Executive Summary
Using filmmaking as the medium, the Directing Change contest set out to engage targeted community members to raise awareness and understanding about appropriate messaging regarding mental health and suicide prevention. Judges were drawn from fields in which their participation would have the greatest potential for impact. For example, it was decided to include members of the entertainment and news media in hope of impacting experts in these fields to improve reporting of, and portrayals of mental health and actions associated with suicide. Perhaps more vital was the engagement of those in the mental health and suicide prevention fields to ensure their familiarity with messaging guidelines as these are the people often sought for information regarding the subjects.

Key Findings:
- Following participation in the Directing Change contest, 98.80% of judges responded they were aware of safe messaging guidelines for content related to suicide or suicide prevention.
- After judging contest videos, 89.54% of judges agreed that the judging process increased their knowledge of safe messaging for suicide prevention.
- After judging contest videos, 81.39% of judges agreed that the judging process increased their knowledge of appropriate language and content about mental health or mental illness.

Background and Purpose
About Directing Change
Students throughout California were invited to Direct Change by submitting 60-second videos in two categories: suicide prevention and ending the silence of mental illness. A total of 432 submissions were received, representing 996 students and 112 schools, 9 UC campus locations and 32 counties. Regional high school winners were selected to move onto a second, statewide round of judging and narrowed down to the top three entries in each category. Entries were judged by volunteer experts in mental health and suicide prevention, members of the media and professionals in filmmaking and video production.

Directing Change is part of statewide efforts to prevent suicide, reduce stigma and discrimination related to mental illness, and to promote the mental health and wellness of students. 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.

“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 videos 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
Judge Engagement
In addition to engaging youth and educators in suicide prevention and mental health awareness, Directing Change also sought to engage key community members and reporters in the judging process of the contest. Entries were judged by a total of 209 volunteer experts in mental health, suicide prevention, members of the news media and professionals in filmmaking and video production. The Directing Change team recruited judges using emails, list serves, recommendations from program partners, and direct outreach to specific interest groups such as members of the news media and entertainment industry.

Suicide Prevention
The Safe and Effective Messaging for Suicide Prevention document created by the Suicide Prevention Resource Center served as the foundation for engagement of all participants (entrants and judges). Scoring/Judging criteria for the Suicide Prevention Category were based upon this document which includes important best practice measures to consider when creating messaging surrounding the topic of suicide.

Scoring criteria based on Safe Messaging included:
- Including a resource such as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: (800) 273-TALK (8255)
- Avoiding dramatized portrayals of self-destructive acts or suicide attempts
- Avoiding statistics or statements which portray suicide or a suicide attempt as a common occurrence or as the result of a single cause
- Using appropriate language when addressing suicide
- Including at least one “key” suicide prevention message:
  - Most people show one or more warning signs, so it is important to know the signs and take them seriously.
  - It is ok to break a friend’s trust and share your concerns with an adult if you think your friend might be thinking about harming him or herself.
  - If a person talks about ending his or her life you should take him or her seriously and connect him or her to help.
  - Asking someone “Are you thinking about suicide?” will not put thoughts of suicide in his or her mind. In fact, asking this direct question is important.
  - You are not alone. There is hope.
  - Images and depictions of people struggling with thoughts of suicide often show them suffering alone and in silence. Instead the PSA should encourage people to reach out to a friend they are concerned about, or to tell an adult if they are concerned about someone.

Ending the Silence of Mental Illness
The Ending the Silence category was based on an overview of the components that make up the criteria of creating an effective message for stigma reduction regarding mental health. These components included information based on the Associated Press Stylebook, which recently added an entry on Mental Illness. Concepts such as stigma, self-stigma, person first language, and stereotypes were discussed and emphasized. By training the judges in this year’s contest, NAMI California hoped to raise awareness of mental illness and dispel stigmatizing ideals that lead to discrimination. In turn, judges can share the concepts that were discussed and bring them into their communities and spheres of influence.
Scoring criteria for the “Ending the Silence of Mental Illness” category include:

- Use person-first language, which refers to people who are living with mental health challenges as part of their full-life experience, not people who are defined by their mental health challenges.
- Use appropriate language, avoiding derogatory terms such as “crazy”, “psycho”.
- Tell a story about how young people can stand up for themselves or those living with a mental health challenges who are being harassed, bullied, excluded or in some other way discriminated against.
- Communicate a message that is positive and hopeful, with an emphasis on the power of friends and family to provide support and assistance in times of suffering.

