage you to use non-judgmental words and phrases when writing an obituary. This can help reduce the stigma and discourage others from considering suicide. Here are some suggestions:

- Use the phrase “died by suicide,” rather than words like “committed” or “completed” suicide.
- Do not share specific details of the means and how to obtain them, as it may contribute to teenagers already at risk for acting on suicidal thoughts.
- Do not try to offer simplistic reasons or explanations for the suicide.
- Avoid describing the suicide as unexplainable.
- Avoid words and phrases that “romanticize” suicide.