



Dear Participating School,

Thank you for being a part of the 2016 Walk In Our Shoes school tour! This program marks the third tour that Walk In Our Shoes has brought to schools statewide. We are thrilled to bring this assembly to your campus to help students learn about mental health and empathy.

We understand this is a topic that is not always directly discussed in classrooms, so we have created materials to prepare students and teachers for the assembly. The following resources are available in this packet:

- **About Walk In Our Shoes-** A one-page explanation of the Walk In Our Shoes program and its various components.
- **Walk In Our Shoes FAQ-** Frequently asked questions about the program and its origin.
- **Letter to Teachers-** A letter for faculty to send to teachers whose classes will be attending the performance. This letter gives them background on Walk In Our Shoes and briefly explains the topics they should be prepared to discuss with students following the performance.
- **Introduction to Walk In Our Shoes/Script for Teachers-** This document gives teachers a mini-script to read to students before attending the performance in order to introduce them to the topic of mental health.
- **Sample Letter to Parents (English and Spanish)-** A letter for teachers to send to parents notifying them of the assembly and briefly introducing the topics that they play will cover. This letter is provided in English and Spanish.
- **Sample Newsletter Article (English and Spanish)-** A sample article that can be added to a regularly scheduled newsletter for parents/guardians alerting them to the dates of the performance. This article is provided in English and Spanish language.

These resources, and additional materials available in the “For Grownups” section of the Walk In Our Shoes website (<http://walkinourshoes.org/for-grownups>) are part of what has made this comprehensive program so valuable to students, teachers and parents. This performance has been proven to effectively increase knowledge of mental health among youth exposed to the play. An evaluation showed a significant increase in 5 key knowledge items about mental health following the performance. In addition, participants reported that they would definitely provide emotional support to a friend with a mental health problem. Using the provided resources to prepare teachers and administrators for the Walk In Our Shoes program will increase the effects on students and play a role in their later attitudes towards mental health.

If you have any question about the program, please contact Kate Calderazzo (kcalderazzo@rs-e.com).

Thank you!

WALK IN OUR SHOES

Stigma and fear of discrimination are serious obstacles for people seeking help for mental health challenges. The California Mental Health Services Authority (CalMHSA) is working to reduce stigma associated with mental illnesses

by de-bunking myths and educating 9-13 year olds about mental wellness. The Walk In Our Shoes campaign utilizes real stories from teens and young adults to teach youth about mental health challenges and mental wellness.

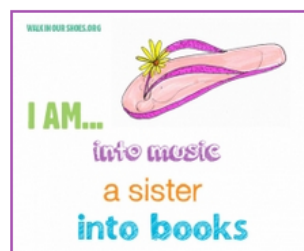
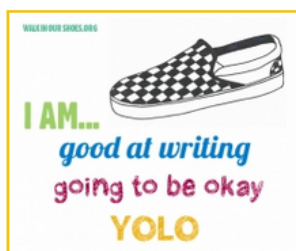
The multifaceted campaign uses positive, authentic and appropriate stories as an educational tool for youth. These stories are told through an interactive website, school-based theatrical performance, and a statewide public education campaign, which are all designed to reduce stigma and promote a resilient and realistic perception of mental health challenges and the real people who experience them.

The campaign directs youth to the interactive website, WalkInOurShoes.org, where visitors can explore and experience true stories of real people who have experienced hope, recovery and resilience in the face of mental health challenges.



The website includes definitions of key terms, a myth and facts page, and an interactive area where visitors can individualize their own shoes. The site contains information for teachers and parents, including suggestions and resources about how to talk to youth about mental health.

The Walk In Our Shoes campaign uses storytelling to convey information and nurture conversations about mental health challenges in an age appropriate manner. These stories and resources are designed to be used as tools by teachers, parents, professionals and youth, in hopes that together we can communicate, cooperate, and cultivate a culture free of mental health stigma.



