

Judging Process and Criteria

All films are first pre-screened and evaluated by a panel of FirstLink and Tellwell staff and community members. Entries will receive scores for use of script, performance, camera, sound, editing, and theme.

Submission Requirements

All films need to meet the following submission requirements:

- Required logos and resources (available as an end slate that can be added at the end of the film)
- Every film must begin with a beginning title slide that needs to include: Film Title, Filmmakers' Names, School/Organization Name, County in which School or Organization is located, Adult Advisor Name, Submission Category. A title slide template is available for download but youth are welcome to create their own.
- Required end slate (png)

Brands and Logos

Please try to avoid use of brands when creating your film or art. This can include logos on shirts, brands on laptops, store signs in the background of outdoor shots, etc. You can avoid logos by dressing your actors in clothing without recognizable brands, covering laptop brands with a sticker or sticky note, or framing your shots so that recognizable stores are not highlighted. While using a brand will not disqualify your film, it may limit the use of your film in television or movie theaters, due to brand copyright laws. We recommend avoiding the hassle and making smart, brand-free choices during the creation of your film!

Music and Copyrights

Entries must meet all copyright standards by obtaining releases for all copyrighted music and materials before submission. Entries that include copyrighted materials (such as images, supers or audiovisual materials) or music (such as music purchased from iTunes, on a CD, or other downloadable services) without the proper permission and signed release forms will be disqualified. Please review the forms and copyrights page for more information and to download the appropriate forms.

It's best to provide original music! When getting permission, you're seeking permission for all places that the film could be used, such as online and on television.

Safety

Youth and young adult producers: please avoid potentially dangerous production situations that could put crew, actors, or the public at risk. Safety during the project is of the highest priority.

FirstLink staff and sponsors take no responsibility and assume no liability for any acts or damages that may result from preparing the materials to submit to this contest. Further, all the submission categories are sensitive subjects that need to be addressed with respect and understanding for how they might impact those involved in the project. If at any time, you or someone working on the project experiences an emotional crisis let an adult know immediately or call the national Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-8255. This is a free, 24-hour hotline.

Disqualification

Films can be disqualified for the following reasons:

- Providing false information
- Not meeting the submission deadline
- Not obtaining the proper release forms or copyright permissions
- Violation of the safe messaging policy (in each submission category)
- Violation of the rights of any third party or US, state, or local law
- Any other violation of the contest rules

FirstLink reserves the right to disqualify any entry that they believe at their sole discretion to violate these rules. Further, the advisor can refuse to submit an entry that is not suitable for schools and a general audience. All categories have special content that must be included and specific content that must be avoided and can lead to disqualification.

Note: Entries should not be uploaded to Vimeo, YouTube, or any other video service sites accessible to the public (other than the official contest website as part of the entry form) until after winners have been announced on the website. See “Submission to Other Film Festivals” below as an exception.

Submission to Other Film Festivals – Entries submitted must be original work created by the individuals listed on the entry form. Entries can be submitted to other film festivals after the submission deadline.

Contact us if you have any questions about the contest rules!

Entry Process

1. **Identify an adult advisor at your school or organization.** All high school participants must select an adult advisor for their team. The adult advisor is someone who is not on the film submission team. This is required so we can connect your school, club, or organization with free prevention programs and resources, and they also qualify for cash prizes. The adult advisor does not need to have knowledge of or expertise in film making or the subject matter (suicide prevention and mental health).
2. **Submit an Intent to Participate Form** to let us know that you are planning to submit a film. Submitting the form does not obligate you to submit an entry, just as not submitting

the form does not disqualify entries, but it helps us with the planning process. Only one per film team, please!

3. **Sign Release Forms** and provide them to the adult advisor. The advisor must secure a signed release form for every person that worked on the film crew, acted in the film, or whose voice appears in the film. Youth under age 18 also must have the form signed by their parent or legal guardian. Location release forms must also be completed for all locations that appear in the final project.
4. **Create your film!**
5. **Upload your film and entry form to FilmFreeway by the deadline: MIDNIGHT on APRIL 15th.**
6. **Attend the FirstLink Film Festival** and see your work on the big screen!

