



Directing Change Program and Film Contest – Talking Points for Media

The Directing Change Program & Film Contest is an evaluated youth engagement program. *Directing Change* engages students and young people throughout California to learn about the topics of suicide prevention and mental health by creating short films that are used to support awareness, education and advocacy efforts on these topics. Youth apply information about mental health and suicide prevention to create their own unique message about for their peers. Through the creative process of filmmaking young people are engaged via all methods of the learning spectrum: to see, experience, discuss and apply. And most importantly recognized for their efforts at a red-carpet award ceremony and by having their films impact social change at their schools and in their communities.

Learning objectives surrounding mental health and suicide prevention are integrated into the submission categories of the film contest, giving young people the opportunity to critically explore these topics. Program participants - whether they are making a film, acting as an adult advisor, or judging the films - are exposed to appropriate messaging about these topics, warning signs, how to appropriately respond to someone in distress, where to seek help, as well as how to stand up for others who are experiencing a mental health challenge.

In addition, schools and districts are offered trainings and technical assistance to meet the requirements of AB 2246, new legislation that requires schools to have comprehensive suicide prevention, intervention and postvention policies in place.

At a glance the contest:

- **Provides** each school or organization the opportunity to receive prevention programs and educational resources.
- **Is open** to middle and high school students in California.
- **Is also open** to youth and young adults ages 14-25 in California, who are associated with a college, university, club, program, or community-based organization.
- **Asks** young people to develop a 60-second film about ***Suicide Prevention*** or ***Mental Health***, and ***Through the Lens of Culture***, exploring the topics in different languages and from the perspective of different cultures. Middle school students can create films about mental health and suicide prevention through the ***Walk In Our Shoes*** category.
- Additionally, there are two categories that ask for 30-second films. *SanaMente* category asks youth to create films about mental health in Spanish. The *Animated Short* category asks for animated PSAs about suicide prevention.
- **Encourages** youth and young adults to advocate for these issues on their campus, in their local communities, and with local policy makers.
- **Recognizes** youth, schools, and organizations at an award ceremony in May.

Submission Deadline: March 1 every year. For more information visit: www.DirectingChangeCA.org

Funding

The Directing Change Program and Film Contest was launched as a demonstration initiative as part of Each Mind Matters: California's Mental Health Movement and funded by counties through the Mental Health Services Act (Proposition 63) and administered by the California Mental Health Services Authority (CalMHSA). The program was created by and has been implemented since 2013 by Your Social Marketer, Inc. As of December 20, 2017 the Directing Change Program and Film Contest is a nonprofit organization. For more information visit: www.directingchange.org.

Media Requests

For all media requests please contact Stan Collins, Media Spokesperson for Directing Change. Stan can be available for an interview and can also arrange interviews with youth participants of the program. Stan@suicideispreventable.org/619.518.2412

Impact

A 2016 study conducted by NORC at the University of Chicago found Directing Change to be highly effective in increasing knowledge, behavior and attitudinal outcomes related to suicide prevention and mental health and demonstrated changes in school climate.

- More youth have knowledge of warning signs of suicide, mental health challenges, and how to appropriately respond to a person in emotional distress (e.g. asking a trusted adult for help, not keeping suicide a secret).
- More youth have a voice to speak up about suicide prevention and mental health and become advocates for these topics in their schools or communities.
- Increased early identification and intervention by those in a position to help (e.g. teachers, parents, staff, peers).
- More schools implement prevention programs, staff trainings, and have protocols in place for helping students at risk for suicide or in emotional distress.
- More community members and members of the media and entertainment industry are aware of appropriate messaging for suicide prevention and mental health.

Outcome videos:

- [Directing Change- Minds Begin to Change](#)
- [Directing Change and Suicide Prevention](#)
- [Directing Change and Mental Health](#)
- [The Impact of Directing Change](#)

[Directing Change 2017 Outcome Infographic](#)

Reach

In 2019, the Directing Change Program and Film Contest received 1,063 film submissions from 3,346 young people, representing 118 high schools, 24 middle schools, 16 youth/community organizations, and 12 colleges across 30 counties. Over the last seven years the Directing Change program received 3,960



films from 10,504 youth participants representing 498 schools and community-based organizations. Over the past seven years 596 judges have participated in the judging process and youth films have been viewed online over 77,000 times.

Additional Talking Points

- Approximately one in five youth ages 13 to 18 experiences a mental health challenge in a given year. Another way to look at this is that in an average class room of 30, six students experience a mental health challenge. Mental health challenges take many forms including depression and anxiety. Challenges can also lead to substance abuse that can affect school work, social opportunities and the future. ⁱ
- Stigma has a Negative Impact – Youth and young adults can Stand Up – Speak Out and Put a Stop to Stigma. Feeling hurt and isolated impacts youth and their families. It can be difficult to ask for help for fear of judgment, but this can lead to discrimination, bullying and in extreme cases suicidal thoughts and self-harm.
- Pain isn't always obvious but knowing signs that someone you care about is contemplating suicide can be learned, we all can help. Just like CPR, we can all learn the skills that could save a life.
- Studies show that although about half of teens who are thinking about suicide tell a friend, less than 25% of those friends tell an adult. Youth need to know how to respond appropriately to a friend in need. ⁱⁱ

Featured films

[Speak Out](#)

Friends notice the warning signs for suicide in a friend and seek the advice of a trusted adult.

[Feeling Locked](#)

Youth discuss their personal experiences with mental illness and encourage others to reach out for help because “there is always a key to everything that is locked”.

ⁱ National Institute for Mental Health, *Mental Illness Exact Heavy Toll-Beginning in Youth*, <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/news/science-news/2005/mental-illness-exacts-heavy-toll-beginning-in-youth.shtml>, (May 2013)

ⁱⁱ Michelmore, L., & Hindley, P. (2012). *Help-seeking for suicidal thoughts and self-harm in young people: A systematic review*. *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior*, 42(5):507-24