



CALIFORNIA
DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

TOM TORLAKSON

STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

August 8, 2016

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

SUPPORTING THE DIRECTING CHANGE PROGRAM AND FILM CONTEST

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

The 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 four years of the program, Directing Change received more than 1,600 films from student teams throughout the state, representing over 250 schools with more than 4,000 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 associated with the winning film in each category are eligible to receive \$500 to support suicide prevention and mental health awareness programs and activities at their school (subject to availability of funding).

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The goal of the Directing Change Program and Film Contest is to support implementation and expansion of mental health and suicide prevention awareness efforts on school campuses. Schools that participate in the program are exposed to prevention resources and eligible to receive mental health and suicide prevention programs. For more information, please visit the Directing Change for Schools Web page at <http://www.directingchange.org/schools/>.

Two years ago, the CDE distributed a letter encouraging all governing boards to establish suicide prevention policies. The policies and information identified are key steps in helping to safeguard our youth. That document is on the CDE Letters Web page at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/nr/el/le/yr14ltr0721.asp>.

I encourage all school staff to promote the Directing Change Program and Film Contest among their students.

If you have any questions regarding this subject, please contact Monica Nepomuceno, Education Programs Consultant in the Educational Options, Student Support, and American Indian Education Office, by phone at 916-323-2212 or by e-mail at mnepomuceno@cde.ca.gov.

Sincerely,



Tom Torlakson

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