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.
Directing Change at a Glance

The Directing Change Program & Film Contest encourages students and youth to learn about the topics of suicide prevention and mental health in a non-textbook kind of way: a film contest. Young people across California are invited to Direct Change by creating 60-second films addressing either suicide prevention or mental health. Through exposure to the submission guidelines and judging forms, youth participants, school staff and judges are exposed to suicide prevention, warning signs, how to appropriately respond to someone in distress, as well as how to stand up for others who are experiencing a mental health challenge.

Participation in Directing Change opens the door to introduce prevention programs to the school. Every school that engages with the contest receives an Ending the Silence presentation from the National Alliance on Mental Illness 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.

The short films that are created are then used by schools, youth programs, county behavioral health agencies and community-based organizations across the state to support awareness activities. Finally, the program recruits and trains a large number of volunteer judges each year that are exposed to appropriate messaging about these topics through the judging process.
Short Term Outcomes

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.
The Need for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention for California’s Young People

Approximately 1 in 5 youth ages 13 to 18 experiences a mental health challenge in a given year. When young people feel alone in dealing with mental health challenges, they may be afraid to talk about it, and not get the help they need. Despite the high rates of mental health needs among children and youth, 4 out of 5 children, ages six to seventeen, who have mental health needs, do not receive any services. Research shows that early identification and treatment of mental health disorders can minimize the long-term effect on a person’s life. The good news is that early and effective mental health treatment can prevent violence and crime in youth. Untreated mental health issues in children and adolescents can lead to adverse and sometimes tragic long-term consequences. Some of these consequences include academic failure, truancy, dropping out of school, behavior problems, substance abuse, school violence, health problems and, even worse, suicide.

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. Although suicide deaths among youth are relatively low when compared to other age groups, rates of youth suicide attempts, and even more so thoughts of suicide ideation among youth are reported to be high among youth and young adults. According to the California Health Kids Survey 2011, 19% of freshman and 17% of juniors in high school had seriously considered suicide in the previous 12 months. Suicide is the third leading cause of death among youth between ten and nineteen years of age.

Directing Change In Numbers:

- **3,000** Students around California that have participated in Directing Change
- **262** High schools have participated in Directing Change
- **1200** Short films created by youth for youth
- **980** Students reached through donated NAMI Ending the Silence school-based presentations in the 2013/14 school year.
- **42,000** and counting... Number of times films have been viewed online.
- **300** Judges that have been trained; drawn from fields in which their level of understanding regarding appropriate messaging for suicide prevention and mental health would have the greatest potential for impact.

*Innumerable* the number of minds touched by watching the films.
Directing Change: A Program Disguised as a Film Contest

“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
Directing Change: A Program Disguised as a Film Contest

Directing Change is a way to engage youth in topics that are often swept under the rug. Whereas the program provides some students with a voice to share and process personal experiences, in many instances it touches students who otherwise may never have been exposed to these topics; students who created films as part of a class project, or wanted to enter the contest. Anyone can read about the signs of suicide or mental illness but to actually take these issues and form a statement about them, be respectful, and think deeply about impacting the opinion of others requires a level of involvement that has lasting impact. Survey data from advisors indicate that over the course of making their films students develop an enormous sense of empathy and awareness overall, opening them up to have conversations about these topics. Directing Change is an innovative medium to influence and educate peers and future parents, teachers and community members who are knowledgeable about the warning signs of suicide, aware of the importance of mental health and know how to appropriately respond to a person in distress.

Directing Change educates students through the process of applying submission guidelines to making a short film about mental health or suicide prevention. The actual learning curriculum is embedded in the submission guidelines and further enhanced with additional resources made available to students and teachers. The suicide prevention curriculum is based on Safe and Effective Messaging for Suicide Prevention recommendations developed by the Suicide Prevention Resource Center (www.sprc.org) and the Framework for Successful Messaging from the National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention.

