

[TO BE PLACED ON SCHOOL / DISTRICT LETTERHEAD]

Red text = fill in or delete before sending. Delete this instruction line and the two notes below once the letter is complete.

[Date]

[Funder / Foundation Name]

[Attn: Program Officer]

[Street Address]

[City, State ZIP]

RE: District-Wide Grant Request — Ryan’s Story Bullying, Cyberbullying, and Suicide Prevention Program

Amount Requested: \$[] | Students Served: []

Dear [Mr./Ms. Last Name],

On behalf of the [DISTRICT NAME], I am writing to request a grant of \$[] to bring **Ryan’s Story**, presented by award-winning speaker and author John Halligan, to [] schools in our district — reaching [] students in grades [5–12] — along with a district-wide evening program for parents and guardians, during the week of [DATE].

We are requesting this at the district level rather than school by school for a practical reason: **scheduling multiple schools into a single travel day cuts the cost per school by roughly a third or more.** A grant to the district therefore reaches substantially more students per dollar than the same grant to any one building.

ABOUT OUR DISTRICT

[INSERT DISTRICT PROFILE. Include: number of schools and grade spans; total enrollment; the communities you serve; percentage of students qualifying for free or reduced-price meals; and your district’s strategic-plan or board goals relating to student wellness, school climate, or mental health. Name the specific schools that will participate.]

[List participating schools and enrollment, e.g.: • [Middle School] — [] students, grades 6–8 • [High School] — [] students, grades 9–12]

THE NEED

Bullying and cyberbullying remain among the most persistent threats to student safety and mental health in American schools, and the most recent national data show the problem moving in the wrong direction. **In 2023, 19% of U.S. high school students reported being bullied on school property and 16% reported being bullied electronically** — an increase from 15% in 2021, reversing nearly a decade of decline.¹ Nationally, the U.S. Department of Education reports that **19% of students ages 12–18 were bullied at school** during the 2021–22 school year, and among those students, 22% said the bullying also occurred online or by text.²

These experiences do not stay on the playground. Bullying victimization is consistently associated with anxiety, depression, substance use, absenteeism, lower academic achievement, and suicidal ideation that can persist well into adulthood.³ The broader youth mental-health picture underscores the urgency: in 2023, **40% of high school students**

reported persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness, 20% seriously considered attempting suicide, 16% made a suicide plan, and 9% attempted suicide.¹

Locally, [INSERT LOCAL DATA — this is the single most persuasive paragraph in the letter. Use your own numbers: district or county Youth Risk Behavior Survey results, school climate survey scores, counts of bullying/harassment reports (DASA, HIB, Title IX) filed last year, discipline referrals, counselor caseload growth, chronic absenteeism, or a recent incident that prompted this request. Two or three specific local figures will do more than a page of national statistics.]

ABOUT THE SPEAKER: JOHN HALLIGAN

John Halligan lost his thirteen-year-old son, Ryan Patrick Halligan, a middle school student in Essex Junction, Vermont, to suicide on October 7, 2003. In the months that followed, it became clear that Ryan had been ridiculed and humiliated by peers both at school and online. Rather than withdraw, Mr. Halligan turned his family's loss into two decades of prevention work.

- **Legislative impact.** He advocated for Vermont Act 117, the state's first bullying prevention law, signed May 18, 2004 — seven months after Ryan's death. He then wrote Vermont Act 114, which requires suicide prevention education in public schools, passed in April 2006.
- **Reach.** Since his first presentation in May 2005, Mr. Halligan has delivered Ryan's Story to more than 2,500 schools and over one million students across the United States, Canada, and Mexico.
- **National platform.** He has been featured on ABC's Primetime with Diane Sawyer, PBS Frontline, The Oprah Winfrey Show, and TLC, and spoke at the United Nations Cyberhate Seminar in 2009.
- **Honors.** IBM Community Service Award (2005); Kids Safe Collaborative Community Service Award (2008); United Way Home Town Hero Award (2008); Child Abuse Prevention Services Community Award (2009); FBI Director's Community Service Award (2009); The Learning Channel Give A Little Award (2017).
- **Author.** He is the author of Ryan's Story: A Father's Hard-Earned Lessons About Cyberbullying and Suicide (for parents and educators) and Ryan's Story: Loved Beyond Belief (for students). Both were released in updated second editions in 2026 addressing sextortion, AI companion apps, and digital responsibility.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Student Assembly — 60 minutes, grades 5–12. Approximately 45 minutes of first-person narration by Mr. Halligan, followed by guided discussion. Students hear how ordinary, everyday cruelty escalated, how it followed Ryan home through his screen, and how quickly a young person can conclude there is no way out. The presentation is delivered without slides of graphic content and without dwelling on method. Its emphasis is forward-looking: recognizing the warning signs of depression in a friend, understanding that telling a trusted adult about a suicidal peer is an act of care rather than betrayal, moving from bystander to upstander, and knowing how to apologize and repair harm already done.

