To Whom It May Concern:

We are writing to you to inform you about a local initiative we are undertaking to raise awareness about the national epidemic of suicide. Nationally, each year we lose over 5,000 teenagers a year to suicide. Since the year 2000, the national suicide rate has generally increased, with over 45,000 suicide deaths in 2016. However, with education and initiatives such as this one, we are beginning to make progress. In Westmoreland County, the number of suicides in 2017 decreased from number of confirmed suicide deaths in 2016. In 2017 there were 58 and for 2016 there were 61.

The Ray of Hope: Westmoreland County Suicide Awareness and Prevention Task Force is dedicated to the prevention of suicide through community education and outreach; we also recognize that suicide is a national health problem across the lifespan and our mission is to reduce stigma associated with mental illness and suicide. Our task force is made up of various human service, educational, governmental organizations and community members, many of which have lost loved ones to suicide; all are dedicated to the cause.

Beginning January 9th, in an effort to raise awareness and educate about signs, symptoms, and help-seeking, we are sponsoring a poster and video contest in Westmoreland County Middle and High Schools. Non-public schools and homeschoolers are welcome to enter as well. The contest will close March 8th. Particularly in light of the increase in the suicide rate as well as the new legislation requiring schools to provide suicide prevention education, we believe this effort is timely.

Enclosed are more details about the contest. Please disseminate this information in whatever manner you see fit so the students in your district can be aware of this important opportunity. This information is also being shared with the Student Assistant Program liaisons. Information will be available on our website as well at www.rayofhopewestmoreland.org.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Task Force Chair Heather McLean at (814) 671-5179 or Heather.McLean@uhsinc.com, or Coordinator Rachel Ravis at 724-834-6351 ext 128 or rravis@mhaswpa.org.

Sincerely,

Ray of Hope: Westmoreland County Suicide Awareness and Prevention Task Force Contest Committee
All students submitting entries for the Ray of Hope: Westmoreland County Suicide Awareness and Prevention Task Force poster and video contest MUST follow the rules below or their entry will not be accepted. There are no exceptions.

**Rules for Submission:**

1. This contest is reserved for Middle School and High School students who currently reside in or attend a school located in Westmoreland County.

2. Although it is not required, it is suggested that students have a school faculty mentor to supervise submissions, such as teachers, SAP coordinators, guidance counselors, school nurses, or administrators. Middle School and High School youth who are in non-traditional educational environments may also submit an entry.

3. It is okay to talk about feelings, and it’s ok to use the word suicide: HOWEVER:
   - Please do not display any images/video, etc., that explicitly show self-harm behaviors (for example, no knives, guns, etc., or illusions to such.) Entries showing youth engaging in suicidal behavior (for example, swallowing pills) will be excluded.
   - No explicit discussion of specific suicidal behaviors will be accepted.

4. Content of Messaging
   - We are requesting that entries focus on 1) warning signs for youth suicide and/or 2) encouraging help-seeking behavior. Students may submit entries without a focus on either of these areas; however we are particularly requesting submissions focused on warning signs and help-seeking.

   i. **Warning Signs for Youth Suicide**
      - Beginning in January 2015, the United States released a NEW list of youth suicide warning signs. The goal is to simplify the information into something that can easily be remembered by the public. As such, we are encouraging contest participants to preview these new warning signs to aid them in developing their submissions. To preview the new warning signs, please go to: [https://www.preventsuicidepa.org/warning-signs-risk-factors/](https://www.preventsuicidepa.org/warning-signs-risk-factors/)
      - The 2015 warning signs are the recommendations for how youth and adults should respond if they see these warning signs in another youth. If your messaging will also focus on how to respond, we encourage you to check on [https://www.preventsuicidepa.org/warning-signs-risk-factors/](https://www.preventsuicidepa.org/warning-signs-risk-factors/) on how youth should respond and [https://www.preventsuicidepa.org/warning-signs-risk-factors/](https://www.preventsuicidepa.org/warning-signs-risk-factors/) on how adults will be asked to respond.

   ii. **Help-Seeking Behavior**
      - We encourage messages about help-seeking to also follow the recommendations associated with the new youth suicide warning signs. Information on how youth can help youth when they are concerned can be found at [https://www.preventsuicidepa.org/warning-signs-risk-factors/](https://www.preventsuicidepa.org/warning-signs-risk-factors/).
5. **Video Submissions**
   i. Entries should be of high-definition video quality. Please be sure that your final submission is in the mp4 (video) format on a thumb drive or DVD.
   ii. Please follow all copyright rules regarding music and images.
   iii. Do not include school and/or student’s names in the video.
   iv. Submissions should be exactly 60 seconds in length. **DO NOT** have any introductory images such as the name of the video, or concluding credits at the end of the video. If you wish to submit a second version including this information with your entry, you may do so, but please note which file is the final version.

6. **Poster Submissions**
   i. **All posters MUST be printed and submitted in a 8”x10” format.** Landscape orientation is preferred for reproduction in a calendar form.
   ii. All computer generated posters in jpeg, .tif, .gif, bmp, etc. format must be printed in a 8”x10” format.
   iii. All hand drawn posters must be constructed and submitted in an 8”x10” format.
   iv. It is fully acceptable to hand draw a 8”x10” image and then SCAN that image into the proper file format. It is also possible to hand draw the graphics, scan the image, and then digitally print the message over the scanned image. As long as the submitted product is sufficiently able to go directly to the printer as is, it will be accepted. We encourage students with great artistic abilities to partner with students with strong graphic abilities!

