

## The Directing Change Program and Film Contest

engages young adults throughout California to learn about the warning signs for suicide, the importance of mental health, and how to help a friend through the creation of short films. Throughout the filmmaking process, participants are engaged via all methods of the “learning spectrum” to see, experience, discuss, and apply concepts learned about suicide prevention and mental health. These films are used in schools and communities to raise awareness and start conversations about these topics.

### Directing Change Box Office Returns

**86%**  
of youth learned proper response to a friend's suicide warning signs via program

**58%**  
of youth encouraged someone going through a tough time to seek help

**86%**  
agreed even people who seem successful can be hurting on the inside and thinking about suicide

**10,504**  
youth participants since 2012

**3,960**  
Number of films submitted by youth since 2012

**446,727**  
Number of times films have been viewed online since 2012

Findings from a [cross-sectional case-control study by NORC at the University of Chicago](#) demonstrated knowledge, attitude and behavior changes:



**Directing Change participants** more frequently agreed that suicide is preventable, identified more warning signs and were more willing to encourage others to seek help, beyond their own social circles.

**Directing Change participants** are more willing to engage in conversation aimed at suicide prevention and have fewer attitudes that contribute to stigma about mental illness.



**Teachers** report impact on students and school climate such as gaining skills for dealing with mental health issues later in life, noticing social isolation, increased sense of safety and sensitivity to the feelings of others, and knowledge of how to connect peers with resources.

**Directing Change** provides an effective, tangible, and supportive way to generate open discussion about mental illness, prevent suicide, increase help-seeking, and to reduce stigma and discrimination.



Ghirardelli, A., & Bye, L. (2016, January 30). *California Mental Health Services Authority Directing Change Film Contest and Program Evaluation*. Retrieved from <http://www.directingchange.org/wp-content/uploads/CalMHSA%20DC%20Eval%20Report.pdf>

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. The program is implemented by Your Social Marketer, Inc.



For program information and to view films visit: [www.directingchangeCA.org](http://www.directingchangeCA.org)



## Directing Change

Program and Film Contest

# Prevention & Early Intervention Youth Engagement Program 2018-2019 Impact Report

The **Directing Change Program & Film Contest** encourages young people to learn about suicide prevention, mental health, and how to support a friend, in an innovative way: a film contest. Researching these topics, applying knowledge to the making of the film, and thinking deeply about impacting the opinions of others requires a level of involvement that has lasting impact.

# Creating Stories to Save Lives

Imagine you just listened to a presentation about suicide prevention or mental health. **How prepared do you feel?** Now imagine you take the information and discuss it with a group of friends. You apply what you learned to write a script, develop a storyboard, and work with actors to play roles showing young people standing up for others or talking to a friend about suicide. You spend days, maybe even weeks, creating a film that you hope will prepare other young people to reach out for help. **Maybe** youth participate to win cash; maybe to make a difference or share their own personal story with others. Whatever the reason was for starting out, by the end of their participation in **Directing Change** they are **prepared to recognize warning signs of suicide** and know how to connect a friend, or themselves, with help.

