



CHARLIE CRIST
GOVERNOR

STATE OF FLORIDA

Office of the Governor

THE CAPITOL
TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA 32399-0001

www.flgov.com
850-488-7146
850-487-0801 fax

Dear Mr. Aisheo,

According to the Florida Department of Health, 2,723 Floridians lost their lives to suicide in 2008 at a rate of seven people per day. As reflected by your website, www.jumperpool.com, many families and communities have been affected by the deaths of their loved ones, friends, classmates, co-workers, and neighbors.

Although your website disclaimer states that you in no way condone jumping from the Skyway Bridge, we are concerned that some of your content may be producing more harm than good. There are some positive elements to the website, including your suicide prevention and help section which features crisis hotlines, advocacy organizations, and other information websites. It is commendable that you have included these resources for those who are suffering. We also appreciate that you are seeking environmental solutions to prevent those attempting to jump.

Adversely, research shows that media (including websites, blogs, and social networking) displaying explicit details or pictures of suicide deaths, settings, or methods can increase the spread of suicide contagion, or copycat suicides. People in crisis or suffering from mental illness can be especially susceptible to suggestions, especially from various media sources. The Statewide Office of Suicide Prevention and other prevention advocates around the State are concerned that some of the content on your website may promote the idea of suicide rather than prevent it. Here are some media guidelines provided by national experts for your consideration:

- Sensational coverage of suicide should be avoided, especially when involving a suicide death. Avoid showing pictures of the deceased, the scene of the suicide or the method used.
- Avoid graphic descriptions of the suicide or method.
- Take care not to glorify suicide victims and to limit the expressions of community or public memorials or services.
- Remember to be sympathetic to the family in your documentation.
- Refrain from oversimplified explanations of why someone would take their own life. Suicide is a very complex issue and is rarely the result of an incident; acknowledging that suicide is a result of a combination of factors is helpful.
- Untreated depression *can* lead to suicide, so information about resources to deal with depression should be provided. Depression is treatable and this point should be publicized.
- If the deceased suffered from a mental illness, this should be acknowledged.
- It is a good and welcome gesture to publicize the warning signs of suicidal behavior, as well as community resources such as The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (1-800-273-TALK), crisis hotlines, support groups, and mental health centers. Make sure



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information is current and up to date. Perhaps this number could be listed on all the pages of your website.

If you have any questions or would like additional information and resources, please do not hesitate to contact Erin MacInnes with the Statewide Office of Suicide Prevention at (850) 922-0498 or Erin.MacInnes@myflorida.com; and for additional information on the epidemic of suicide please visit www.HelpPromoteHope.com. We would happy to help you make some revisions to your website to encourage help-seeking behavior.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Erin MacInnes".

Erin MacInnes
Director, Statewide Office of Suicide Prevention
Executive Office of the Governor