Frequently Asked Questions

The California Mental Health Services Authority (CalMHSA) is working to reduce stigma and discrimination associated with mental health challenges through a multi-faceted contact strategy campaign, which includes school-based performances. The school-based performances will reach schools as we hit the road bringing the performance to elementary and middle schools statewide. Please reference the answers to some of our most commonly asked questions below.

What is the California Mental Health Services Authority (CalMHSA)?

CalMHSA is a joint powers authority of the California County Behavioral Health Systems that provides and manages prevention and early intervention (PEI) mental health activities within three initiatives: Stigma and Discrimination Reduction, Suicide Prevention and Student Mental Health.

What is the school-based performance about?

The play follows the lives of four high school students and introduces their various experiences with both mental health challenges and stigma. The interaction between each character, whether diagnosed with a mental illness or not, helps to illustrate the harmful effects of stigma and provides children with the knowledge and tools to battle misconceptions about mental illness. The goal of the performance is to fill key gaps in knowledge that can lead to stigmatizing beliefs. Specifically, the performances will cover the following topics:

1. Mental health challenges are common
2. There are different kinds of mental health challenges
3. People with mental health challenges can manage/recover to live normal and successful lives
4. The vast majority of people with mental health challenges are non-violent
5. Young people are encouraged to speak up and ask questions about mental health

How will a play help overcome stigma associated with mental health challenges?

The CalMHSA school-based performance tour is largely modeled after other successful school-based performances that educate and create social change, such as those about smoking cessation and bullying.

What resources do you provide to support children through this sensitive topic?

Because we realize that discussing mental health challenges and real-life situations can be emotionally charged, we are working to ensure that every child's needs are met by working with schools that have received Training Educators Through Recognition and Identification Strategies through the California Department of Education, or equivalent training. In addition, the performance was reviewed and vetted by a team of school counselors, child development experts and cultural experts to ensure that the material is age appropriate and culturally relevant.

How is the school-based performance funded?

CalMHSA's funds for projects such as the school-based performance tour are funded by counties through voter-approved Proposition 63. By breaking down barriers, de-stigmatizing mental health challenges and educating the public about how to access help before they reach a crisis, PEI activities are saving lives and dollars. CalMHSA contractors share in the responsibility of ensuring public resources are in line with the will of the voters who passed Proposition 63 very seriously. Every major campaign component is measured and analyzed, including the school-based performance tour. As with all CalMHSA PEI projects, this work will be independently evaluated through a contract with the RAND Corporation.

How can I learn more about the projects and PEI activities funded through Prop. 63?

Visit www.calmhsa.org to learn more about CalMHSA. Or, visit www.WalkInOurShoes.org (www.PonteEnMisZapatos.org for Spanish) with your child to help facilitate the conversation about mental health challenges.



Sample Letter to Teachers



Dear Educator,

In an effort to reduce stigma associated with mental illness and de-bunk myths, your school has requested that the musical play, Walk In Our Shoes, be presented to your students. Mental health challenges are much more common than often realized. In fact, as an educator, you've probably encountered children who struggle with their own mental wellness.

Walk In Our Shoes provides an opportunity to discuss mental health challenges in an open and honest format. This play is intended for a 9-13 year old audience and utilizes real stories from teens and young adults who have personal experience with mental health challenges. To help prepare for the performance, consider the following activities.

- Review the Schedule of Events to familiarize yourself with the format of the performance.
- Visit www.WalkInOurShoes.org – click on the section titled “For Grown Ups.” NOTE: For the Spanish-language site, please visit www.PonteEnMisZapatos.org
 - Watch the webinars pertaining to the school play and how to incorporate the lessons learned during the performance into the classroom.
 - Review the sample lesson plans, classroom facilitation guide and activities.
- Work directly with the mental health trained faculty member on your campus to address mental health-related questions from students that may arise after the performance.
- Visit www.EachMindMatters.org to learn about California’s Mental Health Movement.

The 35-minute performance will be followed by a 15-minute Q&A in which your students have the opportunity to ask questions about the play and what they might have learned. We understand that mental health can be a sensitive topic and have asked that a mental health trained faculty member be present during the performance to co-facilitate this conversation with the actors.

