



WELLNESS • RECOVERY • RESILIENCE

## CaIMHSA Program Partner Spotlight: AdEase

Pain Isn't Always Obvious



Suicide Is Preventable.org

In 2010, 3,823 Californians took their own lives, and 16,425 people were hospitalized for self-inflicted injuries. These tragic facts demonstrate the need for suicide prevention and early intervention resources in California. [Know the Signs](#) is a statewide suicide prevention social marketing campaign created to address this need. Know the Signs is funded by counties through the Mental Health Services Act and implemented by AdEase, a full-service advertising, marketing and public relations agency in partnership with the Education Development Center and Your Social Marketer. The campaign aims to prepare more Californians to prevent suicide by increasing knowledge of warning signs, resources and how to talk about suicide to someone they are concerned about. Three directives drive the campaign: **Know the signs, Find the words, Reach out.**

### Research Driven

The three-year campaign, operating from September 2011 through June 2014, was informed by extensive research into existing resources, county needs, and media adherence to national recommendations for reporting on suicide. The research involved meetings with nearly all of California's 58 counties to learn about existing activities and needed resources, a literature review and review of existing suicide prevention campaigns, analysis of media adherence to national safe messaging recommendations and a survey of Californians' awareness and attitudes related to suicide prevention.

The results of the survey were telling. "Confidence in the ability to discuss suicide significantly increased with knowledge about resources and of warning signs for suicide," said Theresa Ly, AdEase subcontractor with the Education Development Center (EDC). "Those who know where they could seek help for a friend or family member were 7.8 times more likely to agree that they felt confident to offer help to someone they were concerned about."

Based on this research, the campaign aims to target individuals who are most likely to see the signs of suicide and respond appropriately, such as family and friends.

“Our mass media campaign is targeted to helpers of those who are at risk. We are educating Californians to know the warning signs of suicide, teach them how to have a conversation on the topic and know how to find local resources,” said Richelle Brown, AdEase Director of Account Services.



### Stakeholder Input

Development of campaign materials was informed by a wide variety of suicide prevention stakeholders and community members representative of different cultures and ages throughout all 58 counties through the [Your Voice Counts](#) forum and focus groups in Spanish for the Spanish language campaign. Launched in January 2012, Your Voice Counts is an online public forum intended to facilitate information sharing and dialogue about suicide prevention in California. “When we set out to develop the campaign we had to ask ourselves, how can we make our campaign work not only for all counties, but all the diverse individuals and cultures throughout the state? And how can we connect the multitude of suicide prevention activities that are taking place? Your Voice Counts, which currently has nearly 400 members, connects people across the state and engages them to make this campaign their own,” said Jana Sczersputowski, President of Your Social Marketer and AdEase subcontractor. Your Voice Counts members can download campaign materials, offer feedback and provide critical input about suicide prevention efforts in their community. Members were engaged in the development of campaign materials and continue to provide input as the campaign progresses. You can join the conversation and download campaign materials at [yourvoicecounts.org](http://yourvoicecounts.org)

### Mass Media

Starting in November, the campaign will roll out a mass media effort to raise awareness and direct Californians to available suicide prevention resources. The mass media campaign involves English and Spanish speaking T.V. and print advertising including Sports Illustrated and People Magazine Español. The campaign targets helpers of persons at risk of suicide or suicide ideation, with a special emphasis on helpers of 45-64 year old men and Latina youth because research has shown these groups to be at risk.



## Engaging Students

The [Directing Change](#) PSA contest offers high school students an opportunity to actively participate in suicide prevention and stigma reduction efforts. The objectives of the contest are to raise awareness with students and schools about suicide prevention, engage the news media as judges of the contest, and increase suicide prevention activities in schools. Contest information was sent to every school in the state and was even supported by California Superintendent of Schools, Tom Torlakson, who applauded the efforts and encouraged school



staff to promote the contest. “Students can submit 60-second PSAs in stigma reduction and suicide prevention to win cash prizes and suicide prevention programs for their school. We will host an awards ceremony in Sacramento at the end of May,” said Jana. Submissions are due March 1<sup>st</sup> but students throughout the state have already expressed interest in participating.

## County Assistance

AdEase has taken steps to ensure the programs are implemented locally. Campaign materials have been disseminated to each county and over the next 18 months, AdEase will work with county representatives to provide assistance. Recognizing the limited resources and unique challenges faced by rural and small counties, AdEase provides enhanced technical assistance and hands-on social marketing support to these counties.

## News Media Outreach

Research has shown that the way the media reports on suicide can impact suicide rates in the region. As such, media outreach to encourage responsible and safe reporting on suicide is an important component to the campaign. This outreach includes media toolkits as well as forums that alert the media about national safe reporting recommendations and stimulate dialogue about the issue. “The goals of the media forums are threefold: to alert the media about the recommendations, foster relationships between local suicide prevention activists and members of the press, and ensure suicide prevention is covered in the media,” said Anara Guard, Education Development Center (EDC) and AdEase subcontractor. The forums consist of workshops, community agencies and organizations and a panel with members of the press. The first forum was organized in conjunction with the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health and the Entertainment Industries Council.

Every day in California friends, family and co-workers struggle with emotional pain. For some, it’s difficult to talk about the need for help. Though the warning signs can be subtle, they are there. By teaching Californians how to recognize the signs, know how to start a conversation and where to turn for help, we can save lives. Learn more at [suicideispreventable.org](http://suicideispreventable.org)