

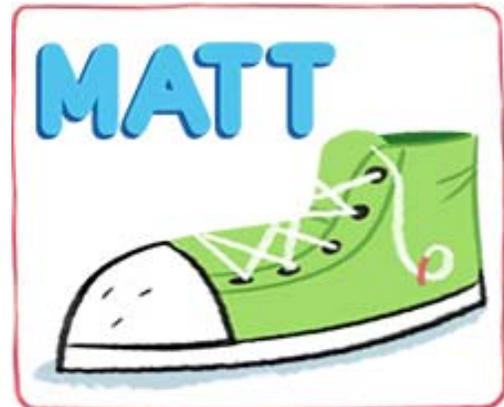
WALK IN OUR SHOES

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.

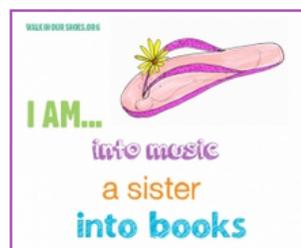
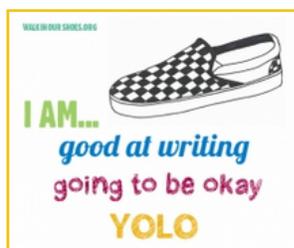
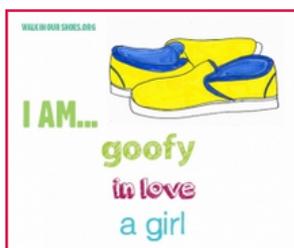
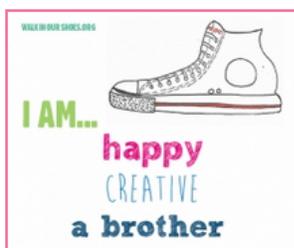
The multifaceted campaign uses positive, authentic and appropriate stories as an educational tool for youth. These stories are told through an interactive website, school-based theatrical performance, and a statewide public education campaign, which are all designed to reduce stigma and promote a resilient 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 this fall 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 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.calmhisa.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.