Judge Orientation
To familiarize judges with the content of the scoring criteria, the Directing Change team prepared judges through webinar-based trainings and phone conversations. The curriculum for the training was based upon the Safe and Effective Messaging for Suicide Prevention document and information from NAMI California document previously mentioned. Of 209 total judges, 126 participated in one of the offered webinar trainings, while the other 83 judges received the information by viewing a recorded version of the webinar and/or participating in a follow-up phone conversation with one of the Directing Change team members. A total of 8 webinars were offered to judges participating in the contest from February 25- April 1, 2014. Webinar duration ranged from 45 minutes to 1 hour, depending on the level of engagement and interaction of the participants.

California Counties Represented (17):

- Alameda (3)
- Contra Costa (3)
- Fresno (1)
- Humboldt (1)
- Imperial (1)
- Los Angeles (2)
- Monterey (1)
- Orange (1)
- Riverside (1)
- Sacramento (6)
- San Bernardino (2)
- San Diego (1)
- San Francisco (2)
- San Luis Obispo (3)
- Shasta (2)
- Solano (1)
- Yolo (2)
- Unidentified/ Outside of CA (93)

Date of Webinars

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Attendees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>February 25, 2014</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 26, 2014</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 5, 2014</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 6, 2014</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 17, 2014</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 18, 2014</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 26, 2014</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 1, 2014</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total Webinar Attendees 126**

“Encouraging young people to create these public service videos educates and engages them in dialogue on the subject, charges them to educate others, and empowers them to become ambassadors for suicide prevention.” Judge

“Contests like this exposes young adults to diverse and complex topics in which they might not otherwise be fully aware of. Discussing and developing strong videos and imagery in these categories allow a wide audience range to foster the deep impact of the message internally and externally within their community.” Judge

“This video contest reached out to the very people that this program seeks to help. It was an inclusive, creative process and a great example of the important use of peer to peer marketing to send an important message that I hope will resonate with young people in this targeted group.” Judge
**Pre-Oriention Survey**

Prior to participation in webinar orientation sessions, all judge participants were asked two questions related to safe messaging for suicide prevention. Overall, 92.86% (117) of the webinar attendees indicated that they will likely use the 'safe messaging guidelines' pertaining to suicide prevention in other activities, besides the Directing Change judging event; and 85.71% (108) indicated that they have heard of 'safe messaging guidelines' pertaining to suicide prevention prior to the webinar. For comments and questions via chat during all eight webinars, refer to Appendix A.

**Figure 1: Pre-Oriention Survey Questions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I will use the 'safe messaging guidelines' pertaining to suicide prevention in other activities, besides the Directing Change judging event.</td>
<td>92.86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have heard of 'safe messaging guidelines' pertaining to suicide prevention</td>
<td>85.71%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Post-Judging Survey**

All contest judges were asked to fill out a survey two weeks after judging for the contest was completed. Of the 209 total judges who participated in the contest, 118 judges completed the online survey. The majority of judges who took the survey, 73.50% (86), judged in the suicide prevention category, while 26.50% (31) judged the ending the silence of mental illness category. Nearly 90% (105) of the judges scored the high school level films (n= 117) and 63.56% were new to the contest and did not judge last year. (n= 118)

Judges were asked to indicate their areas of expertise and were asked to mark all that applied. Overall, the majority of judges indicated they were in the mental health, 65.25% (77); and/or suicide prevention, 39.86% (47) field. (n= 118)

**Figure 2: Area of Expertise**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of Expertise</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mental health</td>
<td>65.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suicide prevention</td>
<td>39.83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Film, production, creative, writing, acting</td>
<td>24.58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment</td>
<td>12.71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News media/Reporter</td>
<td>7.63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal experience related to contest topics</td>
<td>23.73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>11.02%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Findings
After participating in the judging process, 98.80% (82) of survey participants indicated that they were aware of safe messaging guidelines for content related to suicide or suicide prevention. (n= 83) Participants were then asked to indicate whether they agreed with the following statements. (n=86)

