

Out of the Darkness™ Walks: **Communications Toolkit**

afsp.org/OutoftheDarkness



Use the power of public relations to boost attendance at your walks.

Journalists are always looking for stories, and we have a great one to tell. Follow this toolkit and you'll see just how much of a difference a few phone calls, emails, social media posts, and creative inspiration can make for your walk.

Contact

Alexis O'Brien
Public Relations Director
347-826-3577
aobrien@afsp.org

Table of Contents

Create a Press List.....	1
Query Email Template.....	2
What to Send and Who to Send it to.....	3
Timeline.....	4
Talking Points.....	5
Interview Tips	6
Calendar Listing Template.....	7
Press Release Template.....	8
Letter to the Editor.....	9
Public Service Announcements	10
Event Speech.....	11
Social Media	13
Seize the Awkward.....	18
Event Photography	20
Campus Walks.....	21
Campus Walks Marketing	22

Create a Press List

Spend the time to create it. Your events will grow, and the media list will pay off year after year. Plus, getting a head start on building a press list makes it a lot easier to promote your event when you get busy as the event date grows closer.

Start by making a list of all your local media outlets – TV stations, radio stations, newspapers, weekly papers or magazines. List the local media outlets you pay attention to most first.

Go down the list and for each media outlet, go to their website and find a phone number. These are usually listed at the bottom of the website. Call and ask for the “news desk.” When you get someone at the news desk, ask them who would be the right contact for your event. Another good rule of thumb is to look to see who has covered suicide or mental health issues in the past. Generally it will be the same person.

Create a Spreadsheet for Your Press List

First Name	Last Name	Outlet	Email	Phone	Twitter	Notes
------------	-----------	--------	-------	-------	---------	-------

Contacts to Look Up

Metro/City Editor, Assignment Desk

Print publications and TV/radio stations call these contacts by different names, but this person is in charge of assigning stories to journalists.

Health Reporter

Generally the health reporter might be the reporter who covers suicide, depending on the size of the publication.

Calendar Listing Editor

Some media outlets have someone who manages the list, others may have an electronic submission process. Take a look at the website.

Photo Desk/Director of Photography/Photographer

Depending on the size of the media outlet, it might have someone responsible for assigning photographers to the story, or you may have to reach out directly to a photographer on their staff.

Local Community Reporter

Several reporters in the local area will be assigned to report on things that happen locally.

Student Newspaper

Start with the editor of the paper and ask them to assign a reporter to the story.

Query Email Template

Use this email to reach out and identify the right reporters. Call and tell them about your walk, ask if they are interested in coming to the walk to report on it or if they would like to interview you or another walk participant.

Email Subject

Help Fight Suicide

Email Body

Dear [NAME],

I'll be sending press releases and media alerts from the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention about our Out of the Darkness [COMMUNITY/CAMPUS] Walk on [DATE], but I want to make sure the information goes through the proper channels so you'll have an opportunity to cover the story. Should I send these to you? Or is there another contact at [MEDIA OUTLET] that I should reach out to?

Thanks for your help, [NAME]

What to Send and Who to Send it to

What to Send	Calendar Listing	PSA	Press Release	Letter to the Editor
Who to Contact	Calendar Listings Editor or online submission page	PSA Director	Metro/City Editor, Assignment Desk, Health Reporter	Check the website to find out where to send the letter
When to Send	3 months before	1-2 months before	2-3 weeks before	2 weeks before

Glossary

Press Release

A notice to a journalist about a story to cover. It is a teaser to get a journalist interested in covering a story. (See [pg. 9](#))

Letter to the Editor

A short opinion piece submitted by a reader. (See [pg. 10](#))

Public Service Announcement (PSA)

A public service announcement (PSA) is like a commercial for an event or cause that is non-paid. By law, every station is required to prove they broadcast “in the public interest” and PSAs are one of the ways they meet that requirement. If you would like to share the PSAs that AFSP made about our walks with the PSA Director at your local television station, or your campus radio or TV station, they can be found on [pg. 10](#) of this toolkit.

Following Up Goes a Long Way

Follow up one day after each submission, by phone. Reporters are busy and often on tight deadlines so keep your voice message short and to the point.

Timeline

Before Event

- Send out **Calendar Listings** (pg. 8), **Press Releases** (pg. 9), **Letters to the Editor** (pg. 10), **Public Service Announcements** (pg. 10); call the reporters you've contacted to follow up
- Provide updates on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram about registration and human interest stories of those walking
- Find two to three local volunteers willing to speak to the media about the walk and their reasons for being involved
- Promote the event on your city's website – you can usually post information about upcoming events on the site yourself
- Decide on a hashtag for the event (it can be #OutoftheDarkness, #StopSuicide or something more specific to your event) and share this hashtag on marketing materials that are sent in advance of the event
- Email the **Image Wish List** (pg. 17) to local media photographers or other volunteer photographers for suggestions on what photographs would be most helpful (include your event hashtag in the email)

