



August 2021

Dear Pennsylvania School Personnel:

Prevent Suicide PA is excited to announce its annual PSA contest for youth suicide prevention. This year we celebrate our 10th anniversary of the contest and are as excited as ever to see what brilliant, positive, and encouraging messages your students develop. We have seen over the past nine years how students have used this PSA contest to develop a better understanding about youth suicide prevention and educate their peers through their exceptional work. Over the past 18 months, the mental health and well-being of all have been brought into the forefront of public conversations. Depression and anxiety rose during the pandemic, and youth are continuing to be impacted both indirectly and directly. While suicide deaths have not dramatically increased, as one may have expected, self-reported suicidal thoughts, as well as hospital visits for self-harm behavior, have significantly increased. Throughout our many versions of quarantining and isolating at the start of the pandemic, we have witnessed powerful new and creative ways to share resources with our communities. We are confident that the youth voice will continue to rise. We hope that your school will join us in our efforts to amplify the youth voice in the *prevention* conversation.

We are seeking your support to disseminate information about this important step to reducing lives lost to youth suicide in your schools. Please share the information with your administrators and then spread the word to students to get involved! Reach out to adults in your school community who may wish to serve as mentors, as they may be unaware of the contest (e.g., English, art, tech teachers, etc.). The [PSA website](#) contains details about the contest, including the official rules and an entry form. There are a few important details that have direct relevance to your staff:

- **Each school building may only submit one entry per category.** We encourage you to consider a local challenge within your school to help identify the best submission per category. The categories include: poster, 60-second video, 30-second video, and either 15- or 30-second audio
- **Each submission must be reviewed by a mentor at the school.** This may be a teacher, guidance counselor, school nurse, school administrator, or SAP team coordinator. We simply ask the mentors to provide some guidance on appropriateness of content (there are national media guidelines with links in the official rules), and then sign off on the application once the final product is approved.
- All submissions must be **received by Wednesday, December 15, 2021** to be considered for the statewide contest.
- **Students and the broader public will vote for the winning submission** in each category. Voting will happen online from February 2 – February 25, via the Prevent Suicide PA website.

- **We will once again accept a School vote.** In addition to allowing individuals to vote during the public voting window, we are looking to get schools more engaged in the overall mission of the project – expose youth to positive and encouraging messaging that enable them to seek support and/or help those who may need that support. As such, **the school vote allows each middle and high school to place one vote for each of the four categories.** Schools can solicit the voting opinions of their student body in whatever way they choose, and Prevent Suicide PA will offer a number of possible suggestions for this. The school voting period will extend from January 26 – February 25 to allow enough time for schools to gather the opinions of students. One adult in each school may cast the vote for the students, remembering that the vote must be a reflection of their students’ opinions (teachers – and students – may vote independently during the public voting window).

All of the details about the contest, including official rules, a downloadable pdf of the flyer, the application form, as well as help with guiding the students in their messaging, are available on our website, <http://psa.preventsuicidepa.org/2022psa/>. You may also view previous winners by visiting our main page, <http://psa.preventsuicidepa.org>. Winners will be announced in early March 2022. All finalists will receive a certificate of recognition, and each winner will be honored at an event with one of our professional sports partners – the Pittsburgh Pirates and Philadelphia Phillies. Depending on the status of in-person gatherings, we may also hold a virtual celebration with the winners with some special guests. To view some of the festivities at previous awards ceremonies, please visit: www.preventsuicidepa.org/glsawareness.

As always, we are excited to receive a record number of submissions this year and are eager to see how Pennsylvanian youth use their creativity to once again develop exceptional and powerful messages to help reduce youth suicide in the Commonwealth.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Julia Mead at Julia.mead@jefferson.edu

Sincerely,



Matthew B. Wintersteen, Ph.D.
PSA Contest Chair and Executive Board, Prevent Suicide PA
Associate Professor, Department of Psychiatry & Human Behavior
Thomas Jefferson University
Philadelphia, PA