The following comments were provided:

- “Producing suicide prevention programming.”
- “Please note, this is in reference to what I learned about safe messaging guidelines last year, when I judged for you. The information on the subject was largely the same this year, so I do not feel my knowledge on the subject changed significantly.”
- “Excellent refreshers given to keep these messages in thoughts of education/increasing knowledge in the community, as well as in mental health treatment.”
- “Beautiful, just beautiful!”
- “I knew it from last year, but it was a good review.”
- “Great experience - thank you for all your hard work and support.”
- “This is such important information that I feel a refresher of ‘safe messaging’ should always be provided before starting a project like this one.”
- “I hadn’t thought about not talking about statistics before.”
- “It is always great to refresh my memory!”
- “Another great experience! Thank you for including me. I was surprised that one of the entries lacked the inclusion of a help phone number or website, and wondered if they were all advised to do so. I think some emphasis should be place on the quality of acting in the films. I know that these are young performers (or perhaps even students who do not regularly perform), but the quality of the message is dependent on its believability. If the actors are not effective, the message becomes less effective. Similarly, the students should
be advised to have the highest sound quality possible. If we can't clearly hear the message... Thanks again. This is a great program!”

- “Loved the process. It was very user friendly and I see no changes that need to be made.”
- “I found the safe messaging guidelines to be very helpful. The one confusing statement was how it was okay to say, for example, "38,000 people die by suicide every year." I might not have that statement correct, but the use of the number was confusing for me in regards to not wanting to normalize suicide.”
- “Again, a great experience.”

Judging Process and Feedback

In order to gauge the time commitment needed to participate as a judge in the contest, survey participants were asked how much time they spent on judging the entries. Overall, slightly more than half of participants spent 1 to 2 hours judging entries. (n= 115) For comments refer to Appendix B, Question 11.

The majority of judge survey participants, 88.60% (101) did not experience any technical difficulties during the judging process. (n= 114) The following comments were provided:

- “Process was well organized.”
- “One of the video entries had a broken embedded link that was not fixed in time to complete the judging.”
- “One of the videos had no audio.”
- “Video/audio issues.”
- “Loading glitch in one of the videos, so wasn’t able to watch one. No big deal!”
- “Everything went smoothly!”
- “Some of my scores wouldn’t save on the last day.”
- “Some of the films would only open on You Tube.”
- “Everything went really well this year.”
- “I thought that this entire process was very well organized.”
- “The first computer I was working on was extremely slow in uploading the videos so it was frustrating but when I went to a different computer, I had no troubles at all.”
- “This is a very important issue to continue to work on.”
- “It may have been at least partially the fault of my computer, but the videos were extremely slow to load and begin.”
- “One of the videos would not play at first, but they fixed it in a timely fashion.”
- “I was registered to judge both the UC submissions and the high school submissions. There was some difficulty with the judging portal because I was judging two different events. However, Stan Collins was very responsive

![Figure 4: How much time did you spend judging entries?](image-url)
and sorted the situation out quickly.”

- “Everything was smooth.”
- “Just initially getting on the training. The staff was very prompt and courteous in responding.”
- “One video did not upload.”
- “The server was slow and occasionally froze while I was judging. I just closed down the site and returned later, apparently at a less popular time.”