Day of Event

- Help media personnel with parking at events, or anything else they need to cover the event
- Coordinate any volunteer interviews with media attending event
- Post the hashtag for the event on signs at the event
- Promote the event on social media during festivities

After Event

- Send digital photography with photo captions to print media that expressed interest but could not attend; if you have any photographs from the event that adhere to the **Image Wish List** (pg. 17), upload them to AFSP's Dropbox at afsp.org/WalkShare
- Get copies of local print coverage and recordings from radio and TV contacts and send to Alexis O'Brien at aobrien@afsp.org; please also copy Nicole Dolan at ndolan@afsp.org, and Meredith Henning at mhenning@afsp.org
- Send video footage to AFSP for use on social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube to Alexis O'Brien at aobrien@afsp.org; please also copy Nicole Dolan at ndolan@afsp.org, and Meredith Henning at mhenning@afsp.org

Talking Points

You and your volunteers should familiarize yourselves with these talking points and tips to prepare for your interviews. Be proud of what you do. Avoid guilt-tripping donors, avoid citing negative statistics. Instead: show them suicide prevention is a noble cause, and that they can be a part of this lifesaving work.

Event Messages

- The **[CITY/COUNTY/SCHOOL]** Out of the Darkness **[COMMUNITY/CAMPUS]** walk will take place on **[DAY, DATE]** at **[LOCATION]**, and we have over **[# OF REGISTERED PARTICIPANTS]** registered to date
- (Community Walks): There are over 400 Out of the Darkness Community Walks taking place across the country this spring with over 275 thousand people participating, each contributing their voice to support research and education that saves lives
- (Campus Walks): There are nearly 200 Out of the Darkness Campus Walks taking place across the country this spring with over 35 thousand people participating, each contributing their voice to support research and education that saves lives
- It's not too late to be a part of this lifesaving work; visit afsp.org/OutoftheDarkness to make a donation that will make a difference [Please note: you can use your walk's custom URL here – if you're not sure what that is, please contact your staff partner or refer to the resources section of the walk manual]

AFSP Messages

- The **American Foundation for Suicide Prevention** leads the fight against suicide – we save lives and bring hope to those affected by suicide
- With chapters in all 50 states that host programs and events nationwide, the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention is the largest suicide prevention organization in the United States
- The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention has set a bold goal to reduce the annual U.S. suicide rate 20 percent by the year 2025 – that's tens of thousands of lives saved, and everyday heroes like you can make it happen
- Visit afsp.org to learn more

Suicide Prevention Messages

- Suicide is a leading cause of death, and it can be prevented
- Together we encourage those who struggle to seek help, improve the quality of their lives and stop this tragic loss of life
- Talk saves lives – whether you are suffering from suicidal thoughts, or you're concerned about someone, assume you are the only person who will reach out
- Suicide prevention starts with everyday heroes like you
- If you are in crisis, please call the Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255), or text TALK to the Crisis Text Line at 741741

Fundraising Messages

Your donations will make a real-world difference. Your donations:

- Teach teens and educators to be smart about mental health – AFSP distributes **Talk Saves Lives: An Introduction to Suicide Prevention™**, an education program about suicide to hundreds of high schools, colleges and community centers across the country
- Fund critical research that will improve suicide prevention outreach and treatment for those at risk for suicide – last year AFSP funded over \$4.5 million dollars in **suicide prevention research**
- Organize programs for survivors of suicide loss, including the annual **International Survivors of Suicide Loss Day Program** in almost 400 locations worldwide
- Organize volunteers to advocate for suicide prevention policies at both state, federal and local levels
- Encourage students to be mindful of their mental health by making programs like **It's Real: College Students and Mental Health** available on college and high school campuses

Interview Tips

Please remember safe reporting saves lives. To learn more, visit afsp.org/journalist.

Do	Never
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Say "American Foundation for Suicide Prevention" (not AFSP)• Be yourself• Be brief• Wear your Out of the Darkness T-Shirt• Repeat key messages• Make eye contact with the reporter, not the camera• Stand firmly on two feet• Speak up and from your heart• Ask the reporter for a tape or copy of the story• Tell the reporter if you are not comfortable answering a question they ask	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Say "no comment"• Go "off the record"• Say "committed suicide" or describe a suicide as "successful"• Guess on statistics or facts – if they ask something you don't know, tell them you'll get back to them with the answer later• Give one word responses to questions• Let the reporter lead your answer or put words in your mouth• Look away up or down at your feet (when being interviewed on camera)• Wear sunglasses or chew gum

Calendar Listing Template

Walk to Fight Suicide

Join us for the **[WALK NAME]** Out of the Darkness **[COMMUNITY/CAMPUS]** Walk on **[DATE]** in **[LOCATION]** at **[TIME]**. Proceeds bring local and national suicide prevention and awareness programs of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention directly to the school. Learn more at afsp.org/OutoftheDarkness.