The mental health curriculum was developed in partnership with the National Alliance on Mental Illness California (www.namica.org) and messaging that is part of Each Mind Matters: California’s Mental Health Movement (www.eachmindmatters.org).
All students that submit a film are exposed to one or both sets of key educational messages outlined above, depending on the category they submit in. These students (as well as the teachers that assist them in the process of making their film) are better prepared to recognize the warning signs for suicide, seek help for themselves, other people, and their future peers, co-workers and family members. Learning is enhanced by utilizing additional educational tools, either on the Directing Change website, other online resources, or by bringing in guest speakers on the topic. Students are further empowered when they have an opportunity to speak to their local legislatures about these topics, recognized by their county behavioral health agency for their achievements, or simply thanked by peers to bringing these topics out in the open.

One of the most important catalysts for lasting impact is when their films are used as tools to educate their peers. Peer-to-peer student mental health programs have gained popularity because peers can connect and communicate with other students in ways that faculty, staff, and administrators cannot (i.e., similar life stages, common language, and understanding the social environment). Every year a group of Directing Change participants emerge as student advocates with a commitment to these topics and change- for example by speaking out on these issues or by advocating for and starting programs at their school or in their community.

Directing Change encourages schools to review and update their suicide prevention protocols on campus prior to implementing the program. Ideally the program is complimented by the implementation of additional prevention programs, including staff and faculty training or class room presentations. Together these structures and processes can result in several positive changes for short-, intermediate-, and long-term outcomes that may include improved knowledge and attitudes; positive behavior changes on the part of students, faculty, staff; and, ultimately, improved student mental health.

### Key Educational Messages

#### Mental Health:

- Mental health knowledge (e.g. mental illness is common and can start at a young age, treatable.)
- The importance of standing up for oneself or others who are experiencing a mental health challenges (e.g. importance of getting help and encouraging others to get help, no discrimination)
- Ending the silence about mental illness
Directing Change in High Schools

One in 10 students in the K-12 educational system has a mental illness serious enough to impair how they function at home, school, and with their peers. While communities as a whole should work to promote mental health and prevent suicide, the school setting is a point of focus for prevention for several reasons, including: student mental health can affect academic performance, maintaining a safe school environment is part of a school’s overall mission, and the negative impact a suicide death in a school community has on student mental health and school climate.

Over the past three years, **3000** high school students have participated in Directing Change, representing **262** high schools.

- In 2013, **142** schools participated

- In 2014, **112** schools participated. Of these **66** were new schools. **46** had also participated in 2013.

- In 2015, **112** schools participated. Of these **57** schools were new schools. **55** had also participated in either 2013 or 2014.
Success Through Partnerships

California Department of Education (CDE)
The California Department of Education (CDE) encourages all schools and districts to participate in Directing Change. In 2014, Tom Torlakson, California Superintendent of Public Instruction, issued a letter boards to establish suicide prevention policies in schools. He also participated in the Directing Change award ceremony as a guest speaker.

Student Mental Health Initiative (SMHI)
The Directing Change team worked closely with the statewide Student Mental Health Initiative (SMHI) on the original model of the program. K-12 SMH initiatives are based on a statewide framework of prevention and early intervention strategies delivered in each of the 11 regions that encouraged schools and their communities to implement programs and services that meet local needs. CCSESA and the Regional Lead County Offices of Education conducted a range of activities with the goals of increasing cross-system collaboration; implementing school-based demonstration programs; providing education and training for education personnel, parents/caregivers, and community partners; and providing technical assistance for school-based program development. The Directing Change team worked close with regional coordinators to promote the program and link schools with prevention programs.

In addition,
Directing Change could not be possible without the strong support of county behavioral health agencies, community-based organizations, schools, districts, county offices of education, after school programs, youth programs, our prevention program partners, and many others.
To Whom It May Concern,

My name is Alex Graham and I have been teaching Media Arts classes at Canyon High School in Anaheim, California for the past eight years. I’m writing this letter to express my gratitude as a teacher who has been fortunate to have my video production students involved with the Directing Change organization and its student film contest for several years. I emphatically believe that having my students participate in the contest has had a dramatic impact on each one of us, myself included, and will continue to do so for the rest of our lives.

I have been so impressed with Directing Change Film Festival and I thought I’d take a moment to share why this contest is likely one of the most valuable parts of our class, if not their high school career.

