

FEMICIDE REPORTING RECOMMENDATIONS

OAITH, 2021



Femicide Reporting Recommendations

Prepared by the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses (OAITH)
in collaboration with the University of Guelph

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Femicide:

Femicide is commonly defined as the intentional murder of women because they are women. OAITH's definition of femicide includes women (and at times their children) or girls who were killed by men who are either a former or current intimate partner, a family member, someone known to them, or in some cases unknown but still targeted.

Introduction:

Media reporting plays an important role in understanding and shaping public perceptions of social issues (Gillespie et al. 2013). Media sources have the ability to frame the dominant narrative through the use of various images and language, sources and substantive content. Whether or not the frame is accurate, these frames allow the general public and policymakers to easily categorize, label and manage issues. Media frames are often shaped by three components: sources, language and context (Gillespie et al. 2013, 225).

Research has found that femicide is often framed as episodic or isolated criminal events (Easteal et al., 2015). This is done through word choice, at times placing blame on the victim, through an over-reliance on criminal justice sources as well as a lack of contextualizing details such as victim-perpetrator relationship and a history of gender-based violence. As a result, femicide cases are often de-contextualized within the media and are portrayed as individualized incidents rather than a part of a social gendered problem (Gillespie et al., 2013). By framing these events as isolated incidents there is a focus on individual circumstances and responsibility and no connection is made to the role that patriarchy and gendered power relationships play as part of the root cause of male violence against women and femicide (Easteal et al., 2015). By excluding important facts concerning the reality of violence against women then journalists are contributing indirectly to



mythology (Easteal, Blatchford, Holland & Sutherland 2021). Such mythology reinforces and supports ideologies and institutions that uphold gender inequality.

In an effort to increase public understanding of the complexity of gender-based violence and to work toward addressing solutions there is a need to accurately situate femicide as a form of gender-based violence and not as an isolated incident.

The following document highlights a number of existing recommendations and best practices for media reporting on femicide that can be used to improve media reporting and public understanding of femicide and to contextualize femicide as the most extreme form of gender-based violence.

Tip/ Recommendation/ Best Practice	Citation/ Name of Doc.	Link
Use the term femicide	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Femicide in Canada Tips 2. Our Watch Australia: Tips for reporting on violence against women and their children 3. Level Up: Dignity for dead women: Media guidelines for reporting on domestic violence deaths 4. OAITH: Femicide in Ontario 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. https://www.femicideincanada.ca/tips 2. https://media-cdn.ourwatch.org.au/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2019/06/27060600/OW_3990_SNAPSHOT-GUIDELINES_WEB_FA.pdf 3. https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5741ba638a65e2e0809f8d25/t/5c8f7f1015fcc04d1f249d84/1552908055603/Guidelines-Report.pdf 4. http://www.oaith.ca/oaith-work/current-initiatives.html
Language Do's & Don'ts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Using non-sensationalist language, avoiding unnecessarily graphic portrayals of violent 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Easteal AM, P., Blatchford, A., Holland, K., & Sutherland, G. (2021). Teaching Journalists About Violence Against Women Best Reportage Practices: An Australian Case Study. <i>Journalism Practice</i>, 1–17. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2021.1886866 2. https://media-cdn.ourwatch.org.au/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2019/11/07040030/Emerging-evidence-guide-media-AA.pdf