For additional comments, suggestions and quotes about the judging process refer to Appendix B Question 12 & 13.
Appendix A
Comments and questions (via chat) during the eight judge orientation webinars

Comments that thanked: 33

Questions and comments about the judging process:

- “But to be clear, each video is judged on its own merit as opposed to comparing them to one another - yes?”
- “Are the points on a scale range or just 0 and 10?”
- “Are we judging both categories?”
- “Are the points listed on the rating form?”
- “Do we include acting/ performance quality in our scoring?”
- “Will we have access to the slides to refer to while we are doing our rating?”
- “Is it ever OK to split the points?”
- “Were the students given a list of acceptable statistics and will we be?”
- “So the number of suicide deaths is okay to include?”
- “Is 14-24 the intended target audience to receive the messages or the target audience that the PSA is attempting to help?”
- “Did you say that you suggested we view all of the vids first then go back to judge?”
- “So if we have more expertise in one category over another we still don’t get a choice which topic video we judge?”
- “What about creativity, originality, visual approach? (coming from a filmmaker's POV)”
- “Is there a maximum running length for each video?”
- “How do you feel about the approach that says ‘Very few young people die from any cause- However, of those that do die the third leading cause is suicide.’?”
- “When you mention the judging is from March 28th -April7th is that how long we will have to judge and submit our scores.”
- “Are the students aware of the criteria?”
- “Are we judging on both stigma and suicide prevention?”
- “Will we be able to print the criteria of judging for guidance?”
- “Is it possible to see examples of previous submissions to get a sense of high quality film submissions?”
- “How do you know if the stats are fully factual?”
- “Will you provide a list of accurate and not accurate statistics that we should be on the lookout for in the judging materials?”
- “How do we know that the videos are targeted towards 14-24?”
- “I arrived late. Is it possible to view a recording?”
- “Can I watch this again tomorrow?”
- “Who do I send the email to see the webinar from yesterday?”
- “You guys are going to send us all a copy of the webinar, is that correct? Along with the judging dates?”
- “Or send us the PPT?”
“Will it be possible to get this presentation as PPT?”
“I was referring to the slide with the 3 criteria.”
Where do you access those videos?”
“Will the audio scripts be available as well?”
“Will we have access to power point slides following the webinar for reference?”
“Can we get this PowerPoint?”
“What if there is a mixture of first-person and third-person language? 5 pts?”
“Can we get a copy of this presentation as a reference?”
“For this slide is it 10 or 0 or can it fall in between?”
“Didn’t’ you say that all the finalist are pre-screened for all of these types of misinformation?”
“I have a question more related to how we are judging. Are we judging a certain amount or all videos?”
“If they are pre-screened before we judge them, we are not judging them on these issues? Are we just being told what the pre-screening process is all about? In other words, are we judging more on the creative aspects?”
“That may be a bad question but I’m assuming we are judging all videos after the pre-screening to make it fair?”
“Is there a place to sign in?”
“Yes, that would be my question as well. Also, will there be notes from today's presentation?”

Other:
“I think the confusion is that ‘first person’ is usually talking about ‘I’ perspective. It's usually called ‘People first’ language in the field.”
“Do you know the running charge for airfare to Sacramento?”
“Is there a charge for the award ceremony?”
“Don't interrupt, I'm sure it will all make sense later.”
“Last year’s contest was a wonderful opportunity, and surprising event. Loved it!”
Do you still need judges?”
“Why not CSU students?”
“Could you hear me?”
Appendix B — Responses from Post-Judging Survey

Question #11: How much time did you end up spending on judging your entries?

