

[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: Grant Request — Ryan’s Story Bullying, Cyberbullying, and Suicide Prevention Program

Amount Requested: \$[_____]

Dear [Mr./Ms. Last Name],

On behalf of [SCHOOL NAME], I am writing to request a grant of \$[_____] to bring **Ryan’s Story**, presented by award-winning speaker and author John Halligan, to our [_____] students in grades [5–12], together with a companion evening program for parents and guardians, on [DATE]. Since 2005, Mr. Halligan has delivered this program to more than 2,500 schools and over one million students across the United States, Canada, and Mexico. We are asking for your help to bring it to [CITY/TOWN].

ABOUT OUR SCHOOL

[INSERT INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR SCHOOL. Include: total enrollment and grade span; the community you serve; percentage of students qualifying for free or reduced-price meals or other indicators of need; how long the school has served this community; your mission statement in one line; and any existing anti-bullying, SEL, character education, or mental health programming this presentation would build on. Funders give to institutions they can picture — two strong paragraphs.]

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 CONTINUED IMPACT

A one-hour assembly on its own is an event. We intend to make this the anchor of a year-long effort, using the full set of no-cost materials that accompany the program:

- Pre- and post-assembly lesson plans and classroom discussion guides, used in advisory, health, and English classes in the weeks before and after the presentation.
- Upstander Challenge posters (available in English and Spanish) displayed throughout the building for the remainder of the year.
- Family notification letter, post-assembly follow-up letter, and a family discussion guide sent to every household.
- Counselor resources and referral information integrated into our existing student support protocols.
- Copies of **Ryan's Story: Loved Beyond Belief** added to our library and **Ryan's Story: A Father's Hard-Earned Lessons About Cyberbullying and Suicide** made available to faculty and parents.
- Integration of the program's core content into our health curriculum, so the material is reinforced rather than isolated.

We intend to repeat this program on a [two- to three-year] cycle so that every student encounters it at least once during their time with us, funding permitting.

PROJECT BUDGET

Ryan's Story Presentation LLC publishes its fee schedule openly, and 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, and payment is due within 30 days after the presentation.

Line Item	Description	Cost
Student assembly	Ryan's Story, 60 minutes, for [] students in grades [5–12]. Inclusive of all travel: airfare, lodging, ground transportation, and meals.	\$2,000
Second same-day assembly	Only if a second session is needed for auditorium capacity or grade-band scheduling. Delete this line if one session is sufficient.	\$1,000
Parent/guardian evening	60-minute evening program for families and community members, added to the student assembly day.	\$1,000
Printing and materials	Pre- and post-assembly lesson materials, Upstander Challenge posters, family letters and discussion guides.	In-kind — \$[]
Facility, staffing, A/V	Auditorium, custodial and security coverage, sound and projection, counseling staff coverage for the evening program.	In-kind — \$[]
TOTAL GRANT REQUESTED	Cash request to [FUNDER]; in-kind items above are absorbed by the school.	\$[]

Fee tier shown: primary market region (NY, NJ, PA, CT, RI, MA, VT, NH). If your school is outside these states, change the assembly line to \$3,000 and the parent evening line to \$1,500.

Cost efficiency. Neighboring schools or districts can share a single travel day, which substantially lowers the per-school cost. In the primary market region, two schools sharing a day pay \$3,000 total (\$1,500 each) and three schools pay \$4,000 total (about \$1,333 each); outside that region, two schools pay \$4,000 total and three pay \$5,000 total. **[If you are coordinating with a neighboring district, say so here — funders reward shared-cost regional approaches.]**

Cost per student. At [] students, the total cost of the assembly works out to approximately \$[] per student — **[a figure worth stating plainly; it is typically a few dollars per child].**

IN CLOSING

We cannot know which student in our auditorium is the one who most needs to hear that someone survived this, that it gets better, and that telling an adult is an act of love rather than betrayal. What we do know is that for more than twenty years, students have told John Halligan — sometimes ten and fifteen years later — that his hour with them changed the course of their lives. **[SCHOOL NAME]** is asking for **\$[]** to give our students that hour.

Thank you for considering this request. I would welcome the chance to discuss it further, and I am glad to provide any additional documentation your review requires. Please contact me at **[phone]** or **[email]**.

Sincerely,

[Name]

[Title]

[School Name]

ENCLOSURES

- About John Halligan — speaker biography and program overview
 - Ryan’s Story student assembly overview for parents and administrators
 - Sample pre- and post-assembly lesson plan
 - [If a private school: IRS determination letter. If a public school: W-9 and district tax identification information.]
 - Certificate of general liability insurance (available on request)
 - [Optional] Letters of support from our school counselor, PTA/PTO, or a neighboring school that has hosted the program
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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.