Please feel free to use the resources provided to create a healthy and safe environment to discuss this important issue.

Thank you,

Walk In Our Shoes Team

Mini-Introduction to “Walk In Our Shoes” Performance & Student Expectations

“Tomorrow we will be going to a performance during this class. The performance will be discussing mental health, also referred to as mental wellness and/or mental illness. Mental health and mental illness are points on a continuum that can affect people in many different ways. Mental health includes emotional balance, engaging in productive activities, having fulfilling relationships, and managing life’s stresses and challenges. This is a serious, important topic that we hope you enjoy learning more about tomorrow.

All the teachers and I expect you to be model students tomorrow during the performance. Please be mature and respectful when listening to the performance by:

- Entering and exiting the cafeteria quietly
- Sitting quietly in your seat before, during and after the performance
- Raising your hand if you wish to speak with a teacher (ex. to go to the bathroom)

Immediately after the performance, there will be a brief question and answer session with the performers. You may raise your hand at this time to ask an appropriate, on-topic question. Please be silent while listening to the questions others ask and the answers that are provided. You might just learn something new!

If you wish to speak with someone about this topic and/or the performance, please go to [enter name of mental health professional/trusted adult] before/after school or lunch. We are all here to support you as you learn about mental health and begin to better understand your own mental wellness.”

Sample Letter to Parents

Dear Parent/Guardian,

We would like to notify you of an exciting performance on mental health and wellness that is coming to our school community. “Walk In Our Shoes” is a musical play that aims to increase knowledge about mental health for 9-13 year olds.

The “Walk In Our Shoes” school-based performances are part of the California Mental Health Services Authority (CalMHSA) campaign to reduce stigma and discrimination associated with mental health challenges. The 35-minute production follows the lives of four high school students and introduces their various experiences with mental health challenges and the negative effects of stigma. The interaction between each character, whether diagnosed with a mental illness or not, helps to illustrate the harmful effects of stigma and provides children with the knowledge and tools to battle misconceptions about mental illness.

After the performance, your child will receive the opportunity to partake in a 15-minute Q&A. School personnel, trained in mental health, will assist in facilitating this conversation.

If you would like to know more information about what your child will be learning, please feel free to contact [insert name of mental health-trained personnel]. Please also visit the campaign website www.walkinourshoes.org where you can find tips and information about how to talk to your child about mental health.

If you do not want your child to receive this instruction you must provide a written note to your child’s teacher.

Sincerely,

Estimado Padre/Guardián,

Nos complace comunicarle que una presentación interesante acerca de la salud mental y el bienestar se llevará a cabo en nuestra comunidad escolar. "Walk In Our Shoes" ("Ponte En Nuestros Zapatos") es una obra de teatro musical en inglés que tiene como objetivo aumentar el conocimiento sobre la salud mental para estudiantes de 9 a 13 años de edad.

Las presentaciones escolares de "Walk In Our Shoes" son parte de la campaña de la Autoridad de Servicios de Salud Mental de California (CalMHSA por sus siglas en inglés) para reducir el estigma y la discriminación asociados con los retos de la salud mental. La obra teatral dura 35 minutos y presenta las vidas de cuatro estudiantes de la escuela preparatoria, detallando sus experiencias con los retos de la salud mental y los efectos negativos del estigma. La interacción entre cada uno de los personajes, hayan sido diagnosticados con una enfermedad mental o no, ayuda a ilustrar los efectos nocivos del estigma y proporciona a los niños conocimientos y herramientas para combatir ideas erróneas acerca de la enfermedad mental.

Después de la presentación, su hijo(a) tendrá la oportunidad de participar en una sesión de Preguntas y Respuestas de 15 minutos. La conversación será dirigida por personal de la escuela entrenados en salud mental.

Si desea más información acerca de lo que su hijo(a) va a estar aprendiendo, por favor comuníquese con [insert name of school mental health specialist]. Visite también la página web de la campaña www.PonteEnMisZapatos.org donde usted puede encontrar consejos e información acerca de cómo hablar con su hijo(a) acerca de la salud mental.