<p>crime</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No negative language to describe victim - No sympathetic language to describe perpetrator - Use correct terminology, name VAW as a crime, avoid euphemisms - Avoid language that implies mutuality in the VAW, i.e. “domestic dispute” - Recognize power of Headline and do not reinforce gender stereotypes/myths - Use active language to reinforce perpetrator accountability & counter perpetrator excusing comments or descriptors of the perpetrator that imply that they are an exceptional deviation from the norm (i.e. “monster”) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Sutherland, G., Simons, M., and Blatchford, A. (2017). Emerging Evidence, Insights and Lessons: News media and the primary prevention of violence against women and their children. Report prepared for Our Watch. Melbourne: University of Melbourne 3. Comas-d'Argemir, D. 2015. “News of Partner Femicides: the Shift from Private Issue to Public Problem.” <i>European Journal of Communication</i> 30 (2): 121–136. 4. Australia’s National Research Organisation for Women’s Safety (ANROWS) (2016). Media representations of violence against women and their children: <i>Final report</i> 5. Sutherland, G., McCormack, A., Esteal, P., Holland, K., and Pirkis, J. (2016.) Media guidelines for the responsible reporting of violence against women: a review of evidence and issues 6. Gillespie, L.K, Richards, T., Givens, E.M & Smith, M.D. (2013). Framing Deadly Domestic Violence: Why the Media’s Spin Matters in Newspaper Coverage of Femicide. <i>Violence Against Women</i> 19(2), 222-245. 7. Use the right words: Media reporting on sexual violence in Canada 8. Our Watch Australia: Tips for reporting on violence against women and their children 9. Femicide in Canada Tips 10. Reporting on sexual violence: A guide for journalists 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0267323114544865?casa_token=e8Zaw2e58wAAAA%3AM0cMf22-LHIS35YeWPaMw17-q34n881omUp5LzHzaSKFRbPSnbcBQK_T4jAJEKWtD2HXe_1jNqudAA 4. https://www.google.com/url?sa=D&q=https://d2bb010tdzqaq7.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2019/07/22035818/Media-representations-of-violence-against-women-and-their-children-Final-report.pdf&ust=1624461360000000&usq=AOvVaw3-gLXB_XMFb00X3DASfdhP&hl=en-CA 5. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/307466813_Media_guidelines_for_the_responsible_reporting_of_violence_against_women_a_review_of_evidence_and_issues 6. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1077801213476457?casa_token=1fNo7ZVNHEIAAAAA%3A0JFAw3uc77GbkJnmQzJSCSHT6BMNrlsf-RCWAtuJN-96p73lb-0loQIRWWY3Udj9ERk2PSII8Dv5MA 7. http://www.femifesto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/UseTheRightWords-Single-May16.pdf 8. https://media-cdn.ourwatch.org.au/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2019/06/27060600/OW3990_SNAPSHOT-GUIDELINES_WEB_F_A.pdf 9. https://www.femicideincanada.ca/tips 10. http://www.ndhealth.gov/injury/nd_prevention_tool_kit/docs/2013mediamanual.pdf
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<p>Include contact information for local and provincial resources for support for survivors of violence (e.g., crisis lines) and include typical warning signs and obstacles for women seeking to leave abusive partners.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Our Watch Australia: Tips for reporting on violence against women and their children 2. Level Up: Dignity for dead women: Media guidelines for reporting on domestic violence deaths 3. OAITH: Femicide in Ontario 4. Media guidelines for the responsible reporting of violence against women: A review of evidence and issues 5. Media guidelines for reporting on gender-based violence in humanitarian contexts. 6. Eastal AM, P., Blatchford, A., Holland, K., & Sutherland, G. (2021). Teaching Journalists About Violence Against Women Best Reportage Practices: An Australian Case Study. <i>Journalism Practice</i>, 1–17. 7. Sutherland, G., McCormack, A., Esteal, P., Holland, K., and Pirkis, J. (2016.) Media guidelines for the responsible reporting of violence against women: a review of evidence and issues 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. https://media-cdn.ourwatch.org.au/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2019/06/27060600/OW_3990_SNAPSHOT-GUIDELINES_WEB_F_A.pdf 2. https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5741ba638a65e2e0809f8d25/t/5c8f7f1015fcc04d1f249d84/1552908055603/Guidelines-Report.pdf 3. http://www.oaith.ca/oaith-work/current-initiatives.html 4. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/307466813_Media_guidelines_for_the_responsible_reporting_of_violence_against_women_a_review_of_evidence_and_issues 5. https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/5c3701d27.pdf 6. https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2021.1886866 7. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/307466813_Media_guidelines_for_the_responsible_reporting_of_violence_against_women_a_review_of_evidence_and_issues
<p>Contextualize femicide and VAW as a social problem not an isolated incident (use thematic framing) to link to gender inequality, misogyny and prior violence + Examine femicide and VAW as social problems in reports that are not incident-based but look at the issue thematically</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reporting on Sexual Violence 2. OAITH: Femicide in Ontario 3. Media guidelines for the responsible reporting of violence against women: A review of evidence and issues 4. Level Up: Dignity for dead women: Media guidelines for reporting on domestic violence deaths 5. Our Watch Australia: Tips for reporting on violence against women and their children 6. Femicide in Canada Tips 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. https://vetoviolence.cdc.gov/sites/all/themes/veto_bootstrap/assets/sv-landing/SV-MediaGuide-508c.pdf 2. http://www.oaith.ca/oaith-work/current-initiatives.html 3. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/307466813_Media_guidelines_for_the_responsible_reporting_of_violence_against_women_a_review_of_evidence_and_issues 4. https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5741ba638a65e2e0809f8d25/t/5c8f7f1015fcc04d1f249d84/1552908055603/Guidelines-Report.pdf



