



**For Immediate Release**  
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## **CFI Releases New Guidance to Support Accurate, Respectful Mental Health Reporting**

MILWAUKEE, WI, (May 19, 2026)—Centers for Independence (CFI), a leading provider of services for people with disabilities and behavioral health needs, today announced the release of *[Mental Health: What Journalists Should Know](#)*, a practical guide designed to help reporters cover mental health topics with accuracy, care and empathy. While the resource is tailored for journalists, its insights are valuable for anyone communicating about mental health in public-facing work.

“Every day, journalists tell stories about people living, working and contributing to their communities while managing mental health challenges,” says Associate Vice President, Behavioral Health Rachel Leahy Hilker. “Because media coverage plays a powerful role in shaping public understanding, CFI developed this guide to support responsible, stigma-free reporting that reflects the realities of mental health conditions and the people who experience them.”

### **A Resource for Thoughtful, Informed Coverage**

The guide encourages journalists to ask key questions before including mental health details in a story, such as whether the information is relevant, whether it adds necessary context, and whether the facts come from credible sources. As the guide notes, “Mental health details should not be included for dramatic effect or speculation.”

It also outlines best practices for language, urging reporters to use person-first, specific and non-sensational terminology. The document emphasizes avoiding generalizations, respecting privacy and including content warnings when appropriate.

### **Special Guidance for Suicide Reporting**

Because suicide coverage requires heightened sensitivity, the guide provides clear recommendations on terminology that reduces stigma and risk. For example, instead of outdated or harmful phrases, it encourages the use of accurate, non-judgmental language such as “died by suicide” or “suicide attempt.” The guide also reminds journalists to include crisis resources whenever possible.

### **Interviewing with Empathy**

The resource offers practical tips for interviewing people about their mental health experiences, including respecting a person’s right to decline, avoiding assumptions or

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diagnoses, being culturally aware, and recognizing when an interview should end. As the guide states, “Preparation and empathy are essential.”

### **Why This Matters**

Accurate reporting can reduce stigma, improve public understanding and encourage people to seek help. The guide highlights key context, including that one in five U.S. adults has a diagnosed mental health disorder and that “most people with mental illnesses are no more likely to be violent than those without a mental health disorder.” It also underscores that people with mental health conditions are more likely to be victims of violence, not perpetrators.

“Responsible mental health reporting starts with empathy,” says Leahy Hilker. “Thoughtful reporting can educate audiences, reduce stigma and encourage people to seek help.”

### **Availability**

*Mental Health: What Journalists Should Know* is available online at [cfihope.org/press-room](https://cfihope.org/press-room) and can be shared widely with newsrooms, journalism educators, communications professionals and community organizations.

### **About Centers for Independence**

Centers for Independence (CFI) is a Milwaukee-based nonprofit dedicated to supporting people with disabilities and behavioral health needs through innovative, person-centered programs. Since 1938, CFI has been a leader trauma-informed care, self-direction and removing barriers to help individuals achieve total health and greater independence. Visit [cfihope.org](https://cfihope.org) to learn more.

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