...I can speak with absolute certainty that the topic of mental health is SO critical to our youth. I personally know that many of our students struggle with these challenges or directly know someone who does. The knowledge base that they build from participating in the contest might be THE reason they seek help, provide a helpful, sensitive, and nonjudgemental approach to someone who could use help today or in the future. The facts that we learn through the pre-production process will always stick with us. For example, my students and I were stunned to know that many people wait over 6 years to seek help for mental health issues- and we started to compare that to other conditions like a broken arm... we were blown away! I think the real “change” that is going to come from this contest is going to be happening for the rest of our students’ lives as they will certainly encounter these life challenges and will be able to approach them from an empathetic, mature, and resource-focused perspective.

My classes and I have grown tremendously throughout the experience of working with Directing Change and I believe this contest is likely one of the most valuable parts of our class, if not their high school career...

Alex Graham
Teacher
Canyon High School
Anaheim, CA
agraham@orangeusd.org
714-532-6000
Directing Change in Higher Education

In the last decade, colleges and universities have also been playing an increasingly important role in addressing the mental health needs of youth, with a substantial increase in the number of students seeking help for serious mental health problems at college and university campus counseling centers. The 2011 National Survey of Counseling Center Directors found that 37 percent of counseling center clients in colleges and universities had significant mental health problems, such as depression, anxiety, suicidal ideation, alcohol abuse, and eating disorders—a sharp increase from 16 percent in 2000 (Gallagher, 2010). In addition, 20% of students completing the CalMHSA Student Mental Health Campus-Wide Survey (2013) met or exceeded the cut-off for probable mental health problems during the 30 days prior to completing the survey; 25–35 percent of students reported their academic performance was negatively affected by anxiety or depression.

Over the past two years Directing Change has partnered with the University of California System. In 2014 and 2015, 100 UC students have participated in Directing Change, representing 9 UC campus locations.

- In 2014, 53 UC students participated
- In 2015, 47 UC students participated

In the future, Directing Change hopes to expand participation to all higher education students in California. Directing Change in higher education settings can augment existing statewide efforts overseen by community colleges, University of California and California State campuses to promote student mental health and reduce suicide. Past efforts funded by CalMHSA have included offering suicide prevention trainings such as ASIST, safeTALK, and QPR. The online suicide prevention training (Kognito) was offered at all 112 community college campuses. The “red folder” initiative resulted in each UC campus producing a quick reference guide to mental health resources. RAND findings showed the increased collaboration and partnerships that resulted in breaking down of silos as a result of the higher education SMH initiatives.
Prevention Programs and Schools

“The contest was great. Within the video program I partnered with our school's Public Service Academy and we created an entire broadcast on the topic of stopping stigma. The broadcast was seen by almost the entire school and some classrooms had follow-up discussions on the topic.”

School Advisor
Prevention Programs and Schools

The Directing Change Student Program & Film Contest addresses mental health and suicide prevention at various points in the school prevention continuum, but also in the community at large with engagement of judges, use of films, and recognition of participants. The film contest is the foundation of the Directing Change program, which serves as a vehicle to draw schools and community members in to address the subject of mental health and suicide prevention.

Although available resources, information and research exist to support schools undertaking mental health and suicide prevention efforts, the reality is many schools are still lacking comprehensive prevention strategies. This under-utilization can be attributed to multiple factors. For one, schools throughout the country are in a constant struggle to balance education time and standards with other programming. In addition, the cost associated with implementing prevention programs can also present a barrier for schools to examine and implement suicide prevention strategies. One reason schools may hesitate to engage in suicide prevention in particular is simply out of lack of information or fear. It is a commonly held myth even today, that talking about suicide can cause it to happen. However, research studies and best practices in suicide prevention and public health suggest that addressing suicide prevention responsibly and openly is the most effective strategy to prevent suicide deaths and attempts.

The Directing Change Program hopes to remove these barriers by introducing the subject of and start conversations about mental health and suicide prevention, offer background information and resources to schools, and provide technical assistance to bridge gaps and further prevention efforts on campuses.

Every participating school is encouraged to review their suicide prevention protocols, offered a free suicide prevention or mental health program, and is connected to a variety of educational resources on these topics.

