



Entertainment Industries Council

—Encouraging the Art of Making a Difference

## Entertainment Industries Council (EIC) Puts New National Strategy for Reducing Suicide Deaths into Action

*EIC encourages and recognizes stories that change public discourse and perceptions*

**Washington, D.C. (September 10, 2012)** --- Today, on World Suicide Prevention Day, the National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention (Action Alliance) released an ambitious national strategy to reduce the number of deaths by suicide. The Entertainment Industries Council (EIC), is engaging the entertainment industry and news media to generate accurate, compelling stories and depictions that reinforce suicide prevention programs, help-seeking behaviors and stories of hope. Additionally, FACEBOOK has taken a leadership role within social networks to make help available to members in need of support. The 2012 National Strategy for Suicide Prevention, called for by Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Kathleen Sebelius and former Department of Defense Secretary Robert Gates, details 13 goals for reducing suicides over the next 10 years.

Every year 11 million people contemplate committing suicide. In 2009 37-thousand people died. And the military has seen an alarming increase in suicides this year. In July, 38 soldiers died, an all time high, according to government reports.

“Entertainment and news media have a profound impact on our culture, attitudes and behaviors. When the messages portrayed are ones of hope that encourage individuals to seek help or to support a loved one, the population tends to respond in a profound way – we are informed by accurate, compelling media. EIC will actualize key goals of the strategy to promote responsible reporting, recognize those who produce accurate, compelling and informative pieces, support efforts to increase safety and access to information online and through emerging communications, and continue to develop and disseminate guidelines for both journalists and creative writers.” said Brian Dyak, President and CEO, Entertainment Industries Council.

Given that Americans spend a substantial amount of time with communications media, including computers and mobile devices, the media can contribute to suicide prevention by helping to combat stigma, providing opportunities for peer-to-peer support, and linking individuals in crisis with sources of help. Activities will be put into place to act upon Goal 4 of the strategy: to promote responsible media reporting of suicide, accurate portrayals of suicide and mental illnesses in the entertainment industry and the safety of online content related to suicide.

Just as this goal addresses the entertainment industry, a key objective is to “encourage and recognize news organizations that develop and implement policies and practices addressing the safe and responsible reporting of suicide and other related behaviors,” as stated in the strategy, released today.

Additionally, recognition programs like the *PRISM Awards*, and other incentives, as noted by the strategy, help promote greater awareness of and adoption of these recommendations. EIC’s *PRISM Awards Showcase* embodies this objective of the strategy by “recognizing entertainment industry productions who follow recommendations regarding the accurate and responsible portrayals of suicide and other related behaviors,” Dyak said. “In fact, the *PRISM Awards Showcase* will begin airing nationally on Sunday, September 16<sup>th</sup> at 4pm on our flagship FX network and other cable networks, with a special segment dedicated to accurate and compelling depictions of suicide prevention, help-seeking behavior and encouraging attitude change.” The

*PRISM Awards Showcase* also recognizes returning veterans mental health concerns and promotes the Suicide Prevention Lifeline.

EIC along with Public Awareness and Education Task Force Co-Leads, including those from Facebook, are striving to give people access to help, when they need it, where they need and with immediacy by developing, implementing, monitoring, and updating guidelines on the safety of online content for new and emerging communications technologies and applications.

"All too often, people in crisis do not know how—or who—to ask for help," said Facebook's Global VP for Public Policy, Marne Levine. "At Facebook, we have a unique opportunity to provide the right resources to our users in distress, when and where they need them most. By enabling connection to trained and caring professionals around the world, we can do our part to let users know help is available. Through a concerted and coordinated effort on the part of private industry, government, and concerned family and friends, we can make a real difference in preventing suicide and saving lives."

A new service offered by Facebook enables users to report a suicidal comment they see posted by a friend to Facebook using either the [Report Suicidal Content](#) link or the report links found throughout the site. The person who posted the suicidal comment will then immediately receive an email from Facebook encouraging him or her to call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255) or to click on a link to begin a confidential chat session with a crisis worker.

The Action Alliance, co-chaired by Gordon Smith, chief executive of the National Association of Broadcasters, and Army Secretary John McHugh, highlights four immediate priorities to reduce the number of suicides: integrating suicide prevention into health care policies; encouraging the transformation of health care systems to prevent suicide; changing the way the public talks about suicide and suicide prevention; and improving the quality of data on suicidal behaviors to develop increasingly effective prevention efforts.

"Our message today is one of hope," Secretary Sebelius said. "The national strategy will bring together the nation's resources, both public and private, in an organized effort to provide life saving services and improve the ability of individuals, friends and family members to recognize the warning signs of despair and take action to save lives."

At a press conference earlier today, a series of activities geared towards suicide prevention were unveiled:

- Secretary Sebelius announced \$55.6 million in new grants for national, state, tribal, campus and community suicide prevention programs made possible under the Garrett Lee Smith Memorial Act and partially funded by the Prevention and Public Health Fund under the Affordable Care Act, the health care law enacted in 2010.
- The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) launched, *Stand by Them: Help a Veteran*, a joint VA-Department of Defense (DoD) outreach campaign that includes a new public service announcement, *Side by Side*, designed to help prevent suicide among veterans and service members and focuses on the important role family and community play in supporting Veterans in crisis.

"By implementing this plan, we will engage diverse sectors of our communities, from health care systems and policy-makers to the media and public," said Gordon Smith, a former U.S. senator from Oregon. "It will take all of our efforts to win this fight against suicide that touches so many American lives."

Additionally,

- If you are concerned about yourself or someone you care about, call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 24/7 for free, confidential help (1-800-273-8255; Veterans, press '1')
- To view or order printed copies of the National Strategy for Suicide Prevention and other materials, visit [www.samhsa.gov/NSSP](http://www.samhsa.gov/NSSP).
- To learn more about suicide prevention, visit [www.sprc.org](http://www.sprc.org).
- To view the Department of Veterans Affairs new "Side by Side" PSA, visit <http://www.veteranscrisisline.net/materials/spmsupport/files/side-by-side-SD-eng-60-cc.wmv>

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### **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).