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FILM CONTEST EMPOWERS CALIFORNIA YOUTH TO TACKLE MENTAL HEALTH STIGMA AND HELP PREVENT SUICIDE AMONG PEERS

Fourth Annual Directing Change Expands to Welcome Greater Participation and Diversity

Sacramento, Calif. – The Directing Change Program and Film Contest is expanding in its fourth year with an increased emphasis on mental health in cultural communities. To increase participation among California youth, submissions will be accepted from high school students and, new this year, from youth and young adults (ages 16-25) in partnership with a college, university, club, program or community-based organization. Sponsored by the California Mental Health Services Authority (CaMHSA) and Each Mind Matters: California's Mental Health Movement, the program offers young people the opportunity to create 60-second films about suicide prevention and mental health that are used to support awareness, education and advocacy efforts. Contest rules and participation information are available on DirectingChange.org and submissions are due by March 1, 2016.

Since 2012, more than 3,000 high school and college students representing 41 California counties have participated in Directing Change and helped tackle mental health stigma and suicide prevention in their schools and communities. The program provides a unique opportunity to critically explore these topics and educate their peers through their films as well as through the free prevention programs and education resources their schools receive from Directing Change thanks to the students' participation.

About one in five teens experience a mental health challenge in a given year, yet due to stigma many wait an average of six to eight years from the onset of symptoms before seeking help. Directing Change is a powerful way for young people to be part of the movement to change societal attitudes around mental health and to directly contribute to the mental wellness of their peers by encouraging and supporting help-seeking behaviors.

The year's film contest is open to high school students as well as youth and young adults ages 16-25 who are associated with a college, university, club, program or community-based organization. Submissions are accepted in three categories including Suicide Prevention, Mental Health Matters and a new category, Through the Lens of Culture, which requires participants to choose suicide prevention or mental health as a focus, but with additional requirements including creating a film in a language different than English and/or with focus on how different cultures view these topics.



The film contest is judged by a volunteer panel including mental health and suicide prevention experts, members of the news media and professionals in filmmaking and video production. Regional finalists are invited to a screening event and awards ceremony in May during which the statewide winners are announced.

For more information, visit www.DirectingChange.org.

About the California Mental Health Services Authority (CalMHSA)

CalMHSA is an organization of county governments working to improve mental health outcomes for individuals, families and communities. Prevention and Early Intervention programs implemented by CalMHSA are funded by counties through the voter-approved Mental Health Services Act (Prop. 63). Prop. 63 provides the funding and framework needed to expand mental health services to previously underserved populations and all of California's diverse communities. The Directing Change Program & Student Film Contest is one of 25 programs that are part of comprehensive statewide efforts to prevent suicide, reduce stigma and discrimination related to mental illness, and to promote the mental health and wellness of students. For more information, visit www.calmhsa.org.

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