Media Contact

[NAME]

[PHONE NUMBER]

[EMAIL ADDRESS]



Press Release Template

Contact

[NAME]

[PHONE NUMBER]

[EMAIL ADDRESS]

Volunteers Walk to Fight Suicide

Movement of a Quarter of a Million People Joined by Local Participants in [CITY]

[CITY, STATE – DATE] – Suicide is the 10th leading cause of death in the United States, yet suicide can be prevented. Volunteers from [CITY, STATE] are joining the quarter of a million people who are walking in towns across the United States to draw attention to the fight for suicide prevention. The annual [WALK NAME] Out of the Darkness [COMMUNITY/CAMPUS] Walk, hosted by the [CHAPTER NAME – MAKE A HYPERLINK] will be held at [TIME A.M./P.M.], [DATE] at [LOCATION]. This walk supports the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention's education and support programs and its bold goal to reduce the annual U.S. rate of suicide 20 percent by the year 2025.

"Suicide touches one in five American families. We hope that by walking we will draw attention to this issue and keep other families from experiencing a suicide loss. Our ultimate goal is to save lives and bring hope to those affected by suicide," said [YOUR NAME OR A BOARD MEMBER'S NAME], [AFSP CHAPTER NAME VOLUNTEER/AFSP CHAPTER NAME BOARD MEMBER].

The [WALK NAME] Out of the Darkness [COMMUNITY/CAMPUS] Walk is one of more than 550 Out of the Darkness Overnight, Community and Campus Walks being held nationwide this year. The walks are expected to unite more than 300,000 walkers and raise millions for suicide prevention efforts. Last year, these walks raised over \$21 million for suicide prevention. Last year this local walk, raised over [\$XX] and had [##] participants.

Speakers at the [CITY] Out of the Darkness [COMMUNITY/CAMPUS] Walk will include [LOCAL DIGNITARIES/VIPS].

"These walks are about turning hope into action," said **AFSP CEO Robert Gebbia**. "The research has shown us how to fight suicide, and if we keep up the fight, the science is only going to get better and our culture will get smarter about mental health. With the efforts of our courageous volunteers, and a real investment from our nation's leaders, we hope to significantly reduce the suicide rate in the United States."

Local sponsors for the [WALK NAME] Out of the Darkness Walk include [LIST HERE].

*The **American Foundation for Suicide Prevention** is dedicated to saving lives and bringing hope to those affected by suicide. AFSP creates a culture that's smart about mental health through education and community programs, develops suicide prevention through research and advocacy, and provides support for those affected by suicide. Led by CEO Robert Gebbia and headquartered in New York, and with a public policy office in Washington, D.C., AFSP has local chapters in all 50 states with programs and events nationwide. Learn more about AFSP in its latest Annual Report, and join the conversation on suicide prevention by following AFSP on **Facebook**, **Twitter**, **Instagram**, and **YouTube**.*

Letter to the Editor

How to Send a Letter to an Editor

- Letters to the editor usually run from 150 to 250 words
- Call your local newspaper for length limit and submission information – there often is a special e-mail address for submissions (e.g., letters@newspaper.com)
- The draft below is about 150 words – make it your own by filling in personal information about why you are walking for suicide prevention, but be careful to stay within the appropriate length
- When sending, paste your letter into the text of the e-mail, not as an attachment
- Include your name, city or town, and a daytime phone number (preferably cell phone) so a paper can verify information
- A newspaper may propose edits to shorten it – that’s fine as long as the meaning does not change
- Letters should be submitted as soon as possible to allow for timely publication
- If your letter is printed and posted on the Internet, please email aobrien@afsp.org with a link to it

Sample Letter to an Editor

As part of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention’s **[COMMUNITY/CAMPUS]** Out of the Darkness Walks, I will be walking on **[DATE]** at **[LOCATION]** to draw attention to the importance of suicide prevention. I won’t be walking alone. I will be joined by many who share my dedication. Last year, over 550 Out of the Darkness Walks took place in communities and on campuses across the United States, attended by a quarter of a million dedicated people who share my passion. Our movement is growing.

Like many, I walk because suicide has affected me personally. **[ADD TWO SENTENCES ABOUT WHY YOU CARE ABOUT SUICIDE PREVENTION, EXAMPLE: I LOST MY MOTHER PAM TO SUICIDE IN 2015. SHE WAS A MOTHER, A SISTER, A TEACHER AND MY FRIEND.]**

Since then, I have dedicated my time to educating others about suicide prevention and mental health.

Our goal is to spread awareness of what is currently the 10th leading cause of death in the U.S., and let others know they are not alone. Please help us ensure that mental health is looked upon in equal importance to physical health, and continue to bring hope to those affected by suicide. Join me in this walk. We need you.