7. **All Video Submissions** should follow the same file naming format LastName(category)SchoolName. For example, smith(60 sec video)schooldistrict.

8. **All Poster Submissions** should contain the same identifying information on the back of the poster; Individual’s Full Name, School Name, and Grade.

9. All poster and video submissions must be received by March 8, 2019 and sent/delivered to:
   Mental Health America of Southwestern PA
   ATTN: Rachel Ravis
   409 Coulter Ave., Suite 4
   Greensburg, PA 15601

10. **You MUST adhere to these submission rules and requests.** If any of the above criteria are not met, we will not be able to accept your submission.

**Additional Resources**
- [www.rayofhopewestmoreland.org](http://www.rayofhopewestmoreland.org) Westmoreland County Suicide and Prevention Task Force
- [www.afsp.org](http://www.afsp.org) American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
- [www.sprc.org](http://www.sprc.org) Suicide Prevention Resource Center
- [www.suicidology.org](http://www.suicidology.org) American Association of Suicidology
- [www.survivorsofsuicide.com](http://www.survivorsofsuicide.com) Survivors of Suicide
- [www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org) National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
Ray of Hope: Westmoreland County Suicide Awareness and Prevention Task Force
Poster/Video Contest for Youth Suicide Prevention
(Submit Application with Project-DUE March 8, 2019)

Name of Student Submitting Form: ____________________________

Name of Other Students on Team: ____________________________
(If applicable)

Mentor (If Applicable): ____________________________

School Name: ____________________________

School District: ____________________________

School Address: ____________________________

Category of Entry:

☐ High School: 60 Second Video (submit DVD or thumb drive, in mp4)*

☐ High School: 8"x10" Poster** (submit printed hard copy along with jpg, .tif, .gif, .bmp, etc. on DVD, CD-ROM, or thumb drive) Can be hand drawn and scanned or created electronically and printed.

☐ Middle School: 8"x10" Poster** (submit printed hard copy along with jpg, .tif, .gif, .bmp, etc. on DVD, CD-ROM, or thumb drive) Can be hand drawn and scanned or created electronically and printed.

*All discs should be labeled with NAME, SCHOOL, and CATEGORY. All electronic files should be saved as follows: LastName (Category).file type, e.g., Smith (60-sec vid).mp4

** Poster may be used in various ways, including a calendar. Landscape orientation preferred.

Title of Poster/Video

Terms and Authorization:

By submitting the enclosed public service announcement to the Ray of Hope: Westmoreland County Suicide Awareness and Prevention Task Force (ROH), I understand that I am turning over the rights to the poster, video, and/or image(s) to ROH. Further, I understand that ROH may take my submission and place it on their website, submit it for broadcast, and/or may reproduce it in some form as a public service campaign. ROH will acknowledge my contribution whenever possible.

By signing, I acknowledge that I am submitting the attached Poster or Video on behalf of myself and any other students with whom I have worked. I certify that the work is entirely that of my own and/or my creative partners. I certify that I followed all of the rules of submission.

ROH may contact me if they have any questions regarding my submission. ROH will not contact the student directly without also addressing the parent or guardian. In order for this submission to be valid, we need signatures of student as well as parent or guardian. Mentor should sign if there is one, but this is not required. By signing, I acknowledge that I have read the rules for submission and have adhered to such rules. I am aware that not adhering to these rules will mean that my submission will not be accepted.

Student Signature: ____________________________ Date: ____________________________

Student Email Address: ____________________________ Phone ____________________________

Mailing Address ____________________________
I certify that I have reviewed the enclosed submission and approve the content.

Signature: _______________________________ Date: ________________

Mentor Email Address: _________________________________
Mentor Phone Number: _________________________________

Parent/Legal Guardian Name: _________________________________
I am aware that my child is submitting an application for this contest and that any correspondence regarding this contest will be directed to both me and my child.

Parent/Legal Guardian Signature: _________________________________ Date: ________________
Parent/Legal Guardian Email Address: _____________________________ Phone _____________________________
Parent/Legal Guardian Mailing Address: ________________________________

Complete the application electronically, print, sign and date. Please obtain signatures of mentor and parent/legal guardian. Mail or drop off application form with Poster or Video submission (must be received by March 8, 2019) to:

Ray of Hope Poster/Video Contest
Mental Health America of Southwestern PA
Attn: Rachel Ravis
409 Coulter Avenue, Suite 4
Greensburg, PA 15601

Contact for more information:
Jason C Stangl: stanglj@westmoreland.swsix.com (724) 830-3657
Heather McLean: Heather.McLean@uhsinc.com (814) 671-5179
Rachel Ravis: rravis@mhaswpa.org (724) 834-6351 ext. 128

Please contact us if mailing or delivery of submission is an issue. Pick-up can be arranged.
The Ray of Hope: Westmoreland County Suicide Awareness & Prevention Task Force is sponsoring a Poster /Video Contest

All interested students are encouraged to submit a poster or video. There are two categories for submission:
1. Poster -- 8”x10”
2. Video-- 60 seconds

Each winner will be given a monetary gift and honored at the 2019 Ray of Hope Walk.

All entries are due no later than March 8th 2019. Go to www.rayofhopewestmoreland.org for more details.
The Ray of Hope: Westmoreland County Suicide Awareness & Prevention Task Force is sponsoring a Poster Contest

All interested students are encouraged to submit a 8”x10” poster

Each winner will be given a monetary scholarship and honored at the 2019 Ray of Hope Walk.

All entries are due no later than March 8th 2019. Go to www.rayofhopewestmoreland.org for more details.

Past Poster Winner: Alyssa Minko, Norwin