Directing Change is part of statewide efforts to prevent suicide, reduce stigma and discrimination related to mental illness, and to promote the mental health and wellness of students.

These initiatives are funded by counties through the Mental Health Services Act (Prop 63) and administered by the California Mental Health Services Authority (CalMHSA), an organization of county governments working to improve mental health outcomes for individuals, families and communities.
Changing the minds of many and possibly saving a life.

Directing Change encourages young people to learn about the topics of suicide prevention and mental health in a non-textbook kind of way: a film contest.

Anyone can read about the signs of suicide or mental illness, but to create a 60-second film about them, be respectful, and think deeply about impacting the opinion of others requires a level of involvement that has lasting impact.

As a result of the contest I have a better understanding of the warning signs of suicide: | 88%
As a result of the contest I have a better understanding of what to do if I am concerned that a friend is thinking about suicide: | 89%
I pledge not to keep it a secret if a friend tells me he or she is thinking about suicide: | 87%
Based on 222 student responses to a post-contest self-administered questionnaire

The contest increased students’ understanding of the importance of standing up for other young people experiencing a mental illness: | 87%
The contest stimulated discussion among students about mental health and suicide prevention: | 76%
Based on 79 school advisor responses to a post-contest self-administered questionnaire

Over the past three years, more than 3,000 students around California have decided to Direct Change resulting in the submission of over 1200 films.

This year the program received 420 films from 1226 students representing 112 schools, 7 University of California campuses and 31 counties.

Participation in Directing Change opens the door to introduce prevention programs to schools.

Every participating school is offered an Ending the Silence presentation from the National Alliance of Mental Illness California and one of several donated suicide prevention programs. In addition, students and schools are provided with access to a variety of educational resources on these topics throughout the school year.

Programs like Directing Change help students, teachers and administrators by increasing their awareness and knowledge about suicide and mental health, and provide an opportunity to learn about effective prevention strategies.

“Many of our students are familiar with mental illness, bullying, and suicide; not because they’ve studied it but because a lot of them are either going through situations themselves or witnessed them. This project not only taught them a lot about behavioral health but I definitely saw an increase in student attendance. This project awakened something in some of the kids that has them excited about coming to school and learning. It’s exciting to see a group of kids who desperately need help and encouragement themselves excited about creating films that will help and inspire others. Thanks for the opportunity.”

-Lynnza Rogers, Arts Instructor at PAL Charter Academy, San Bernardino County

To view the films visit: www.directingchange.org
The students become exceptionally knowledgeable about mental illness and suicide prevention by the end of meeting all of the film requirements because they are applying what they learn to what they are doing.

- Don Collins, Torrey Pines High School

“We began this project because we’re filmmakers and the contest intrigued us, but found that the making of the film was what really benefitted us. We had the opportunity to learn about the warning signs of an individual in need of help and hope that our film will encourage others to reach out to those around them.”

- Student, University of California Irvine

“This contest was introduced to me through my digital photography teacher. Through watching sample videos and exploring the contest rules and qualifications, my own understanding of these pressing topics grew. I learned that everyone feels different or alone at times, and you never know the impact you can have on a person.”

- School Advisor

“We hope to share these films with the community via local access television and social media, and use the films to help us fundraise to enable our students to produce future films as part of this project. Unemployment, high school dropouts, teenage pregnancies, and crime are at an all-time high. Our community needs films like these.”

- School Advisor

The short films are used by schools, youth programs, county behavioral health agencies and community-based organizations across the state to support awareness activities.

Over the past three years, films have been viewed over 42,000 times on YouTube and 10,000 DVDs have been distributed.

To view the films visit: www.directingchange.org