Public Service Announcements

Below are four scripts you could share with the radio stations in your area. All PSAs are available on **ChapterLand**. Please note: you can use your walk's custom URL in place of the generic Out of the Darkness URL below. If you're not sure what that URL is, please contact your staff partner or refer to the resources section of the walk manual

10 Seconds

Join us on **[DAY]**, **[DATE]** at **[LOCATION]** as we walk to fight suicide and raise awareness about mental health. Register today at [afsp.org/Out of the Darkness](https://afsp.org/OutoftheDarkness).

15 Seconds

Join us on **[DAY]**, **[DATE]** at **[LOCATION]** as we walk to fight suicide and raise awareness about mental health. Proceeds benefit the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. Register today at [afsp.org/Out of the Darkness](https://afsp.org/OutoftheDarkness).

30 Seconds

Suicide prevention starts with everyday heroes like you. Join us on **[DAY]**, **[DATE]** at **[LOCATION]** as we walk to fight suicide and raise awareness about mental health. Be a part of the movement turning hope into action, and create a culture that's smart about mental health. Funds raised at the walks will benefit the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. Find a walk near you at [afsp.org/Out of the Darkness](https://afsp.org/OutoftheDarkness).

60 Seconds

Suicide is the 10th leading cause of death in the United States, but there is something we can do about it. Each year, thousands of people participate in the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention's Out of the Darkness **[COMMUNITY/CAMPUS]** Walks, raising awareness and letting people know they are not alone. Join us on **[DAY]**, **[DATE]** at **[LOCATION]** as we walk to fight suicide. Funds raised support research, education, advocacy, and support for those affected by suicide. Remember: Suicide prevention starts with everyday heroes like you. Come be a part of the movement that's helping create a culture that's smart about mental health. Find a walk near you at [afsp.org/Out of the Darkness](https://afsp.org/OutoftheDarkness). Together, we can stop suicide.

Event Speech

Key Messages

- Thank the walkers, volunteers, and sponsors
- Together we are creating a culture that's smart about mental health
- It's important to have a direct conversation about suicide and mental health when you need assistance or are concerned about someone else
- Together we are improving and expanding suicide prevention and mental health care
- Together we are supporting those affected by suicide
- Mention specific work of your local AFSP chapter

Tips

Compare Notes

Your speech does not stand alone. If you have multiple speakers, compare notes to make sure you're not needlessly repeating information.

Speak Slowly and be Brief

Your speech should last no more than five minutes. Less than 600 words. The opening program should last no more than 15 minutes in total. Make sure to practice. Do not speak faster to fit more in; instead edit the text.

Be Proud

Organizing a walk is hard work. It's easy to lose perspective in the hectic lead-up to the event. But these walks could not happen without you. You deserve to be on that stage, so be proud of what you and your walkers have accomplished.

Remind people of your event hashtag and AFSP's #StopSuicide and #OutoftheDarkness hashtags, and ask them to post on social media using these hashtags during the event.

Sample Speech

I'm [NAME] and I'd like welcome you to the 2018 [CITY] Out of the Darkness [COMMUNITY/CAMPUS] Walk.

By showing up today, you are sending the message that mental health is as real as physical health. You are sending the message that reaching out for help is the strong thing to do. You are showing others that suicide, which is currently the tenth leading cause of death in the U.S., can no longer be swept under the rug.

Suicide is a health issue that affects all of us. By joining us, you are part of a national movement. You are not just walking alongside the others you see beside you today. You are also walking alongside nearly a quarter of a million people across the country who are walking to fight suicide. Together, we are strong.

Our progress is tangible. When these walks started in 2004, some people thought no one would show up to walk for suicide prevention. 4,000 people showed up that year, and started the movement you are a part of today. By showing up, you let others know they are not alone.

The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention started as a research-based organization, when a small group of families affected by suicide banded together with scientists who wanted to understand more. By walking with us, you are helping to fund innovative and exciting research that will enable us to find better ways to stop suicide. This past year, with your help, we invested nearly \$5 million dollars in cutting edge scientific research.

As a community, we know we have much to do, as we lose close to 45,000 lives to suicide every year in our country. While we are saddened by these deaths, we also see them as a call to action for our nation to do more to prevent suicide. Because of you, we are able to continue to fight for a day when no one will die by suicide.

By walking with us today, you are helping us develop and share education programs like Talk Saves Lives™ and It's Real, a film about college students and mental health. These programs give people practical strategies for recognizing the warning signs, and preventing suicide in their communities. AFSP's Interactive Screening Program gives students, workers, and veterans a safe way to reach out for support. Together, we are creating a culture that's smart about mental health.

By walking with us, you are also helping to provide support to the many people affected by suicide, through programs like the Survivor Outreach Program. In the Survivor Outreach Program, those who have lost a loved one to suicide can receive a visit from a trained volunteer, who is also a suicide loss survivor. This way, someone who is further along in their healing journey can share their wisdom about what helped them after their loss. Also thanks to you, our annual Survivor Day events reach more families affected by suicide each year. These connections happen because you showed up today.

By walking with us, you honor the memory of the loved ones we've lost.