Si usted no desea que su hijo(a) reciba esta instrucción, por favor proporcione una nota por escrito al maestro(a) de su hijo(a).

Atentamente,

Mental Wellness Performance – Coming Soon!

Coming soon to {INSERT SCHOOL NAME} is Walk in Our Shoes! Walk in Our Shoes is a school-based performance that teaches children about mental health and wellness.

The California Mental Health Services Authority (CalMHSA) is working to reduce stigma and discrimination associated with mental health challenges through a multi-faceted contact strategy campaign, which includes school-based performances. The school-based performances will reach elementary and middle schools this spring.

The 35-minute play follows the lives of four high school students and introduces their various experiences with both mental health challenges and stigma. The interaction between each character, whether diagnosed with a mental illness or not, helps to illustrate the harmful effects of stigma and provides children with the knowledge and tools to battle misconceptions about mental illness. The goal of the performance is to fill key gaps in knowledge (which can lead to stigmatizing beliefs) that were identified in a benchmark survey of more than 600 middle school aged students. Following the play, the children will participate in a 15-minute facilitated discussion about mental wellness.

In addition to the school-based performance, CalMHSA is also reaching children through the website, WalkInOurShoes.com. This interactive website features real stories about mental wellness from high school aged youth and young adults. The website covers topics such as myth-busting facts and provides resources for parents and teachers to discuss mental wellness with children.

The website and school-based performance repeat the idea of walking in someone else's shoes – literally asking children to think about life's situations from another person's point of view before making a judgment. Visit www.WalkInOurShoes.org (www.PonteEnMisZapatos for Spanish) for information about the Walk In Our Shoes school-based performance tour and tips and resources on how to talk to your children about mental health.

¡Próximamente en la escuela de su hijo(a): una obra teatral acerca del bienestar mental!

Próximamente en **{INSERT SCHOOL NAME}** se presentará *Walk in Our Shoes* (Ponte En Mis Zapatos), una obra de teatro escolar en inglés que enseña a los niños temas acerca de la salud mental y el bienestar estudiantil.

La Autoridad de Servicios de Salud Mental de California (CalMHSA por sus siglas en inglés) está realizando un esfuerzo por reducir el estigma y la discriminación asociados con los retos de salud mental por medio de una campaña multifacética que incluye presentaciones escolares. Las presentaciones escolares se llevarán a cabo en primarias y secundarias durante este primavera.

La obra teatral dura 35 minutos y presenta las vidas de cuatro estudiantes de la escuela preparatoria, detallando sus experiencias con los retos de la salud mental y el estigma. La interacción entre cada uno de los personajes, hayan sido diagnosticados con una enfermedad mental o no, ayuda a ilustrar los efectos nocivos del estigma y proporciona a los niños conocimientos y herramientas para combatir ideas erróneas acerca de la enfermedad mental. El objetivo de la presentación es superar la falta de conocimientos acerca de la salud mental - los cuales pueden provocar creencias que estigmatizan - y que fueron identificados en una encuesta de más de 600 niños de edad escolar. Después de la presentación, su hijo(a) participará en una discusión dirigida de 15 minutos sobre la salud mental.

Además de la presentación escolar, CalMHSA tiene la página web, www.PonteEnMisZapatos.org (www.WalkInOurShoes.com en inglés) desarrollada con niños en mente. Este sitio web interactivo presenta historias reales de salud mental por parte de estudiantes de la escuela preparatoria y de la juventud. El sitio web incluye datos que corrigen creencias erróneas y proporciona recursos para que los padres y maestros puedan hablar con los niños acerca del bienestar mental.

El sitio web y la presentación escolar muestran cómo se siente estar en el lugar de otra persona - invitando al niño a que piense, antes de juzgar, en situaciones de la vida real con la perspectiva de otra persona. Visite www.PonteEnMisZapatos.org (www.WalkInOurShoes.com en inglés) para más información acerca de la gira escolar de *Walk in Our Shoes* y para consejos y recursos de cómo hablar con sus hijos acerca de la salud mental.