Parent and Guardian Evening — 60 minutes. A companion program for families covering social media and screen time, the current cyberbullying landscape, sextortion, AI companion apps, warning signs of adolescent depression, and concrete steps parents can take at home. This content is revised annually to reflect the platforms and risks students are actually encountering.

Core focus. Reaching hearts. Changing minds. Reducing bullying. Preventing suicides.

The program complements our existing social-emotional learning, character education, and school climate work by giving students a shared reference point — a single hour that faculty and counselors can return to throughout the year.

Program details and materials are available at www.ryanpatrickhalligan.org.

SAFE MESSAGING AND BEST-PRACTICE ALIGNMENT

Because this program addresses suicide directly, we want to be explicit about how it is delivered safely. Ryan’s Story is structured to align with the safe-messaging guidance of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the National Association of School Psychologists:

- No graphic content, no description of method, and no romanticizing or sensationalizing of suicide.
- Emphasis on hope, connection, help-seeking, and healthy coping rather than on crisis itself.
- School counselors and mental health staff are present in the room during every assembly, with a plan in place for any student who needs support during or immediately after the program.
- Students receive age-appropriate preparation materials before the assembly; families are notified in advance using a template letter and may opt their student out.
- The 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline and local support resources are shared with students and families as part of the program and follow-up materials.
- A certificate of general liability insurance naming our district as certificate holder is available on request.

[Optional — delete if not applicable: This program also supports our compliance with [INSERT STATE LAW, e.g., New York’s Dignity for All Students Act, New Jersey’s Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act, Pennsylvania Act 71 suicide prevention education, or your state’s suicide prevention instruction mandate].

WHAT EDUCATORS, PARENTS, AND STUDENTS SAY

“Honestly, your program is positively the best presentation for students that I have ever heard.”

— Teacher

“Thank you for dedicating your life to saving our kids’ lives. I have no doubt you are preventing many kids from hurting themselves and others.”

— Parent

“Ryan’s Story 100% changed my life. I was bullied... Now, 14 years later, having my own children, I understand that pure deep love that we have for our children. Thank you for sharing Ryan with all of us. I will never forget.”

— Former student, now a parent

Strongly recommended: replace one of these with a quote from a nearby school that has hosted the program, or from your own principal, counselor, or PTA president. Local voices carry more weight with local funders. A list of schools visited is available at ryanpatrickhalligan.org.

PROGRAM OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION PLAN

Every student, teacher, and administrator will take part in the assembly, and all families will be strongly encouraged to attend the evening program. We will evaluate the investment using measures already available to us, so that reporting adds no cost to the grant:

Intended Outcome	Indicator	How We Will Measure It	When
Increased awareness of bullying, cyberbullying, and depression warning signs	% of students who can identify at least three warning signs and one trusted adult	Brief pre- and post-assembly student survey (5 questions, administered in advisory/homeroom)	Pre: 1 week before; Post: within 2 weeks

Intended Outcome	Indicator	How We Will Measure It	When
Increased help-seeking	Number of student self-referrals and peer referrals to counseling staff	Counseling office referral log, compared with the same period in the prior year	30, 60, and 90 days
Shift from bystander to upstander	% of students reporting they intervened, reported, or supported a targeted peer	Post-assembly survey item and 90-day follow-up item	2 weeks and 90 days
Reduced incidents; improved reporting	Count of bullying/harassment reports filed and related discipline referrals	Student information system data, year-over-year comparison for the same months	End of semester and end of year
Parent and guardian engagement	Evening program attendance; % of attendees reporting a new family conversation	Sign-in count and one-page exit survey; family discussion guide distributed to all families	Night of program; 30-day follow-up
Improved school climate	School climate survey scores on respect, safety, and belonging items	Existing annual school climate survey, compared with prior administration	Annual

Reporting. We will provide **[the funder]** with a written summary of these results, including survey data and year-over-year incident comparisons, within **[90 days / one semester]** of the presentation.