Your being here today also allows our advocates in Washington to do their work of fighting to pass legislation that will save lives. Many states now have better mental health programs and mandatory suicide prevention training for teachers. This is real and lasting change, and it's thanks to you.

I also want to acknowledge those of you who have suffered personally from suicidal thoughts – our green beads. We are so glad to have you here with us in this fight. Your presence and openness allows others to know they are not alone in their struggle.

Together, we are making a difference.

I'd like to close with some of the work our Chapter has been doing right here in [CITY].

[TALK ABOUT SPECIFIC WORK YOUR CHAPTER HAS DONE IN YOUR COMMUNITY. MENTION PROGRAMS THAT YOUR CHAPTER SPONSORS. FOR EXAMPLE:

- **SURVIVOR OUTREACH PROGRAM – WHICH CONNECTS THE NEWLY BEREAVED WITH A TRAINED LOSS SURVIVOR FOR SUPPORT AND RESOURCES**
- **INTERACTIVE SCREENING PROGRAM – AN ONLINE PROGRAM THAT ALLOWS PEOPLE AT-RISK FOR SUICIDE TO CONTACT A COUNSELOR ANONYMOUSLY**
- **MORE THAN SAD – A SERIES OF PROGRAMS THAT TEACH TEENS, PARENTS, AND EDUCATORS ABOUT DEPRESSION AND SUICIDE PREVENTION**
- **OR OTHER PROGRAMS YOUR CHAPTER SUPPORTS**

BE BRIEF, BUT BE SPECIFIC. THE KEY IS TO DEMONSTRATE YOUR CHAPTER'S IMPACT IN YOUR COMMUNITY.]

Lastly I'd like to take a brief moment to request that, when sharing on social media, be sure to tag your walk photos from today with the hashtag #StopSuicide. This will make it easier to find all of your wonderful photos later on, and we at [CHAPTER NAME] can't wait to see them!

Thank you for being here today and supporting the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention and our Out of the Darkness Walks. Our mission to save lives and bring hope to those affected by suicide would not be possible without you.

Social Media

Facebook

For more information on the basics of social media, check out our [Social Media Guidelines](#).

Create a Facebook Event

Your walk should have a Facebook event page. Your local chapter should set up the event through its Facebook page. Walk Chairs (or anyone involved with the walk) can be added as hosts so that they can post to the event, interact with attendees, invite their personal Facebook friends, edit event info as needed, etc. This is great free PR since the event will show up in the feeds of friends who indicate they are interested and/or going.

Instructions for setting up an event page and adding a Walk Chair are below. The person setting up the event will need to be Facebook friends with anyone from the walk that needs to be added as a host.

1. Go to the chapter Facebook page
2. Click "Events" on the left side
3. Click "Create Event"
4. Add an event photo and enter all of the event details
5. Enter the walk registration URL to the "Ticket URL" section
6. At the bottom of the "New Event" pop up window, you will see "Co-hosts"; enter the Walk Chair's name and select them
7. Click "Publish" to make your page live

It is important to be very clear with people that marking themselves as "Going" is not registering for the walk. In the description write "Please Note: marking yourself as "going" on Facebook is not registering for the walk. Please click the link and register (at no cost)." You should also post these reminders to the page a few times (three to four) leading up to the walk.

Facebook Tips

- Explain how people can register for your event
 - To register for our walk, visit [\[EVENT LINK\]](#)
- Email your registrants the link to the Facebook Event or Page and ask them to join and invite others

- Post to your page at least twice a week – include posts with practical information about the walk, as well as information about AFSP to remind people why their fundraising in the first place
- If you have experience with Facebook Live, livestream the opening ceremony and beginning of the walk
- For more content, look to @afspnational on Facebook to reshare

Facebook’s Donation Button

Facebook has recently added a “Donation” button users can add to their posts, enabling readers to click and donate to a charity of their choice. This button appears as an option when users compose a post referencing a nonprofit. Money raised through this method will go to AFSP. However, as a walk participant, we recommend sending users to your personal walks page. Funds donated through this button will not count toward your walk fundraising goal.



Twitter

Walks organizers should not set up separate Twitter accounts. These tips can be used on chapter Twitter accounts and on personal accounts.

Character Count

Twitter posts are limited to 280 characters (including spaces), the link to your Donordrive webpage will take up 22 characters (Twitter automatically alters any URL to 22 characters, no matter the actual length of the link), and #OutoftheDarkness is 17 characters. We also recommend you use #StopSuicide whenever possible. Including those important links and hashtags will leave you with 241 characters to work with.

Involving Partners

Using Twitter to promote your events is great, but if you don’t have any followers it may feel as though you’re speaking to no one. A great way to combat this and get the word out is to tweet “at” local universities, politicians, local and state-level publications, and/or student organizations, even if finding their handles (the names that follow @ on Twitter) may require a little bit of research. To tweet at someone, start a tweet with a period, then put in the @ symbol, and type the handle. If the venue where you’re hosting your Walk has a Twitter handle, you can use this, too.