	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence: Best Practices 8. Eastaerl AM, P., Blatchford, A., Holland, K., & Sutherland, G. (2021). Teaching Journalists About Violence Against Women Best Reportage Practices: An Australian Case Study. <i>Journalism Practice</i>, 1–17 9. Holland, K., & Sutherland, G. (2021). Teaching Journalists About Violence Against Women Best Reportage Practices: An Australian Case Study. <i>Journalism Practice</i>, 1–17. 10. Australia’s National Research Organisation for Women’s Safety (ANROWS) (2016). Media representations of violence against women and their children: <i>Final report</i> 11. Sutherland, G., McCormack, A., Esteal, P., Holland, K., and Pirkis, J. (2016.) Media guidelines for the responsible reporting of violence against women: a review of evidence and issues 	<p>4d1f249d84/1552908055603/Guidelines-Report.pdf</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. https://media-cdn.ourwatch.org.au/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2019/06/27060600/OW3990_SNAPSHOT-GUIDELINES_WEB_FA.pdf 6. https://www.femicideincanada.ca/tips 7. http://www.dvonlineguide.org/en/best-practices 8. https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2021.1886866 9. https://media-cdn.ourwatch.org.au/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2019/11/07040030/Emerging-evidence-guide-media-AA.pdf 10. https://www.google.com/url?sa=D&q=https://d2bb010tdzqaq7.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2019/07/22035818/Media-representations-of-violence-against-women-and-their-children-Final-report.pdf&ust=1624461360000000&usq=AOvVaw3-gLXB_XMFb00X3DASfdhP&hl=en-CA 11. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/307466813_Media_guidelines_for_the_responsible_reporting_of_violence_against_women_a_review_of_evidence_and_issues
<p>Include statistics & other contextual information including intersectionality</p> <p>The inclusion of local statistics in particular may challenge misconceptions of certain areas as “crime-free” and therefore</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Femicide in Canada Tips 2. Media guidelines for the responsible reporting of violence against women: A review of evidence and issues 3. Our Watch Australia: Tips for reporting on violence against women and their children 4. Reporting on sexual violence: A guide for journalists 5. Reporting on sexual violence 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. https://www.femicideincanada.ca/tips 2. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/307466813_Media_guidelines_for_the_responsible_reporting_of_violence_against_women_a_review_of_evidence_and_issues 3. https://media-cdn.ourwatch.org.au/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2019/06/27060600/OW3990_SNAPSHOT-GUIDELINES_WEB_FA.pdf



