



Tools for Entertainment and Media

**eic** A Program of the Entertainment Industries Council, Inc.

## **New Style Guide Debuts to Assist Journalists Reporting on Mental Health Issues**

***Developed by TEAM Up, a project of the Entertainment Industries Council, the guide outlines ways for newsrooms to present a more accurate picture of mental illness***

LOS ANGELES (Sept. 10, 2012)—A new style guide for reporting on challenging stories where mental health issues may be present and the potential for generalizing may occur debuted today at a Los Angeles County suicide prevention summit. The guide—created by TEAM Up (Tools for Entertainment and Media), a project of the Entertainment Industries Council (EIC)—outlines ways in which newsrooms can present a more accurate picture of mental illness—and was produced as part of prevention and early intervention statewide mental health initiatives supported by Counties through the voter-approved Mental Health Services Act (Proposition 63) funds administered by the California Mental Health Services Authority (CalMHSA).

“We created the style guide because journalists have substantial influence on the public’s attitudes about mental health,” said Brian Dyak, President and CEO, Entertainment Industries Council. “The fast pace of breaking news and crises coverage can inadvertently lead to skewed views of individuals living with mental illness that could perpetuate misperceptions and even lead to discrimination.”

Nedra Kline Weinreich, TEAM Up program manager, introduced a preview edition of the TEAM Up style guide to the more than 150 participants at the “Two Lives a Day Lost in L.A.” summit held at the California Endowment Center.

In addition to *Associated Press Stylebook*-like entries that define terms and concepts, the style guide provides journalists with the three questions to ask when covering a mental health-related story:

- *Is mental illness relevant to the story?* If it is not meaningfully linked to the story, there is no need to mention it.
- *What is your source for the mental illness diagnosis?* Don’t rely on hearsay. If someone’s mental health condition is relevant, make sure the source knows with certainty the person’s diagnosis.
- *What is the most accurate language to use?* Avoid using derogatory words, and be as specific as possible when describing someone living with a mental illness to help prevent stereotypes.

The TEAM Up project provides resources and assistance to help journalists and the entertainment industry create accurate stories on mental health issues. EIC conducts outreach efforts for the project throughout California in general markets and rural, minority, and other diverse communities.

The “Two Lives a Day Lost in L.A.” suicide prevention summit was presented by County of Los Angeles Department of Mental Health, Los Angeles County Office of Education, and EIC with support from the Mental Health Services Act (Prop. 63) administered by CalMHSA.

### **About Entertainment Industries Council**

EIC, a non-profit organization, was founded in 1983 by leaders of the entertainment industry to bring the power and influence of the industry to bear on communication about health and social issues. The organization is considered to be the chief pioneer of entertainment outreach and one of the premiere success stories in the field of entertainment education. EIC provides information resources for entertainment creators through innovative and time-proven services and methods of "encouraging the art of making a difference" from within the entertainment industry. EIC produces the simulcast national television special *PRISM Awards Showcase*, which addresses accurate portrayals of prevention, treatment and recovery from drug, alcohol and tobacco use, and mental health concerns. The organization also produces the *S.E.T Awards*, honoring positive and non-stereotypical portrayals of science, engineering and technology.

EIC also addresses issues such as diabetes, ADHD, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, foster care, women's health, firearm safety and injury prevention, sun safety and skin cancer prevention, human trafficking, terrorism and homeland security, eating disorders and obesity, seat belt use and traffic safety, and HIV/AIDS prevention. The organization has also launched an initiative to increase the public profile and interest in science, engineering and technology. EIC's web site is [www.eiconline.org](http://www.eiconline.org). The *PRISM Awards* web site is [www.prismawards.com](http://www.prismawards.com).

### **About CalMHSA**

The California Mental Health Services Authority (CalMHSA) is an organization of county governments working to improve mental health outcomes for individuals, families and communities. Prevention and Early Intervention programs implemented by CalMHSA are funded by Counties through the voter-approved Mental Health Services Act (Proposition 63), which provides the funding and framework needed to expand mental health services to previously underserved populations and all of California's diverse communities. Voter-approved Mental Health Services Act (Proposition 63) funds a portion of EIC's mental health programming. For more information, visit [www.calmhsa.org](http://www.calmhsa.org).