- **153** schools received a hard copy of SAMHSA's "Suicide Prevention: A Toolkit for Schools".
- **83** schools have received donated suicide prevention programs from one of the partner organizations.
- In addition, over **980** students were reached through donated NAMI Ending the Silence school-based presentations in the 2013/14 school year.
Evaluation of current policies and procedures
Protocols for helping students at risk of suicide or in emotional distress
Protocols for after a suicide
Staff education and training
Parent Education and Training
Student education and engagement

The selection of programs above is not a conclusive list and are listed because they have partnered with Directing Change by promoting the program, donating prevention programs or offering other educational resources.

The Directing Change Student Program & Film Contest addresses mental health and suicide prevention at various points in the school prevention continuum.
Suicide Prevention Programs

In 2012, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) released the report titled, “Preventing Suicide: A Toolkit for High Schools”. The toolkit lays a framework for schools to follow to easily understand the entire spectrum of suicide prevention in the school setting. Based upon the “Preventing Suicide” toolkit, there are a variety of components involved with comprehensive suicide prevention including two priority protocols that schools should have in place: helping students at possible risk of suicide, and responding to a suicide death in the school community. Additional components of comprehensive suicide prevention include education and training for staff, parents, and students as well as screening for suicide ideation and mental health concerns. The Directing Change program is working to help schools understand the importance of suicide prevention in schools, the full spectrum of suicide prevention in the school setting, and then assist with implementing or furthering suicide prevention efforts on campuses across the state.

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP)

• AFSP has a strong presence throughout California. With three regional coordinators, AFSP’s efforts span the entire state with multiple outreach events including “Out of the Darkness” walks to raise awareness about suicide prevention. For the past three years AFSP has donated their More Than Sad curriculum to Directing Change, and promoted the program through their networks.

• Program Information: More Than Sad: Teen Depression is a high school curriculum featuring a 26-minute film and discussion guide that can be integrated during one class period. The program seeks to increase the knowledge of the warning signs of youth suicide, so that educators and youth are better prepared to identify and refer students who may be at risk. (www.AFSP.org)

Suicide Awareness Voices of Education (SAVE)

• Based out of Minnesota, the SAVE organization is working to expand to California. Each year, SAVE runs a statewide suicide prevention film contest and has offered valuable support to Directing Change and was the original inspiration for the program.

• Program Information: “LEADS: Linking Education and Awareness of Depression and Suicide” was developed with input from students and teachers, and is an interactive three day curriculum used in a health class setting for high school students. Throughout the lessons, students discuss symptoms of depression, risk and protective factors for suicide and learn to identify warning signs of suicide. (www.SAVE.org)
The Yellow Ribbon Suicide Prevention Program (YRSPP)

- Website: www.yellowribbon.org
- Based out of Colorado, the Yellow Ribbon Suicide Prevention Program has strong chapters in San Diego as well as Fresno. The Yellow Ribbon program is also utilized by schools throughout the state, and in conjunction with other mental health and suicide prevention efforts.
- Program Information: Toolkits donated by YRSPP to the Directing Change Program includes two curriculums: one for staff and one for students, as well as information on community engagement.
  - “Be-A-Link”: Be A Link! is a two-hour adult gatekeeper training program that provides participants with knowledge to help them identify youth at risk for suicide and refer them to appropriate help resources.
  - “Ask 4 Help”: Ask 4 Help! is a one-hour high school based curriculum that provides students with knowledge that may increase help-seeking for themselves or on behalf of others.

The Trevor Project

- Website: www.thetrevorproject.org
- The Trevor Project is focused on suicide prevention for LGBTQ youth and young adults. Currently, the Trevor Project has a strong presence in Los Angeles and San Francisco. Additionally, the Trevor Project received a federal grant to provide their “Lifesaver” program to five counties in Northern California (Marin, Placer, Shasta, Humboldt, Mendocino).
- Program Information: Lifesavers
  - LifeSavers Training is a three-day suicide and crisis prevention program that trains high school and college-aged young people to listen to peers compassionately and confidentially using specialized techniques designed to help them make healthier decisions.
Mental Health Screening

- Website: www.mentalhealthscreening.org
- Mental Health Screening offers a comprehensive suicide prevention to schools which includes screening. The SOS program described below is currently being utilized by the San Diego County School Based suicide prevention grant.
- Program Information: Signs of Suicide (SOS)
  - SOS Signs of Suicide is a secondary school-based suicide prevention program that includes screening and education. Students are screened for depression and suicide risk and referred for professional help as indicated.

