



## Plan and Implement a *What I Wish My Parents Knew* Event on Campus.



**It is important to explore efforts** to engage parents and the larger school community as partners in suicide prevention. One such effort that has shown strong potential is the *What I Wish My Parents Knew* events which originated from the community serviced by the Poway Unified School District in San Diego County. **The *What I Wish My Parents Knew* events have proven to be a successful way to engage parents and the entire community around mental health topics.** The goal of these events is to reduce risk, including risk of suicide, among youth by providing parents with knowledge and skills around a variety of mental health-related topics.

### What I Wish My Parents Knew Agenda:

- Resource fair for parents featuring local community resources (30 min, optional)
- Brief welcome/keynote remarks (10-30 min)
- Two break-out sessions featuring workshops on a variety of topics (60 min each)

The most important piece that has led to the success of the program is the utilization of the youth voice. As the title suggests, a primary piece of the event is to allow youth to share “what they wish their parents knew”. To start, youth provide input on the topics they would like to see covered at the events. Responses from youth typically cover a variety of topics related to mental health including suicide prevention, academic pressure, and bullying. Second, youth and young adults are invited to co-present with subject matter experts during the breakout sessions. Check out our full toolkit about implementing a *What I Wish My Parents Knew* event on your campus! To request a free Step by Step Guide to implement this event visit “Contact Us” at [www.DirectingChangeCA.org](http://www.DirectingChangeCA.org)

**Want to get youth moving with your activity?** Try a self-care scavenger hunt so kids are not only being active but also finding resources on their campuses!

**Case Study:** Mission Middle School  
County: San Diego

Mission Middle School students participated in a modified scavenger hunt, called a BreakOut. In a BreakOut youth use a series of multimedia clues and puzzles to guide themselves to different combinations that unlock locks attached to a box. The goal is for students to “BreakOut” items inside the box. Clues for this BreakOut required finding locations on campus that supported self-care and resources for reaching out for help on campus. Items inside the box included suicide prevention and mental health awareness goodies, such as green ribbons and awareness wristbands.

**Want to host a great suicide prevention event**, but don’t know where to start? We highly encourage you to speak to your students about what they would like to do and see if they can take on some of the responsibility of planning and implementing the events. Share this tip sheet with them as a good starting point. It includes several recommended activities and case studies from California schools who have hosted their own versions on their campus. Regardless of the type of event you plan, make sure to talk about suicide prevention as an action that anyone can take, and to leave time for debriefing afterwards. Have at least one counselor available for students and/or community members to connect with, in case any of the activities unearth strong emotions. Be sure to share this tip sheet with clubs on campus!



## Create a Lime Green Ribbon Campaign



**Distribute green ribbons** to all participating classes and encourage students to wear the ribbon throughout the week and beyond. When students are asked about the ribbon, make sure they know that the lime green ribbon is a symbol of hope, shows that they are willing to be open about mental health/suicide prevention, and that they can talk about the difficult things others may be going through, especially in terms of those who are thinking about suicide.



**Print out templates of green ribbons** that students can decorate, label with their name, and write out one thing they can do to support suicide prevention at your school. Post the green ribbons in a central location to show how many students have made the pledge.

**Want to create a specific design?** Try out a fence activation! Spell out “Hope”, “Fuerza”, or create a green ribbon design using green duct tape on a fence. Download tips and templates on creating a visible sign of solidarity here: <https://www.eachmindmatters.org/fence/>

**Case Study:** Rio Vista Middle School  
County: Fresno

Students hosted an awareness week which included screening of youth films in classrooms, decorating fences at school with green ribbons, distributing bracelets with positive affirmations attached, and organizing a “Feelings Jenga” activity encouraging conversations about mental health and stigma. Feelings Jenga works like this: each Jenga block had an emotion word written on it, so when a student successfully pulled it from the tower, they would have to read the word outloud and share a time in their life that they felt that emotion.



## Suicide Prevention Activities Tip Sheet



### Organize a Screening of Youth-Produced Directing Change Films or Suicide Prevention-Focused Feature Films at Your School or Organization.