- “The judging process was very exciting due to the caliber of entries.”
- “I chose to spend time watching the videos 2-3 times and comparing. It can be done in 3 hours though I am certain.”
- “A portion of that was spending my own time making sure I fully understood the judging criteria and what was expected of me. The rest was actually judging the entries. In total, I probably spent about 5 hours.”
- “It took me longer this year to judge than it did last year because of the Google ads that popped up during each video, often blocking content on the screen, and the YouTube images that appeared directly after the video played. Among the images, there were many partial-birth abortion images, preemie babies, dead babies, sex (some underage), violence, etc., appearing directly after each video, and I had to step away several times just to separate and clear my head before I judged. As a visual person, I found it difficult to shake out images of dead babies so I could judge the students’ works with an unbiased thought process. Also, I have not been able to shake some of those images, which is disturbing. If there is an alternate way to view and judge the work, it is much preferred.”
- “I watched them all through one time and then went back and watched them again to give a score.”
- “It would have been less if I had done two things: 1) used a faster computer to begin with and 2) judged the films the first time I saw them and then just go back as a ‘review’ for the 2nd time I watched them because I found myself thinking ‘was that in this video or a different one?’”
- “I like going through them one day and judging them the next day.”
- “As it turned out, I was traveling during most of the judging period, so I didn’t have a chance to look at the entries as many times as I wished to do so. I viewed them all once, made general notes including the answered to the first three questions on the scoring sheet, then went back later and viewed them again for the official scoring.”
- “About 5 hours total.”
- “I found it best to watch each film in the series, then return and watch again. After that I then spent time on each film rating it and then going back and filling in the judging form for each one.”
- “I judged high school submissions of the Suicide Prevention category and UC submissions of the Ending the Silence category. I spent about 1 1/2 hours judging each category (total of about 3 hours). (This survey did not allow me to check boxes to indicate that I judged both categories and both groups of filmmakers.)”
- “Unfortunately, I got distracted with my life and never finished all the videos I was to review. I am very sorry that I did not complete my commitment. It is a great program and process and I hope that it will continue! There are layers to why this is so good for the goals it was established for.”
- “I followed the suggestion of watching them all first then reviewed them each several times looking for the criteria in each. I had no difficulty with the technology and found it was a very well organized experience to participate in.”
- “Just slightly more than 3 hours.”
- “I watched each film between 3-5 times.”
“I watched all of the entries first, then went back to evaluate each individually (sometimes watching 2-3 times per entry while scoring).”

Question #12: Please provide any suggestions about how we could improve the judging process in the future.

Praise:

- “Everything was great, clear-cut, and pretty self-explanatory. The resources provided were very helpful as well!”
- “The judging process was very easy. The webinar before the judging period really helped identify what we were looking for.”
- “Excellent process. No need to improve!”
- “It was very straight forward and user friendly!”
- “None--it was excellent!”
- “Judging process was very smooth and efficient.”
- “Made it very easy and enjoyable to participate! Thank you!”
- “Cannot improve it anymore, it was beautiful!”
- “None. It was easy and self-explanatory.”
- “This is a really well organized project. Your dedication is evident in structure and content.”
- “Very smooth process!”
- “Excellent work.”
- “I thought it was very well done. Well organized and thought out. Good job to everyone involved!”
- “None, it was great!”
- “I believe it ran smoothly, so I have no suggestions for improvement.”
- “Very easy method to judge and it was a delight to help! Would do it again anytime. Lauren was great to work with and is very likable. Please let me know if there anything else we at Lee MAG can do to help? Thank you, Kenton.”
- “Thought you did a wonderful job and it was fun to participate. Thank you.”
- “Very organized, directions were very clear, attaching safe guidelines as a reference was helpful. Well done!”
- “No changes needed. It was easy and the program worked well.”
- “You made it very clear and easy.”
- “I thought the process was great, and don’t have any suggestions for improvement! I’d like to see this contest promoted more widely, and would love to work with you on reaching out to school districts throughout the state.”
- “I thought the process was very easy. Great instructions and training for the judges.”
- “Excellent judging process!”
- “It was so easy and I would not consider myself an expert in technology. I am glad I had the support available in the event I did have trouble but I didn’t end up needing it.”
- “No suggestions. Your staff has made the process simple, streamlined and very effective. It would be really
cool to be able to have a little blurb from the school on how these ‘short films’ were utilized or shown in their schools - but not judged by this aspect.”

Suggestions:

- “Allow more flexibility in scoring some of the sections; were contestants provided information on the criteria that they'd be judged on? It didn't seem like they were all aware of the criteria (i.e., phone number or website listed at end of video for resource.)”
- “I felt that some of the questions could be broken down into 2 or 3 questions. It felt as if different parts of the questions needed to be scored individually to be more accurate.”
- “Provide the judges with more leeway in receive the information on the judging process.”
- “I appreciated last year that there was a way to attach a personal comment to the students, complementing their film. I understand that there was probably a very good reason for removing that feature this year, but I still missed it.”
- “I didn't receive my login information until the day before the deadline, so better communication would be ideal.”
- “Though you provided still shots from prior entries to help illustrate judging criteria, I think it might be helpful to see actual ‘clips’ from the prior entries to give a better context. I also think it would be helpful if, for some entries, if I knew that the students would receive constructive feedback. I want them to know that with some improvements that their inspiration can achieve more and not to stop here simply because they didn't win.”
- “Some of the students provided videos that were not able to be embedded and could only be viewed on YouTube. This increased the amount of time it took to judge some of the videos. Also, some of the students monetized their videos, so annoying ads kept popping up.”
- “Rubric examples could be helpful.”
- “Have people fill out the tentative judging first time through and then the second time through, only tweak the answers, rather than have them look the first time and judge the second time through.”
- “Perhaps a practice run with sample videos earlier in the process would be in order, to make us aware of how our computers will deal with the submitted videos. Although the message is the most important thing, it would be good to have more specific voting guidelines for technical aspects of the videos: a range of points each for performance, lighting, sound, use of location, etc.”
- “Let us see the criteria given to students.”
- “The process is very smooth. One suggestion that I have is to either make the scales less broad (e.g., a 20 point scale is hard to process) and to make them more uniform (e.g., keep all scales to a 5 point scale). If it's important to have such a wide scale, it would be helpful to have some anchors, to keep the point-giving less haphazard. Without anchors, you really only can judge the videos against one another, since there isn’t a gold standard, which I think is not your intent. Another thing that would be helpful is to see the winners from the previous year, so that we know what quality we can expect from the ‘best’ film. Other than that, the process was very smooth and well organized. Great job!”
- “Rating categories and criteria did not capture some of the important aspects of quality--e.g., diversity, judgmental messages.”
- “Most of the videos I judged came from the same school. I think it would have been beneficial to judge videos
from different regions.”

- “It would be great to judge films from a variety of schools opposed to a group of films from the same high school.”
- “It would be helpful to know if the filmmakers find out what the total score is for their films. I know that any comments judges made would not be available to the filmmakers, but I did not see any explanation about the scores. This would be helpful to know because some of the film submissions scored very low for various reasons, but I did not want to discourage the filmmakers or curb their enthusiasm for advocacy or creative endeavors.”

Question #13: Please provide us with a short quote about your judging experience, a video that inspired you, or why programs such as this contest are important for young people. We may include this in our contest report or on our website.

- “This video contest reached out to the very people that this program seeks to help. It was an inclusive, creative process and a great example of the important use of peer to peer marketing to send an important message that I hope will resonate with young people in this targeted group.”
- “The amount of people this contest impacts is definitely beneficial to the future and current generation of people who wrestle with such struggles. It is a joy to see that so many organizations and people who genuinely care are involved in bringing this war into the light, so that people can find restoration and wholeness in their lives.”
- “Many of the student videos demonstrated that there are young people out there who have a good understanding and grasp of the issues that people with mental health disabilities face, and it’s encouraging that they’re looking for creative ways to reduce stigma and discrimination by providing fresh perspectives.”
- “I was impressed with the creativity, sensitivity, and technical sophistication evident in the high school entries. Contests like this provide an important opportunity for young people to develop film making skills and suicide prevention awareness, fostering a valuable partnership between media and mental health.”
- “The creativity and compassion expressed in these student videos was truly heartwarming.”
- “The judging process was very difficult for me. All the videos presented were inspiring and reflective of the positive and caring attitudes of our youth today.”
- “I was impressed by the imagination and effort that the students put into their work. There were so many different viewpoints and creative ways of speaking the same message. Great job!”
- “Contests like this exposes young adults into diverse and complex topics in which they might not others be fully aware of. Discussing and developing strong videos and imagery in these categories allow a wide audience range to foster the deep impact of message internally and externally within their community.”
- “As evidenced by the creativity and heart that were included in the videos I judged, the Directing Change contest is a valuable experience for our high school students and allows them to be a part of spreading the word that suicide is preventable, not only through their videos but also to the friends and family they share their contest experiences with.”
- “I admired the creativity and the earnest efforts that inspired each of the works I viewed.”
“Participating in this knowledge circle encourages me to be the best I can possibly be as a clinical social worker treating clients with mental illness—this supportive environment brings out the best in all of us!”