Kognito: At Risk in PK-12

- Website: http://www.kognito.com/products/pk12
- At-Risk is a series of online professional development modules designed for use by individuals, schools, districts, and statewide agencies. A uniquely effective and engaging learning experience, At-Risk increases educators' skills and willingness to intervene with students in distress. For administrators, At-Risk includes tools and template to ensure that the program is easy to disseminate and measure success at all levels.
  - At Risk is offered at no cost to all educators in California through a grant from the California Department of Education. Information on how to access the program is listed on the Directing Change website.
Mental Health Programs

Student mental health programs can range from universal to highly targeted programs. Universal programs are designed to increase awareness of and sensitivity to mental health issues in students—for example, by supporting students coping with stress and encouraging student help-seeking behaviors. Universal primary prevention programs are designed to increase awareness of and sensitivity to mental health issues in students—for example, by supporting students coping with stress and encouraging student help-seeking behaviors. More-targeted programs are designed to provide staff or faculty skills to identify and respond to specific mental health issues or populations.

National Alliance on Mental Illness

- Website: www.NAMICA.org

NAMI California and its 71 local affiliates are dedicated to educating families, professionals and the public about mental illness and to eradicate stigma. For the past two years NAMI CA has supporting Directing change by enriching the program with educational resources about mental health and by providing content and oversight for the Ending the Silence category, which was inspired by one of their signature programs, Ending the Silence. Every school that participates in Directing Change is offered an Ending the Silence presentation. In addition, students and staff are connected to a wide range of NAMI resources on the Directing Change website and newsletter.

- **NAMI on Campus**: A peer-run mental health organization to support fellow students, raise mental health awareness, educate the campus community, and promote and advocate for services.
  - [http://www.nami.org/namioncampus](http://www.nami.org/namioncampus)

- **Ending the Silence Program**: Ending the Silence (ETS) is a mental health education and stigma reduction program designed specifically for high school and young adult audiences provided by the National Alliance on Mental Illness California (NAMI). During a one-hour presentation delivered during a class period, the trained two-person team provides education on mental health and personal testimony from a young person living well with a mental health condition.
  - [https://www.nami.org/Find-Support/NAMI-Programs/NAMI-Ending-the-Silence](https://www.nami.org/Find-Support/NAMI-Programs/NAMI-Ending-the-Silence)

Youth Mental Health First Aid

- Website: [http://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/](http://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/)

- Program Information: Youth Mental Health First Aid is designed to teach parents, family members, caregivers, teachers, school staff, peers, neighbors, health and human services workers, and other caring citizens how to help an adolescent (age 12-18) who is experiencing a mental health or addictions challenge or is in crisis. Youth Mental Health First Aid is primarily designed for adults who regularly interact with young people. The course introduces common mental health challenges for youth, reviews typical adolescent development, and teaches a 5-step action plan for how to help young people in both crisis and non-crisis situations. Topics covered include anxiety, depression, substance use, disorders in which psychosis may occur, disruptive behavior disorders (including AD/HD), and eating disorders.
“Many of us are aware of the stigma around mental health issues. The work of mental health professionals is clearly important but our strength actually comes when kids and families know the signs and symptoms too. They are the eyes on the ground- to be in the million places we can't be. Positively changing the mental health of our communities is a team effort. Programs like Directing Change not only educate through the distribution of these films but it also shows each participant and school that they, too, can do something to help. The icing on the cake is that the project lets students use their creative skills and other interests as a tool to share this important message- I think that's pretty incredible! Every participant should be applauded for spending the time to learn and invest in their own community.”

-Judge
Training Community Members, News Media and Entertainment Industry in Appropriate Messaging

In addition to engaging youth and educators in suicide prevention and mental health awareness, Directing Change seeks to engage community members, representatives of the news media and entertainment, as well as those in the mental health and suicide prevention fields as judges. Through training and applying the knowledge learned during the training to the judging of their film judges become familiar with appropriate messaging for suicide prevention and mental health.