<p>free of VAW</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - History of prior male violence against women is number 1 risk factor and often relevant 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Easteal AM, P., Blatchford, A., Holland, K., & Sutherland, G. (2021). Teaching Journalists About Violence Against Women Best Reportage Practices: An Australian Case Study. <i>Journalism Practice</i>, 1–17. 7. Sutherland, G., McCormack, A., Esteal, P., Holland, K., and Pirkis, J. (2016.) Media guidelines for the responsible reporting of violence against women: a review of evidence and issues 8. Gillespie, L.K, Richards, T., Givens, E.M & Smith, M.D. (2013). Framing Deadly Domestic Violence: Why the Media’s Spin Matters in Newspaper Coverage of Femicide. <i>Violence Against Women</i> 19(2), 222-245. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. http://www.ndhealth.gov/injury/nd_preventi_on_tool_kit/docs/2013mediamanual.pdf 5. https://vetoviolence.cdc.gov/sites/all/themes/veto_bootstrap/assets/sv-landing/SV-MediaGuide-508c.pdf 6. https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2021.1886866 7. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/307466813_Media_guidelines_for_the_responsible_reporting_of_violence_against_women_a_review_of_evidence_and_issues 8. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1077801213476457?casa_token=1fNo7ZVNHEIAAAAA%3A0JFAw3uc77GbkJnmQzJCSHT6BMNrlsf-RCWAtuJN-96p73lb-0loQIRWWY3Udj9ERk2PSII8Dv5MA
<p>Use appropriate imagery, (considering the type and placement) to ensure they do not objectify women</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Our Watch Australia: Tips for reporting on violence against women and their children 2. Level Up: Dignity for dead women: Media guidelines for reporting on domestic violence deaths 3. Use the right words: Media reporting on sexual violence in Canada 4. Media guidelines for reporting on gender-based violence in humanitarian contexts. 5. OAITH: Femicide in Ontario 6. Media guidelines for the responsible reporting of violence against women: A review of evidence and issues 7. Australia’s National Research Organisation 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. https://media-cdn.ourwatch.org.au/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2019/06/27060600/OW_3990_SNAPSHOT-GUIDELINES_WEB_FA.pdf 2. https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5741ba638a65e2e0809f8d25/t/5c8f7f1015fcc04d1f249d84/1552908055603/Guidelines-Report.pdf 3. http://www.femifesto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/UseTheRightWords-Single-May16.pdf 4. https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/5c3701d27.pdf 5. http://www.oaith.ca/oaith-work/current-initiatives.html 6. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/3



	<p>for Women’s Safety (ANROWS) (2016). Media representations of violence against women and their children: <i>Final report</i></p> <p>8. Sutherland, G., McCormack, A., Esteal, P., Holland, K., and Pirkis, J. (2016.) Media guidelines for the responsible reporting of violence against women: a review of evidence and issues</p>	<p>07466813_Media_guidelines_for_the_responsible_reporting_of_violence_against_women_a_review_of_evidence_and_issues</p> <p>7. https://www.google.com/url?sa=D&q=https://d2bb010tdzqaq7.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2019/07/22035818/Media-representations-of-violence-against-women-and-their-children-Final-report.pdf&ust=1624461360000000&usg=AOvVaw3-gLXB_XMFb00X3DASfdhP&hl=en-CA</p> <p>8. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/307466813_Media_guidelines_for_the_responsible_reporting_of_violence_against_women_a_review_of_evidence_and_issues</p>
<p>Use Expert Sources Consult gender-based violence advocates and choose survivors and/or survivor advocates as source & do not rely on “authorized knowers” traditional voices including police, cjs and state actors, court reports + Avoid using sources of information who are distant acquaintances from the victim and/or perpetrator and are unlikely to know background and circumstances, do use close friends and family members</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Media guidelines for reporting on gender-based violence in humanitarian contexts 2. Our Watch Australia: Tips for reporting on violence against women and their children 3. Use the right words: Media reporting on sexual violence in Canada 4. Reporting on sexual violence: A guide for journalists 5. Eastal AM, P., Blatchford, A., Holland, K., & Sutherland, G. (2021). Teaching Journalists About Violence Against Women Best Reportage 6. Holland, K., & Sutherland, G. (2021). Teaching Journalists About Violence Against Women Best Reportage Practices: An Australian Case Study. <i>Journalism Practice</i>, 1–17 7. Australia’s National Research Organisation 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/5c3701d27.pdf 2. https://media-cdn.ourwatch.org.au/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2019/06/27060600/OW_3990_SNAPSHOT-GUIDELINES_WEB_F_A.pdf 3. http://www.femifesto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/UseTheRightWords-Single-May-16.pdf 4. http://www.ndhealth.gov/injury/nd_prevention_tool_kit/docs/2013mediamanual.pdf 5. https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2021.1886866 6. https://media-cdn.ourwatch.org.au/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2019/11/07040030/Emerging-evidence-guide-media-AA.pdf 7. https://www.google.com/url?sa=D&q=https://d2bb010tdzqaq7.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2019/07/22035818/Media-representations-of-violence-against-women-and-their-children-Final-report.pdf&ust=1624461360000000&usg=AOvVaw3-gLXB_XMFb00X3DASfdhP&hl=en-CA