“A hands on project like this leaves a lasting impression of the importance and relevance of the topic in the mind of the video creators and the audience, too!”

“Very creative way in overcoming stigma, involving adults and youth.”

“These kids are so inspiring. They open my eyes to see how suicide is perceived by the youth today. I loved being a part of the judging once again. I will look forward to it each year.”

“Creativity inspires people to think more clearly and to become more engaged. Teaching is less about telling students what they need to know and more about guiding them to discover knowledge and to think critically. This is where learning flourishes. Encouraging students to enter this contest provides them with an opportunity to learn about mental health, to hone creative skills, and to habitualize kindness and understanding into their daily lives as members of a community.”

“Because I am a mother of 2, stepmother of 11, godmother of 3, and are awaiting in time my foster care license and I love the kids, God bless them all.”

“I am impressed with the young filmmakers' enthusiasm, courage, and creativity for this project.”

“I was very impressed with the story-telling ability and attention to detail of many of the student videos I watched.”

“Very interesting videos. Very creative.”

“Some people are drawn to champion a challenging concern because they are impacted by it directly, and want to make a positive difference. Others are drawn for different reasons, like the love of film-making. Both have the power to impact lives and change hearts for the common good. I salute them all.”

“There were two films in my batch that really stood out; I was really impressed with the quality of video and the depth of the meaning.”

“We have some amazing, talented and caring youth here in California!”

“Having youth educate the community about suicide prevention increases the likelihood they'll be proactive in helping their peers avoid crisis.”

“I was really impressed with the sophistication of several videos this year. It is reassuring to see the level of involvement students and instructors are showing in this project. Recently I spoke to a local high school, peer driven, and crisis management team. They were very excited to hear of this project and plan on using it next year as a culminating activity for group. They want to get the message out.”

“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 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 videos 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.”

“Anything that combines the creative experience with aiding youth in the struggles many experience is
beneficial for everyone involved, both young and old. Bravo for your efforts!”

- “I was extremely proud of the students and how well thought out their ideas were when creating the videos. I believe this is a worthy cause and would like to see more inner city students get involved in the process.”
- “The videos were impressive, showing a real sensitivity about how stigma affects young people struggling with mental illness. I congratulate every young person who worked on a video for this contest.”
- “Creating a way for students to produce creative media and sincere messaging for their peers is the way to go. Glad to be part of a project that provides this much needed opportunity for our youth.”
- “I was impressed with the insight shown by several of the young film makers. It was obvious that this was a topic that they understood from experience.”
- “There were a couple of submissions that I judged that were very impressive. The contests sets youth in motion to think about mental health and suicide prevention. The creative process not only helps to promote prevention efforts among youth, but engages students in strengthening character as they find ways to help others.”
- “A few of the videos I judged were very well done. They were touching and delivered a sincere message. I hope lots of people get a chance to see them.”
- “I was very encouraged by the amount of time young people spent on this videos and their professionalism in their final product. I was disappointed in some of the great videos that didn’t include the hotline or website as a reference point for viewers.”
- “Encouraging young people to create these public service videos educates and engages them in dialogue on the subject, charges them to educate others, and empowers them to become ambassadors for suicide prevention.”
- “It’s good to get young adults involved, as it’s a leading cause of their deaths.”
- “It is always delightful to see the creative approaches taken by these student filmmakers!”
- “I was pleased to see a large number of videos submitted by our local high schools in San Bernardino and Riverside County. It is heartwarming and moving to see our youth and young adults speaking up for such important causes.”
- “Judging allows awareness information through the voices of students experiencing this among their peer groups.”
- “This is a great program - not just for viewers who might be reached by the videos, but for the kids who go through the process of creating the videos. It’s such an important topic, and this is a fantastic way to get kids interested and have them be really thoughtful about reaching out in a positive way.”
- “Suicide in teens is a very serious situation and these short films are very good for awareness for teens. We believe all the videos were good and had a lot of thought and passion put into each video. We at Lee MAG will help anytime for this serious condition in our nation!”
- “Programs like this create conversations, inspire thought, questions and recognition of the impact each one of us can have on others (young, mature or elder).”
- “Any avenue that allows students to help others in pain is worthwhile and film is a medium in which a student can be creative in the process of helping others. It is an art form that is also a direct, powerful communication tool.”
“I understand the challenges of introducing new ‘project curriculum’ into schools and commend Directing Change, all of your partners, the participating instructors and students for taking on the challenge! I am inspired and impressed and incredibly honored to have been invited to participate as a judge. Bravo!”