Judges take part in the first round of judging to select regional winning films in each category. The first place winning film from each region, in each category moves on to a second, statewide round of judging. The statewide judging panel reviews and scores the films to determine the first, second, and third place statewide winners.
“Without having judged the films, I would not have known about the importance of safe messaging. In the future, I will definitely adhere to the recommendations suggested by the guidelines.”

-Judge

Past statewide judges have included director and producer of the award winning TV series, ‘Glee’, Brad Buecker, ‘Glee’ actor Max Adler, Executive Producer of The Lord of the Rings trilogy, Mark Ordesky, singer and anti-bullying advocate Meredith O’Connor, film and TV series writer and producer known for his work on the film “According to Greta”, Michael Gilvary, filmmakers and co-writers of the film “It’s Kind of a Funny Story”, Anna Boden and Ryan Fleck, and TV writer on “Law and Order: SVU”, Roger Wolfson, and many others.

The Directing Change team prepares judges through webinar-based trainings and phone conversations. The curriculum for the training is based upon the Safe and Effective Messaging for Suicide Prevention and information from NAMI California. Over the past 3 years Directing Change has recruited and trained 447 judges.

- In 2013, 135 judges participated
- In 2014, 209 judges participated
- In 2015, 249 judges participated. Of these 98 were returning to the program after participating in 2013 or 2014.

“After going through this process and seeing many of the videos, I am more aware of safe message guidelines. I was not aware of the need to stay away from statistics that paint the picture that suicide is a common event and that it actually normalizes the action.”

-Judge
Creating Future Advocates and Leaders

“The day’s events are investing in students’ lives by inspiring future generations to pursue the medium of video in order to influence, and investing in society by getting out the word that every mind truly does matter.”

(Student Educator)
Creating Future Advocates and Leaders

Directing Change is part of Each Mind Matters: California’s Mental Health Movement. As part of Each Mind Matters a variety of programs are encouraging diverse voices to the join the cause. By submitting films about mental health and suicide prevention to the Directing Change Student Film Program, youth and young adults from around the state are volunteering to join the discussion and have their voices heard.

Fifty-five youth and young adults, representing regional winning films from around the state, were invited to travel to Sacramento to participate in Mental Health Matters Day events on May 19, 2015 which concludes with the statewide award ceremony for the Directing Change Student Film Program.

The previous afternoon, two Directing Change students joined Senator Jim Beall (D-San Jose) on the State Senate floor to receive a proclamation declaring May 19th Mental Health Matters Day in Sacramento. These events were coordinated by the National Alliance on Mental Illness, California.

On the morning of the 19th, all of the Directing Change students gathered in the Governor’s Press Conference Room to meet with legislators and share their stories. Here, State Senators Jim Beall and Richard Pan (D-Sacramento) stopped by to speak to the Directing Change students, encouraging them to continue their efforts and emphasizing the importance of their work. In addition to the inspirational words of the senators, two of the student participants spoke about the importance of addressing mental health and suicide prevention at a young age. Emma Spiekerman, an alumni participant who received statewide honors in the first year of the contest for her film “More than a Mental Illness” was one of the student speakers. Emma spoke about how the contest changed her life, causing her to switch her major from filmmaking to psychology, and participating in a variety of mental health efforts at college.

After the morning session, students went to meet with their local legislators. The students seized the opportunity to speak on behalf of their peers, highlighting the importance of mental health and suicide prevention efforts that focus on the teen and college years. During lunch, the Directing Change participants were honored with a surprise appearance by filmmaker, director and producer, Bradley Buecker, from the hit TV show GLEE. Mr. Buecker took questions from the students about filmmaking, Hollywood and life.
Then it was time for the “main event” at the historic Crest Theater in downtown Sacramento. During the program each of the winning films was screened as the student viewed their films on the “big screen”. Senator Mark Leno spoke to the youth, explaining that they are now part of one of this generation’s most important social movements, leaving a few laughs in his wake. During the ceremony, writer Michael Gilvary, who wrote the screenplay for “According to Greta” starring Hillary Duff as a youth struggling with thoughts of suicide was recognized for “Outstanding Film with Messaging around Suicide Prevention”.