	<p>for Women's Safety (ANROWS) (2016). Media representations of violence against women and their children: <i>Final report</i></p> <p>8. Sutherland, G., McCormack, A., Esteal, P., Holland, K., and Pirkis, J. (2016.) Media guidelines for the responsible reporting of violence against women: a review of evidence and issues</p> <p>9. Gillespie, L.K, Richards, T., Givens, E.M & Smith, M.D. (2013). Framing Deadly Domestic Violence: Why the Media's Spin Matters in Newspaper Coverage of Femicide. <i>Violence Against Women</i> 19(2), 222-245.</p> <p>10. Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence. (2012). Telling the full story: An online guide for journalists covering domestic violence.</p>	<p>en-and-their-children-Final-report.pdf&ust=162446136000000&usq=AOvVaw3-gLXB_XMFb00X3DASfdhP&hl=en-CA</p> <p>8. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/307466813 Media guidelines for the responsible reporting of violence against women a review of evidence and issues</p> <p>9. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1077801213476457?casa_token=1fNo7ZVNHEIAAAAA%3A0JFAw3uc77GbkJnmQzJSCSHT6BMNrlsf-RCWAAtuJN-96p73lb-0loQIRWWY3Udj9ERk2PSII8Dv5MA</p> <p>10. http://dvonlineguide.org/en/best-practices/use-sources-judiciously</p>
<p>Do not assign responsibility for violence to women, do not victim blame or exonerate the perpetrator - this can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Challenging myths that exonerate the perpetrator and/or blame the survivor and countering these portrayals - Avoid perpetuating 	<p>1. Esteal AM, P., Blatchford, A., Holland, K., & Sutherland, G. (2021). Teaching Journalists About Violence Against Women Best Reportage Practices: An Australian Case Study. <i>Journalism Practice</i>, 1–17.</p> <p>2. Sutherland, G., Simons, M., and Blatchford, A. (2017). Emerging Evidence, Insights and Lessons: News media and the primary prevention of violence against women and their children. Report prepared for Our Watch. Melbourne: University of Melbourne</p> <p>3. Comas-d'Argemir, D. 2015. "News of Partner</p>	<p>1. https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2021.1886866</p> <p>2. https://media-cdn.ourwatch.org.au/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2019/11/07040030/Emerging-evidence-guide-media-AA.pdf</p> <p>3. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0267323114544865?casa_token=e8Zaw2e58wAAAAA%3AM0cMf22-LHIS35YeWPaMw17-q34n881omUp5LzHzaSKFRbPSnbcBQK_T4jAJEKWtD2HXe_1jNqudAA</p> <p>4. https://www.google.com/url?sa=D&q=https://d2bb010tdzqaq7.cloudfront.net/wp-conte</p>



<p>misunderstandings and stereotypes of who is at risk of VAW</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Avoid referencing women's behaviour before, during or after VAW 	<p>Femicides: the Shift from Private Issue to Public Problem.” European Journal of Communication 30 (2): 121–136.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Australia’s National Research Organisation for Women’s Safety (ANROWS) (2016). Media representations of violence against women and their children: <i>Final report</i> 5. Sutherland, G., McCormack, A., Esteal, P., Holland, K., and Pirkis, J. (2016.) Media guidelines for the responsible reporting of violence against women: a review of evidence and issues 	<p>nt/uploads/sites/2/2019/07/22035818/Media-representations-of-violence-against-women-and-their-children-Final-report.pdf&ust=1624461360000000&usg=AOvVaw3-gLXB_XMFb00X3DASfdhP&hl=en-CA</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/307466813_Media_guidelines_for_the_responsible_reporting_of_violence_against_women_a_review_of_evidence_and_issues
<p>Report on non-physical manifestations of coercive control, many of which build up to the more severe forms of violence that are typically considered newsworthy</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Easteal AM, P., Blatchford, A., Holland, K., & Sutherland, G. (2021). Teaching Journalists About Violence Against Women Best Reportage Practices: An Australian Case Study. <i>Journalism Practice</i>, 1–17 2. Australia’s National Research Organisation for Women’s Safety (ANROWS) (2016). Media representations of violence against women and their children: <i>Final report</i> 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2021.1886866 2. https://www.google.com/url?sa=D&q=https://d2bb010tdzqaq7.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2019/07/22035818/Media-representations-of-violence-against-women-and-their-children-Final-report.pdf&ust=1624461360000000&usg=AOvVaw3-gLXB_XMFb00X3DASfdhP&hl=en-CA