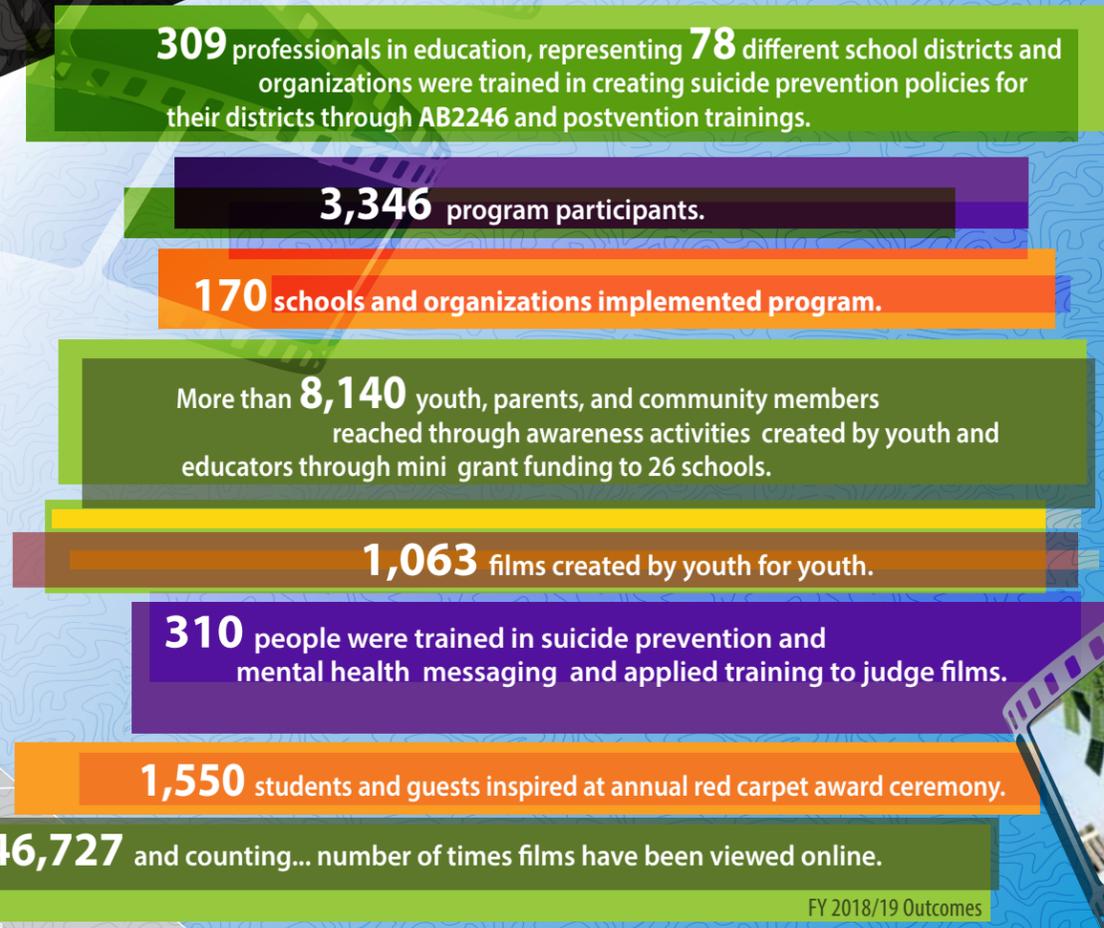
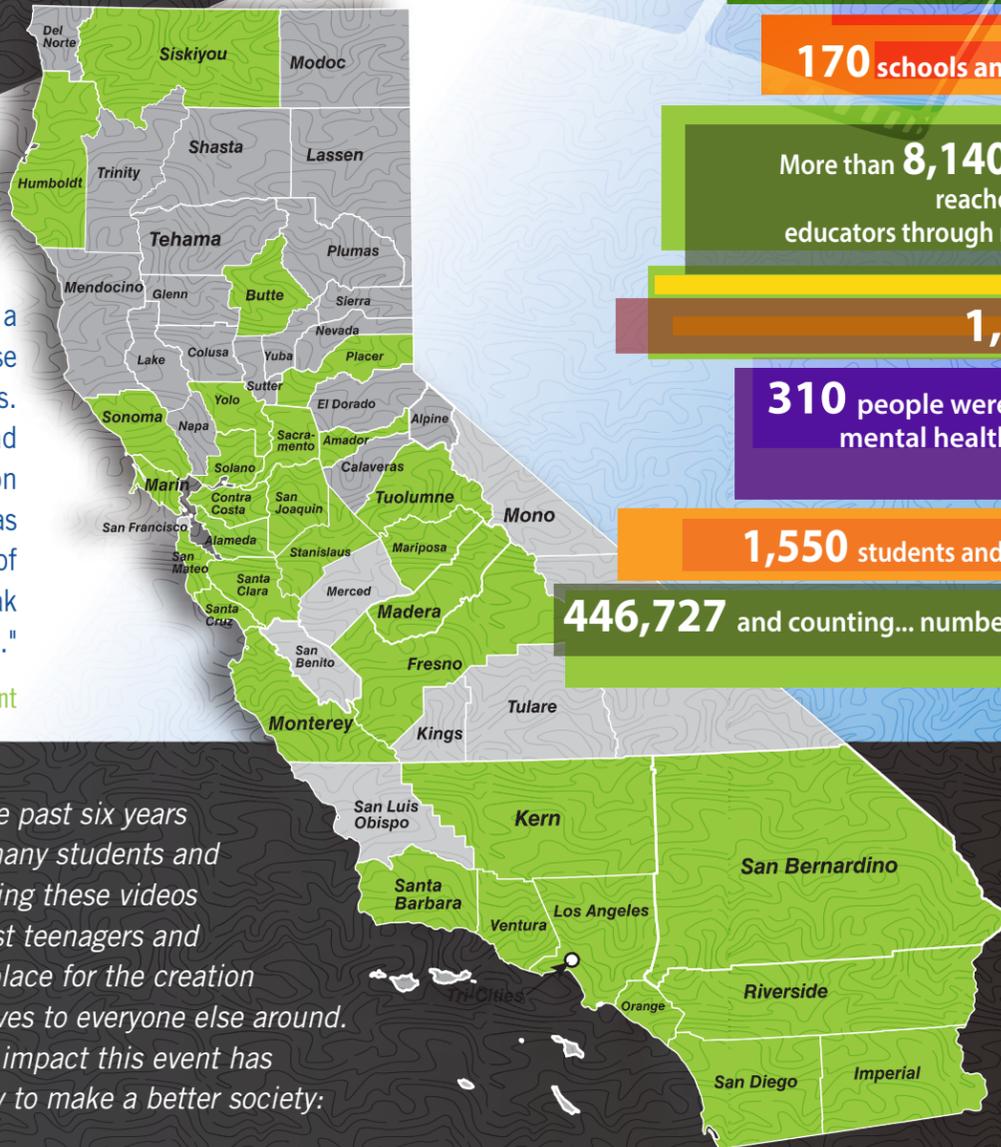
**Directing Change** is about helping young people work through personal stories of loss, creating stories of hope, and changing the story of a young person who is thinking about suicide.