These youth come from across the state, from every background and circumstance. More than likely, when they decide to make a film for Directing Change, they had no idea that they were about to be part of something bigger. Through the experience of meeting other youth, standing in the State Capitol and having their voices heard, they now understand they are part of a movement and that they are truly Directing Change.
“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.”

(Student Educator)
A statewide program with local impact:

Directing Change is a statewide program with regional and local impact. The Directing Change team works with local county behavioral health agencies and community partners to promote the program and use the films to raise awareness efforts, and to strengthen partnerships with schools. Individualized technical assistance is offered to increase the knowledge of school-based staff about educational resources, policies and procedures, prevention programs, as well as postvention in schools and the community.

The success of Directing Change depends to a large extent on local adoption of the program. Local community-based agencies and county behavioral health agencies receive DVDs and support with using films locally, access to films from local schools, contact information for local participating schools to facilitate partnerships, access to local data and support with planning local recognition events.

For example, after Riverside County Mental Health integrated Directing Change into their local PEI efforts, they were able to encourage district wide adoption of the program and more than double submissions from one year to the next.
Regional Directing Change films are promoted with the local media. Here are a few highlights from the 2015 news coverage:

Apple Valley High School's students' video follows a student who senses his friend may not be safe by himself.

San Juan Hills High School's Katrina Fernandez's first-place winning video was featured in the Orange County Register.

With just 60 seconds to get a message across, every moment counts. Even more so when that message could help prevent a teen suicide.

Franklin High School's Brenda Vang's first-place winning film shows that it is OK to tell an adult when someone you know is in danger.

Riverside County students' videos show that you can help your friends without formal education.

Enochs and Riverbank high school's students' videos follow teens talking their friends into seeing a counselor.
Directing Change Participation by County (2013, 2014 and 2015)

Green indicates county participated.

Alameda Amador Orange
Amador Placer
Butte Riverside
Calaveras Sacramento
Contra Costa San Bernardino
El Dorado San Diego
Fresno San Francisco
Humboldt San Luis Obispo
Imperial San Mateo
Inyo Santa Barbara
Kern Santa Clara
Kings Siskiyou
Lake Solano
Los Angeles Sonoma
Madera Stanislaus
Marin Sutter
Mendocino Tehama
Merced Tulare
Monterey Ventura
Nevada Yolo
San Bernardino Yuba
Here is a small snapshot of how California’s Behavioral Health Agencies are integrating the films into their local Prevention and Intervention Efforts.

**Orange County**
- Los Angeles County
  - Recognized students with Board of Supervisor Proclamation; showed films in local movie theaters

**Fresno County**
- Students recognized by Board of Supervisors

**Sonoma County**
- DVD was distributed to help agencies that work with youth.

**San Diego County**
- Proclamation declares August 4, 2015 Directing Change Day

**Alameda County**
- Merced County
  - San Diego County
    - Films shared at local Mental Health Board meeting
    - NAMI Affiliates hosted local films screenings

**Placer County**
- Used films to support outreach and awareness activities

**Calaveras County, Humboldt County, Los Angeles County, Orange County, Placer County, San Bernardino County, Siskiyou County, Solano County, Sutter Yuba Counties, and Tri-City**
- Films shown in local movie theaters
2015 Directing Advisory Group:

The Directing Change Program is guided by an advisory committee with experts from education and suicide prevention, as well as past student and teacher participants, to evaluate and evolve the scope of the program.

- Rich Lieberman, NCSP: School Psychologist with Los Angeles COE. Former member of Student Mental Health Initiative. Lead coordinator of LACOE Suicide Prevention Project.

- Diane Lampe: Student Mental Health Initiative, Prevention and Student Services-Sacramento County Office of Education

- Rebecca Hansen: Riverside County Public Health, Program Coordinator. Coordinates prevention programs with 52 schools in Riverside County including mental health and suicide prevention.


- Chris Lorenz: Teacher, Valley View High School

- Kendra Goff: Past student participant in Directing Change

- Mike Lombardo: Placer County Office of Education

- Monica Nepomuceno California Department of Education

- Melen Vue Community Engagement Manager, NAMI California