SUSTAINABILITY AND DISTRICT-WIDE CONTINUATION

Because this is a district request, the follow-through can be coordinated rather than left to individual buildings:

- A common pre- and post-assembly lesson plan delivered in advisory or health classes across all participating schools in the same window.
- Upstander Challenge posters (English and Spanish) displayed district-wide for the remainder of the year.
- One family notification letter, follow-up letter, and discussion guide sent to every household in the district.
- Shared counselor debrief across buildings to compare what students raised and where support is needed.
- Integration of the program's core content into the district health curriculum scope and sequence, so the material is reinforced annually rather than delivered once.
- A **[two- to three-year]** rotation so that every student in the district encounters the program at least once — typically once in middle school and once in high school.

PROJECT BUDGET

All normal travel expenses — airfare, hotel, rental car, mileage, meals, and parking — are included in the fees below. There is no deposit and no cancellation fee; payment is due within 30 days after the presentation.

Published fee schedule (Ryan’s Story Presentation LLC):

Configuration	Primary Region (NY, NJ, PA, CT, RI, MA, VT, NH)	All Other States
One school, one assembly	\$2,000	\$3,000
Two schools sharing one day	\$3,000 total (\$1,500 each)	\$4,000 total (\$2,000 each)
Three schools sharing one day	\$4,000 total (~\$1,333 each)	\$5,000 total (~\$1,667 each)
Additional same-day assembly at one school	\$1,000	\$1,000
Parent/guardian evening (added to the day)	\$1,000	\$1,500

Our district’s request:

Line Item	Detail	Cost
Shared-day student assemblies	[] schools, [] total students, grades [5–12]. All travel included.	\$[]
District-wide parent/guardian evening	One evening program hosted at [SCHOOL], open to families across all participating schools.	\$[]
Second day of programming	[Only if the district requires more than three schools. Delete if not applicable.]	\$[]
Materials and printing	Lesson plans, Upstander Challenge posters (English and Spanish), family letters and discussion guides for all households.	In-kind — \$[]
Facilities, staffing, A/V	Auditorium use, custodial and security coverage, transportation between buildings, counseling staff coverage.	In-kind — \$[]
TOTAL GRANT REQUESTED	Cash request to [FUNDER].	\$[]

Cost per student. Serving [] students at a total cost of \$[] works out to approximately \$[] per student. **[State this plainly — for most districts it lands between one and three dollars per child, which is a compelling number for a reviewer.]**

IN CLOSING

Our district serves [] young people, and the national data tell us that roughly one in five of them is being bullied and two in five are carrying persistent sadness or hopelessness. This request funds a single coordinated day

that reaches all of them at once, backed by a year of classroom follow-through and a measurement plan we will report back to you. Thank you for considering it.

Please contact me at **[phone]** or **[email]** with any questions.

Sincerely,

[Name]

[Title — e.g., Superintendent of Schools]

[District Name]

ENCLOSURES

- About John Halligan — speaker biography and program overview
 - List of participating schools with enrollment figures
 - Ryan’s Story student assembly overview for parents and administrators
 - Sample pre- and post-assembly lesson plan
 - District W-9 and tax identification information
 - Certificate of general liability insurance (available on request)
 - [Optional] Board of Education resolution or letter of support; letters from building principals
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1 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Youth Risk Behavior Survey Data Summary & Trends Report, 2013–2023. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2024.

2 National Center for Education Statistics. Student Bullying, Condition of Education. U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences. Data for school year 2021–22.

3 Raymond A, Grant S, Tawk R. School Bullying and Health Risk Behavior Outcomes among Adolescents in Florida. Fla Public Health Rev. 2023;20:2. PMID: 36877508; PMCID: PMC9979265.