It’s important to tweet at organizations, state-level publications, and community leaders because they would otherwise not know about the walk, and by sharing with them, you will also advertise the walk to everyone they know as well.

Instagram

All walks related content should go through the Chapter Instagram account. There are multiple ways you can share content through Instagram - from posting photos and videos to the platform, sharing your content on Instagram Stories and direct messaging people. You should post at least one photo or video and 2-3 Instagram Stories day-of. Instagram Story is a great way to share content that's more "behind the scenes" and less polished. You can even add fun filters, gifs, locations and hashtags to these! Make sure to use the dedicated hashtag #OutoftheDarkness to each post.

To learn more on how to use Instagram, click [here](#).

Sample Tweets and Facebook Posts

Some sample tweets and Facebook posts are provided below. You can also recognize top walkers and teams with personalized shout-outs every week. If you do so, make sure to tag them using their Twitter handle.

Social media graphics tend to do better on social media. You can find AFSP's social media shareables at afsp.org/SocialShareables.

Sample Tweets

Please replace the phrases that are highlighted in **[YELLOW AND BOLD]** with your event's information.

- **[@REPORTER]** on **[DATE]**, people who've been affected by suicide will walk. Will you join us? **[EVENT LINK]** #OutoftheDarkness
- **[@PUBLICATION]** **[LOCATION'S/SCHOOL'S]** #OutoftheDarkness Walk is **[DATE]**. Join us: **[EVENT LINK]** #StopSuicide
- **[@UNIVERSITY]** Suicide is the second-leading cause of death among college students. #OutoftheDarkness hopes to change that: **[EVENT LINK]**
- **[@BUSINESS]** RT to help those who've been affected by suicide in **[TOWN/STATE/SCHOOL]** know they're not alone! **[EVENT LINK]** #OutoftheDarkness
- **[EVENT LINK]** Join us to #StopSuicide at our local #OutoftheDarkness Walk on **[DATE]**
- Support the fight to #StopSuicide by donating to our #OutoftheDarkness Walk **[EVENT LINK]**
- Suicide is the 10th leading cause in the United States. Join us on **[DATE]** to #StopSuicide at our #OutoftheDarkness Walk! **[EVENT LINK]**
[Share 10th leading cause graphic from social media shareables page]
- AFSP is the largest private funder of #SuicidePrevention research **[EVENT LINK]** #OutoftheDarkness
[Use the "Research Funding social graphic"]
- Walk with us on **[DATE]** to #StopSuicide: youtu.be/WFVVwLEROX4 #OutOfTheDarkness
- Awkward silences don't have to be so awkward. Sometimes you can use them to check in with a friend about how they're doing. Learn how to #SeizeTheAwkward and start a conversation about mental health at SeizeTheAwkward.org
- When you fundraise for AFSP's #OutoftheDarkness Walk, you're supporting programs like our Survivor Outreach Program. Learn more at afsp.org/sop

Sample Facebook Posts

Use facts from your state's fact sheet (available on [ChapterLand](#), Chapter webpage or from your staff member) to create Facebook posts.

For Your Personal Facebook or Walk Page

- Many people in our area have been affected by suicide, including me. On **[DATE]**, join us for **[LOCATION]**'s Out of the Darkness Walk at **[TIME]** **[EVENT LINK]**
- Join me on **[DATE]** for **[LOCATION]**'s Out of the Darkness Walk to #StopSuicide! **[EVENT LINK]**
- Today's the day! Join me and thousands across the country as we walk to raise awareness for suicide prevention and mental health. Who will I be seeing at the Out of the Darkness Walk today? **[EVENT LINK]**

For Your Facebook Event Page

- In **[STATE]**, someone dies by suicide every **## – SEE STATE FACT SHEET FOR NUMBER – afsp.org/StateFacts**. Together, we can change that. **[EVENT LINK]**
- Join us on **[DATE]** at **[LOCATION]** for the Out of the Darkness Walk. Together we can #StopSuicide. **youtu.be/WFVWvLERoX4**
- Your support of our Out of the Darkness Walk helps AFSP fund research, education and advocacy programs, as well as provide support for those affected by suicide.
- Join us in the fight against this leading cause of death. **[EVENT LINK]**
- Let's be the ones to change the conversation around mental health. Join us on **[DATE]** for the Out of the Darkness Walk. **[EVENT LINK]**
- Nobody likes an awkward silence, but it can actually be a great time to check in with a friend on their mental health. Learn how you can #SeizeTheAwkward at **SeizeTheAwkward.org**
- "It's Real: College Students and Mental Health" is a short film is designed to raise awareness about mental health issues commonly experienced by students. Bring It's Real to your campus! [It's Real Social Media Graphic (for non-students) Graphic]
- Colleges use our ISP to help support the mental health of their students. Bring ISP to your campus: **afsp.org/ISP**
- Check out some of our favorite resources on mental health: **afsp.org/MentalHealth**