“I am inspired by the students who chose who face the topic of suicide prevention head on. Too many teenagers today suffer from suicidal ideation and it’s refreshing to know that their peers are willing to help.”

“Film is a very powerful medium. What is said and how it is said is visually and auditorally processed into a total cognitive and emotional experience that, if done well, stays with one long after the medium is gone.”

“I’m amazed at the talent featured this time around. The projects were well-produced, emotional and educational. I’m impressed! Thanks for allowing me to experience it.”

“I was impressed with the quality of the films I judged, and I was inspired by the creative ways the filmmakers approached the contest’s challenge.”

“The quality and creativity of some of these videos is impressive, given that they are high school students. What a great experience for them to learn both about mental health/suicide prevention and video production!”

“I’m blown away by the compassion and thought that goes into these powerful and important PSA’s to reduce stigma and prevent suicide!”

“This is so helpful in so many ways. As an educator it uses 21st century skills of technology, problem solving, and organizational skills. It helps to de-stigmatize mental health issues. To create an effective video everyone involved in the production has to be educated in the content, these people can now become change agents in this field. They now have information to help prevent suicide and know how to get help. This information will trickle down to others. Great program! Very professionally run, clear, helpful, and informative. Thank you!”

“I learned from the many ways the message of unconditional love and concern was conveyed by these creative young people. It was heart-inspiring to me that they all spoke so consonantly: Live.”

“I am amazed at the level of understanding these young directors display in their videos. In each one I felt a level of pain that most people don’t understand. Well done LA High Schools!”

“It was an honor to be a judge for the Directing Change contest. I was inspired by the creativity and caring that the videos shared.”

“It is inspiring to see the young people of today taking notice of this epidemic. We need their help to end the silence!”

“Unfortunately there were not any videos this year that inspired me. For the entries that I judged, the students created videos that lacked creativity, they took the guidelines literally instead of interpreting them in a different way. Some videos had a story but they were disjointed and not expressed well with the creative aspect of film. I completely understand that the students are not filmmakers but it just seemed that some of last year’s videos from high school students was just at a higher caliber than this year where they really thought about suicide prevention and how to express it in a way that was relatable and supportive.”

“I was very impressed by the high quality of communication in several videos.”

“As a licensed Marriage Family Therapist, I have worked in Mental Health for many years and I am very supportive of any efforts to fight this increasing trend in our society that is so preventable, yet continues to be devastating to so many. I have worked as a crisis evaluator and have seen firsthand what can happen when
those that are suffering an emotional crisis can do when they don’t know how to reach out for help or those around them don’t know the signs that they are in trouble. All the videos I reviewed were a valiant effort to be a part of the solution and I applaud their efforts. I am thankful for the opportunity to do my part.”

- “Programs like this are key to changing stigma around mental illness and getting help by educating students who participate in these videos. These students indirectly are also learning about being trauma informed, and that everyone should be treated with kindness because we don’t know what they are going through.”
- “It was great to see how creative students were with their videos. The video that impacted me the most was the one with the mom and little sister talking about why her older sister was sad.”
- “I thought that your judging process was easy to follow and clear. Being a filmmaker, I had to step back and let some technical issues take back seat to the messaging. It was very interesting to see what these high school students came up with and inspiring to know that they are thinking of how to prevent and help those contemplating suicide. I felt like the same theme ran through a lot of the videos I judged. If memory serves, it was being invisible. Great contest! I look forward to seeing the winning entries.”
- “I was inspired by the work and creativity that students put into this process. One video in particular that touched me, used music and performance without words to portray a strong message of hope that things get better and that a person can help someone else find help.”
- “The use of youth to message to youth is powerful, the examples and the thoughtfulness are truly going to make a difference.”