



CALIFORNIA
DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

TOM TORLAKSON

STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

September 11, 2017

Dear County and District Superintendents, Charter School Administrators, and High School Principals:

SUPPORTING THE DIRECTING CHANGE PROGRAM STUDENT FILM CONTEST

The California Department of Education (CDE) is pleased to support the 2018 Directing Change Program and Student Film Contest sponsored by the California Mental Health Services Authority as part of a collaborative statewide effort to prevent suicide, reduce stigma and discrimination related to mental illness, and promote the mental health and wellness of students.

This statewide Directing Change Program and Film Contest invites high school students and young adults (ages fourteen to twenty-five) to create 60-second films in one of two categories: "Suicide Prevention" or "Mental Health Matters." Over the first five years of its existence, The Directing Change Program has received more than 2,000 films from student teams throughout the state, representing over 300 schools with more than 5,000 students participating.

First, second, and third place winners will be selected in each category from five regions within the State of California. Regional winners in each category will receive the following:

- First Place: \$500
- Second Place: \$250
- Third Place: \$250

Schools, organizations, clubs, and programs associated with the first place winning film in each category are eligible to receive \$1,000 to support suicide prevention and mental health awareness programs and activities at their school or organization (subject to availability of funding).

The primary goal of the Directing Change Program is to support implementation and expansion of mental health and suicide prevention awareness efforts on school campuses. Schools who participate in the program are exposed to prevention resources and are eligible to receive mental health and suicide prevention programs. The Directing Change Web site offers a variety of information to support your prevention efforts. For

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more information, please visit the Directing Change for Schools Web page at <http://www.directingchange.ca.org/schools/>.

With the passing of Assembly Bill 2246, school governing boards serving pupils in grades seven through twelve are required to implement suicide prevention policies. For more information about AB 2246, please visit the California Legislative Information Web page at https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201520160AB2246.

The Directing Change Program has been working with districts around the state to assist them in implementing policies that are in line with the Model Youth Suicide Prevention Policy developed by the CDE. Please see the CDE Model Youth Suicide Prevention Policy at www.cde.ca.gov/ls/cg/mh/documents/modelpolicy.doc.

I encourage all school staff to promote this contest among their students. We are all committed to preserving the health, safety, and well-being of our students. To achieve this, mental health and suicide prevention must be a top priority in our schools.

By working together and incorporating the student perspective in this campaign, we will increase awareness of the mental health issues our students face and reduce youth suicide.

If you have any questions regarding this subject, please contact Stan Collins, Program Coordinator, Directing Change, by e-mail at Stan@SuicidesPreventable.org or Monica Nepomuceno, Education Programs Consultant, Education Options, Student Support, and American Indian Education Center, by phone at 916-323-2212 or by e-mail at mnepomuceno@cde.ca.gov.

Sincerely,



Tom Torlakson

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