

## CaIMHSA response to *13 Reasons Why*

The new Netflix Series titled “13 Reasons Why” has created significant concern within the suicide prevention community throughout the country. The concern around the show centers on the potential for the contagion effect, which could increase suicide risk among those already at risk for suicide.

CaIMHSA understands that counties may want to address the show and the tough topics it brings up with schools, parents and community members in different forums.

Educating the media to talk about suicide responsibly and empowering Californians to stop suicide has been a core mission of CaIMHSA and our suicide prevention efforts. To that end, CaIMHSA has a number of strategies and resources to share with you as you partner with your communities to encourage caring and compassionate conversations on this important issue and to engage a new movement of young Californians who can prevent suicide among their peers. To support counties in this work, CaIMHSA encourages the following:

### Reach out to local journalists/media representatives

- The way media reports on suicide can influence behavior negatively by sensationalizing suicide or positively by encouraging help-seeking. First and foremost, media should be aware of and align their messaging with the consensus [Recommendations for Reporting on Suicide](#). These recommendations are available in English, Spanish, French, German and Slovenian. At minimum, a suicide prevention resource, such as the [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#) (1 800 273-TALK [8255]) should be included in all pieces writing about the show.
- Anyone who may be contacted about the show – including school administrators, teachers, and community based organizations – should be aware of proper messaging around suicide. Visit the [Action Alliance Framework for Successful Messaging](#) to develop suicide prevention messages that are strategic, safe, positive and make use of relevant guidelines and best practices.
- Additionally, CaIMHSA’s [Know the Signs](#) Campaign offers a toolkit entitled [Making Headlines: A Guide to Engaging the Media in Suicide Prevention in California](#), to support counties in creating relationships with the media and offering guidance on messaging.

### Engage students in school and at home

- Educators and parents are encouraged to talk about the show, or even watch the show, with the students to help frame the conversation around suicide prevention. Encouraging students to become involved with California’s suicide prevention organizations can save lives and empower survivors of suicide attempts and their families to become active in helping others. The Suicide Awareness Voices of Education and the JED Foundation created [talking points](#) to help parents, teachers, and other community members talk with youth about suicide as it relates to the show
- Educators can also engage in suicide prevention efforts in schools using the following programs:
  - [Directing Change](#): The Directing Change Student Film Program invites high school and college-aged students to create 60-second public service announcements about suicide prevention.
  - [Know the Signs](#): The Know the Signs suicide prevention campaign teaches all Californians to recognize the warning signs of suicide, how to find the words to have a direct conversation with someone in crisis, and where to find professional help and reach out to local resources, such as crisis hotlines and support groups that can provide care.
  - [Walk In Our Shoes](#): The Walk In Our Shoes program engages elementary and middle school students about mental health, and also provides resources to educators and parents.
- Schools should also reexamine their existing suicide prevention and postvention policies. Supportive resources include:
  - [After A Suicide: A Toolkit for Schools](#) – This toolkit reflects consensus recommendations and includes an overview of key considerations, general guidelines for action, do’s and don’ts, templates and sample materials to support schools in addressing suicide deaths within the school community.
  - [Preventing Suicide: A Toolkit for High schools](#): this toolkit assists high schools and school districts in designing and implementing strategies to prevent suicide and promote behavioral health. It includes tools to implement a multi-faceted suicide prevention program that responds to the needs and cultures of students.
- Recent legislation ([AB 2246](#)) requires all local educational agencies (LEA) serving 7<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grade students to have a pupil suicide prevention policy implemented before the beginning of the 2017-2018 school year. The policy must be developed in consultation with school and community stakeholders, school-employed mental health professionals and suicide prevention experts. The California Department of Education will be providing a model policy to all LEAs shortly. For questions about this model policy, please contact Monica Nepomuceno at the California Department of Education ([mnepomuceno@cde.ca.gov](mailto:mnepomuceno@cde.ca.gov)).
- Get trained in suicide prevention intervention using a recognized [suicide prevention gatekeeper training program](#). After going through the training, use the [“I Know the Signs” sign](#) to show your ability to support a student who may be at risk for suicide.
- Schools can also consider hosting a parent forum, where parents can receive training and engage in discussion about the show and supportive talking points.
- The [Directing Change](#) website also has a comprehensive list of resources for schools.

## Know your resources

- [The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#): If you or someone you know is having thoughts of suicide, call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at **1-800-273-TALK (8255)**. The Lifeline will connect you to a trained crisis counselor at your nearest local crisis center, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. For Spanish language counselors, call **1-888-628-9454**.
- [Trevor Project hotline & online chat](#): The Trevor Project hotline (**1-866-488-7386**) provides 24/7 suicide prevention support to LGBTQ youth. It also offers a [text and chat option](#).
- [Crisis Text Line](#): The Crisis Text Line offers 24/7 support for people in crisis. **Text HOME to 741741** to get connected to a trained crisis counselor.