The **Directing Change website** [www.directingchange.org/films/](http://www.directingchange.org/films/) has hundreds of 60-second films about suicide prevention that can be screened for free. Choose the films based on location (you can pick your county if you want local films), topic (try Suicide Prevention, Animated Short, or Through the Lens of Culture: Suicide Prevention for this event), or the top films each year. View and download films here: <http://www.directingchange.org/films/>

**If you have time** to show a full feature film, we recommend screening a film that includes outstanding messaging around these topics. Some of our team's recommendations include *According to Greta*, *It's Kind of A Funny Story*, and *the S-Word*:



**According to Greta:** A young, suicidal and rebellious teen gets sent to her grandparents by the coast for the summer where life takes an unexpected turn. (PG-13)



**It's Kind of a Funny Story:** Stressed by adolescence, 16-year-old Craig checks himself into a mental-health clinic after contemplating suicide. (PG-13)



**The S-Word (Documentary):** A survivor of a suicide attempt embarks on a mission to document the stories of fellow survivors.

**Location and timing:** If you have the time and flexibility, host it in your school's auditorium during the week so that the most students can view the films. Alternatively, hosting the event after school can encourage parents and other members of the community (kids at neighboring schools, local organizations) to attend. Other ways that schools and organizations have reached youth include screening films once a week in homerooms; incorporating the films into lunchtime fairs and activities; screening the films at end of the year events; and sharing them with neighborhood members at community meetings.

#### Case Study: John R. Wooden Continuation High School County: Los Angeles

The school hosted a campus-wide screening of a TedTalk by Kevin Breel followed by classroom discussions and a writing exercise where students read a letter titled "Me, Myself, and I" written by a person with depression. Afterwards students wrote their own version of the letter where they shared their experiences with mental health challenges and/or wrote themselves positive affirmations for continuing to improve their mental health.



#### Case Study: Southeast DREAMS Magnet County: Los Angeles

A youth talent show screened Directing Change films created by their students in between other musical and dramatic performances. This talent show was held multiple times throughout the day, and students had the opportunity to attend with their science/health class.

## Suicide Prevention Activities Tip Sheet



### Directing Change

Program and Film Contest

The **Directing Change Program & Film Contest** offers young people the exciting opportunity to participate in the mental health movement by creating short films about suicide prevention and mental health that are used to support awareness, education, and advocacy efforts on these topics. Learning objectives surrounding mental health and suicide prevention are integrated into the submission categories of the film contest, giving young people the opportunity to critically explore these topics. Program participants are exposed to appropriate messaging about these topics, warning signs, how to help a friend, and how to stand up for others. Films are shared across the state to raise awareness. To learn more visit: [www.directingchangeCA.org](http://www.directingchangeCA.org)

We encourage you to incorporate a suicide prevention lesson plan into at least one class. Check out the Directing Change Program's Suicide Prevention Lesson: [www.DirectingChangeCA.org/schools/](http://www.DirectingChangeCA.org/schools/)

**Multimedia Approaches:** Who says you have to choose one type of art and stick with it? Some of the best events we've seen in recent years used multiple types of art to connect with youth and community members. Check out some innovative activities and events below!

#### Los Angeles High School County: Los Angeles

Los Angeles High School hosted its first Mental Health Awareness Month this year, which included screening of short films about suicide prevention created by students, talks from local organizations that work in mental health and diversity, and dance performances from a local hip hop group. The school, in conjunction with a neighborhood organization (Koreatown Youth Community Center) and a local artist, also created a community mural that they painted on campus. The mural serves as a reminder of mental health and connectedness that will continue to affect students for years to come.



#### Case Study: Mountain View Elementary County: Tri-City (Los Angeles)

The school incorporated screening of Directing Change short films into their end-of-the-year showcase for their entire 6th grade class. Poems, musical acts, and written reflections were shared with the community at an event held off-campus, and all pieces were concerned with the themes of mental health and community wellness.

