

USA Network Does the Unthinkable in 'Mr. Robot' During Suicide Prevention Month

The Parents Television Council criticized USA Network for rating a graphic suicide scene on the Sept. 1 *Mr. Robot* finale as appropriate for children and airing this scene during National Suicide Prevention Month. The PTC urged the network to commit to a “thorough and transparent review” of how it rates its own TV shows.

In the *Mr. Robot* episode, a male character being questioned by a reporter commits suicide with a gun on live TV, all of which is shown in its graphic and gory nature. The episode was given a TV-14 content rating, meaning that USA Network thought that the content was appropriate for children as young as 14 to watch. USA Network delayed the airing of this episode by a week in light of the tragic shootings that took place in Virginia on the day it was originally supposed to air.

“USA Network should have realized that a graphic suicide scene is highly inappropriate for children and rated the episode for adults only (TV-MA). The scene is disturbing and graphic for adults, let alone children. While this is emblematic of the TV content ratings system, it is inexcusable. USA Network should commit to a thorough and transparent evaluation of the process it uses to rate its own shows so that children won’t be exposed to this type of graphic content again,” said PTC President Tim Winter.

“Americans were rightly concerned and disturbed by footage of the real-life tragic shootings in Virginia that was shown on TV and on the Internet, and by images of the disturbing events

printed in newspapers. USA Network appeared to understand that as well and delayed this *Mr. Robot* finale by a week. But that didn't go far enough—USA Network ended up airing this graphic suicide scene during September, which is National Suicide Prevention Month.

“USA Network should have just canned the episode entirely, especially if the network was truly concerned for the similarities of the content to the real-life tragedy in Virginia, and even more so since it showed the suicide. Waiting a week surely didn't minimize the potential harm to the viewing audience—and it may have even maximized the harm by exposing children to this graphic scene. All the more reason why USA Network needs to commit to reforming the way it rates its shows.”