Post on Day Before Event

- Don't forget tomorrow is the **[WALK NAME]** Out of the Darkness Walk. Please join us at **[TIME]** in **[LOCATION]**.
[This is also the time to remind your attendees of any practical information they might need: driving directions, parking, public transportation, etc.]
- Suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death for people aged 18-24. Help support the fight to #StopSuicide by walk with us on **[DATE]**: **[EVENT LINK]**

Sample Instagram Posts

Use photos of past walks, any set-up photos, or photos at the walk. Remember that you can share multiple photos and videos in one post, too. If you want to add the event link to your Instagram bio, then you can refer people back to it in your posts. If you need instructions on editing the bio, please see our Social Media Guidelines. You can find AFSP's social media shareables at afsp.org/SocialShareables.

Post Before the Event

- Many people in our area have been affected by suicide. Let's come together on **[DATE]** for our #OutoftheDarkness Walk at **[LOCATION]** to bring awareness to this important issue. Together, we can #StopSuicide!
- Join us on **[DATE]** for **[LOCATION]**'s #OutoftheDarkness Walk to #StopSuicide! Want to learn more? Link in bio!

Post Day of Event

- Today's the day! Walk with us at our #OutoftheDarkness Walk at **[LOCATION]** as we walk to raise awareness for suicide prevention and mental health. We hope to see you there!
- What an amazing turn out! We're here with **[# OF PEOPLE]** at **[LOCATION]** raising awareness for suicide prevention. Are you here? Share photos and make sure to tag **[CHAPTER INSTAGRAM HANDLE]** and #OutoftheDarkness!

Snapchat

Setting Up a Geofilter for Your Walk

To submit a geofilter, you will need a Snapchat account. Whatever email is tied to your Snapchat account is the email that will be contacted regarding Snapchat geofilters (the public will not see the name of the account that set up the geofilter so it can come from the personal account of someone involved with the walk or from an account set up by a chapter). Unless you are AFSP staff, please do not set up an account representing a chapter or an Out of the Darkness Walk. Follow the steps on the next page to set up the geofilter.

1. Download our Snapchat geofilter available on **ChapterLand** (under Communications – Social Media)
2. Go to create.snapchat.com and click "Create Filter"
3. Login to your account
4. Click "Upload" under "Use Your Own"
5. Upload the Snapchat filter
6. Name the filter; it should be as close to your event name as possible
7. On the next page, set the timing for your geofilter – it is recommended that you start your at the time of check-in start time and end it an hour after you expect your event to end
8. On the next page, click "Draw Fence" and then select the area of your event; once the area and date/time are set, you will see the price
9. On the next page, under "Geofilter Details" you will need to select "Business"; then enter a business name (this will appear when users are selecting your geofilter); enter "Out of the Darkness" here

10. Enter your payment information
11. Review your area covered, start and end time and date, check that you agree with their terms, and click "Submit"

Seize the Awkward

About Seize the Awkward

Seize the Awkward is a national public service advertising (PSA) campaign created by the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention and The Jed Foundation in partnership with the Ad Council. The campaign empowers teens and young adults to reach out to and support their friends who may be struggling with mental health issues by encouraging them to "seize the awkward" – use an awkward silence or moment as an opportunity to talk to a friend about their mental health.

Talking Points

Here are some talking points you can use when introducing people to the campaign, letting them know the need for encouraging conversation among young adults with their peers, the resources people can find on the main Seize the Awkward website, and facts about mental health.

- Friends of teens and young adults are often the first to recognize early signs of mental health problems and when they do seek support, an estimated 76% of young adults will turn to a peer
- Teens and young adults are ready and willing to have conversations about mental health, they're just missing the language and tools to do so
- It isn't always easy to reach out to a friend who may be struggling with mental health, but just having a conversation can really help

For more talking points to help you discuss the campaign, [click here](#).

Digital Assets

We want to help you get the word out about the campaign on social media! Visit [here](#) to find fun ways of sharing the message, including:

- Posters – Download poster images specially created for the campaign by different artists to share with your followers, or print for your community/campus
- GIFs – Check out these super-fun animated images for Facebook and Twitter
- Coupons – Print out or download these creative ways of letting a friend know you owe them a coffee, movie night, or good old-fashioned chance to talk
- Influencer Videos – These videos from your favorite social media personalities such as Tyler Posey, Hannah Hart, Liza Koshy and more get real with practical advice for opening up

Social Media Posts/Drafts

Thank you for helping support Seize the Awkward! To spread the word about the campaign on social media, we have provided suggested copy to share the campaign on your social platforms. Please use the campaign hashtag, #SeizeTheAwkward, URL, SeizeTheAwkward.org, or Instagram, @SeizeTheAwkward, whenever possible.

If you would like to attribute the campaign to our sponsors, The Jed Foundation (JED) and the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP), please use the following handles. Tag JED on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram using @jedfoundation; tag AFSP on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram using @AFSPnational.