"As a parent, I believe this program is a great way to engage youth and have them use their creativity to speak up on important topics. I have never seen my daughter so excited and engaged in a class before until she came upon this project in her video production class. It was amazing to see teenagers talk about what a lot of us adults also deal with but are afraid to speak up about. It takes a lot of courage."

- Parent

"My participation in the Directing Change program for the past six years has been life changing! I had countless experiences of many students and adults that had expressed to me how the process of making these videos has created awareness about the topic of suicide amongst teenagers and the stigma with mental illness. The research that takes place for the creation of these videos changes the focus of many from themselves to everyone else around. Regardless of who wins the video contest, I feel that the impact this event has makes everyone a winner and gives youth the opportunity to make a better society: one video at the time, one life at a time."

- Teacher



"My film is inspired by the cultural stigma experienced in the Latino community, where the saying goes 'You don't air your dirty laundry'. It is meant to showcase the real-world experience of asking for help and breaking the cycle related to finding support around mental health. Mental Health stigma cuts across all cultures and we hope the message of this film can contribute to the powerful message that it's ok to ask for help."

- Youth

"We spent a lot of time in my class going over the curriculum from the website and talking about mental illness and suicide prevention. I later learned that one student participant noticed warning signs in a friend and talked to a trusted adult. She said that everything she had learned on her Directing Change project came rushing back to her and she knew what she had to do when something didn't feel right on a phone call with her friend. The friend ended up being rushed to the hospital and received the help she needed. I can honestly say the Directing Change program was the most important and valuable curriculum we studied all year."

- Teacher