Safe Messaging Policy

All films have to consider safe messaging guidelines for suicide prevention. Not following these guidelines can cause you to lose valuable points or result in disqualification.

All films have to consider safe messaging guidelines for suicide prevention. (Not following these guidelines can cause you to lose valuable points: 30 out of 100 possible points are related to safe messaging. Key Resources:

- [Messaging Matters: Tips for Safe and Effective Messaging for Suicide Prevention](#)
- [Safe and Effective Messaging for Suicide Prevention](#)

Provide a Suicide Prevention Resource

A key strategy to prevent suicide is to provide information about crisis and support resources. You will be meeting this criteria by including the logo end slate that includes the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline.

Do Not Use Suicide Statistics in Your Film

Do not use statistics and statements that portray suicide or a suicide attempt as something that happens all the time. It may seem compelling to get the audience's attention by using statistics such as "a person dies by suicide every 18 minutes". However, presenting the data in this format might encourage a young person already thinking about ending their life to believe, mistakenly, that suicide is a common and acceptable solution to the problems they are facing. Statistics are a complex factor in creating safe suicide prevention messages, and including statistics about suicide will result in a significantly lower safe messaging score for your film in this contest, so we recommend avoiding them altogether.

Examples of statistics that should be avoided:

- “A person dies by suicide every 18 minutes.”
- “Every 40 seconds someone attempts suicide.”
- “Suicide is the second leading cause of death for young people ages 18-24.”

Remember, this festival is focused on raising awareness of prevention, not just convincing people that suicide is a problem.

Do Not Oversimplify the Causes of Suicide.

Suicide should not be framed as an explanation or understandable response to an individual’s stressful situation (e.g. a result of not getting into college, parent’s divorce, break-up or bullying) or to an individual’s membership in a group encountering discrimination. Oversimplification of suicide in any of these ways can mislead people to believe that it is a normal response to fairly common life circumstances. It is okay to talk about life problems that may increase a person’s risk of suicide such as family issues (divorce, abuse) or social issues (bullying, break ups). And to talk about these life problems as a possible contributing factor to why a young person might be feeling hopeless, drinking more or isolating themselves (which are warning signs for suicide), but the film should not point to just one of these events as the cause of suicide. The truth is that not one of these events causes suicide, usually a person is dealing with multiple tough situations and is showing warning signs.

Use Appropriate Language When Addressing Suicide.

The suicide prevention community is trying to clarify the ways in which people refer to actions related to suicide. The more clear and respectful we can be when speaking about actions related to suicide, the more we will be able to remove misconceptions that prevent people from getting support.

Use	Don't Use
<i>“died by Suicide” or “took their own life”</i>	<i>“committed suicide”</i> <i>Note: Use of the word commit can imply crime/sin</i>
<i>“attempted suicide”</i>	<i>“successful/completed” or “unsuccessful” attempt</i> <i>Note: There is no success, or lack of success, when dealing with suicide</i>

The film SHOULD NOT include portrayals of suicide deaths or attempts (such as a person jumping off a building or bridge, or holding a gun to their head).

Portraying actions related to suicide attempts and showing items someone might use for a suicide attempt even in dramatization, can increase chances of an attempt by someone who might be thinking about suicide and exposed to the film. ALL FILMS WITH DEPICTIONS OF WEAPONS WILL BE DISQUALIFIED.

Important to remember: In general it is best to avoid showing images of ways people might attempt suicide, especially weapons. Also consider that showing images of items/ways people might harm themselves might also be disturbing to those who have lost someone to suicide. Remember, we are focused on prevention and the most important part is educating others about how to help.

The film should be sensitive to racial, ethnic, religious, sexual orientation and gender differences, with all individuals realistically and respectfully depicted.