Facebook and Twitter

- Nobody likes an awkward silence, but it can actually be a great time to check in with a friend on their mental health. Learn how you can #SeizeTheAwkward at SeizeTheAwkward.org
- When it comes to mental health, awkward silences don't have to be a bad thing. Learn how you can #SeizeTheAwkward with a friend at SeizeTheAwkward.org
- Opening up about mental health can make your friendships even stronger. To learn how to #SeizeTheAwkward at SeizeTheAwkward.org
- When it comes to checking in on a friend about their mental health, trust your instincts. Learn how to #SeizeTheAwkward at SeizeTheAwkward.org

Instagram

- Nobody likes an awkward silence, but it can actually be a great time to check in with a friend on their mental health. Follow @SeizeTheAwkward to learn how you can #SeizeTheAwkward
- When it comes to checking in on a friend about their mental health, trust your instincts. Learn how to #SeizeTheAwkward by following @SeizeTheAwkward on Instagram

Event Photography

Thank you for your time and effort to capture this event for AFSP. It's truly an extraordinary event, and your contribution is invaluable. Please be sensitive and respectful as many who attend our events are grieving the loss of their loved ones.

Photos will be shared with all participants and may appear in future AFSP marketing materials and on social media. If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to aobrien@afsp.org.

Purpose

Promote the hopeful message that suicide can be prevented.

Image Wish List

- People walking together, holding hands, hugging, embracing and clapping in support
- People looking hopeful at the start and end of the events
- People showing confidence and strength, supporting one another while smiling or looking hopeful; poses of accomplishment, success, or confidence
- People should be facing forward, even in crowd shots; if walking, they should be walking toward the camera
- Groups of people, teams or crowds during the event (avoid showing sparse crowd backgrounds)
- Walkers over 18 years old who are wearing our Out of the Darkness or Be the Voice apparel
- Close-ups of walkers taken at chest height, preferably with crowds behind them
- Close-ups of two or three walkers in the crowd displaying signs of support, love and care for the cause
- Images of veterans in teams, groups and individual photos
- Photos for AFSP material consideration also need to be free of objects which obstruct the view of the face or may cause distraction (water bottles, etc.)

Specific Demographic Needs

College-aged groups, men of all ages, seniors, ethnically diverse groups, and groups from diverse backgrounds or lifestyles.

Photos We Do Not Need

People walking from behind, people who may be in emotional distress or crying, walking feet, AFSP-branded tents, signs or registration tables, sparse crowds, city landmarks, pets, and anyone under the age of 18.

Formats and File Sharing

Please deliver all images as unedited JPEGs at high resolution or RAW images suitable for potential reuse in print and collateral materials. Pictures should be delivered at their maximum resolution (we prefer images that are 9,000 pixels wide or larger). Photos should be shared through afsp.org/WalkShare.

Please select only your best images and try to limit uploads to 100 photos per event.

Campus Walks

Campus Walks Marketing

It's a good idea to have a lot of handouts at your walk for people to learn about who we are and what we do. To view options for materials, visit [ChapterLand.org](https://www.chapterland.org) or ask your staff member.

Getting Greek Life Involved

Your Campus Greek Life organizations are great sources for students committed to community service.

Sample Email

Mental health is such an important thing. We all feel stressed and anxious sometimes – about grades, our social lives, dating – but you don't have to be afraid to talk about it. I am contacting you with the hope that you will consider getting your sorority involved in the **[SCHOOL NAME]** Campus Walks. It helps raise awareness, and lets people know that it's okay to get help before it becomes anything serious. And funds go to the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. It's on **[DATE]**. You can get more info at **[INSERT CONTACT INFO]**.

It's Real: College Students and Mental Health

Spread the word about AFSP's film, *It's Real: College Students and Mental Health*, by using the trailer found at: afsp.org/RealFilm. You can send it in to your campus TV station, have them show it in your student union, dining hall, or campus center, or screen it yourself for a club or group you're in. It's a great way to get other students interested in suicide prevention, and help them understand how important it is for people to ask for help when they need it.

Film Description

The transition to college often presents emotional challenges. The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention's documentary *It's Real: College Students and Mental Health* follows six students who wrestled with mental health concerns, sought treatment, and found their own sense of balance. This short documentary, which includes a facilitator's guide for use in programming, is appropriate for students, parents, staff and faculty. Visit afsp.org/RealFilm to learn more.

Dorm Fundraising Competition

Setting up a competition between the different dorms is a great way to help you meet your fundraising goals. Think of some cool (inexpensive) prizes – like a pizza party, some AFSP swag – or even just bragging rights. It's easier, and more fun, to hit new heights in raising money for the Walk when you're in it together with friends. (Plus, you know your dorm is the coolest on campus: you got this.) #StopSuicide #MentalHealth #OutOftheDarkness #SuicidePrevention.

afsp.org/OutoftheDarkness

