



HEAR THEIR VOICES:

What Girls* & Gender-Expansive Youth Need in South and Southeast LA

October 2023

***“Girls and gender-expansive youth” refers to cis girls, trans girls, non-binary youth, gender non-conforming youth, gender queer youth and any girl-identified youth.**

In January 2023, Alliance for Girls (AFG) partnered with the Center for Nonprofit Management Southern California (CNM) to study the current landscape of programs, services, and resources available to girls and gender-expansive youth in South and Southeast Los Angeles, with a specific focus on Service Planning Areas (SPAs) 6 and 7. Through a mixed methods research design that included a desk review of 97 girl and/or gender-expansive youth-serving organizations, 12 interviews, focus groups with 11 girls, and 83 completed surveys with youth and organizational leaders, this study reviewed not just what programming is currently available in their communities, but also the accessibility of these services and how these services align with the needs of girls and gender-expansive youth as they themselves define them. This study resulted in CNM and AFG creating a community asset report and an accompanying heat map of the 97 community-based organizations and their services that support girls and/or GEY in SPAs 6 and 7. The report is not comprehensive as it was specifically conducted in SPAs 6 and 7. The following brief was created to highlight the data from the full report. To read the full report and view the Geographical Information System (GIS) heat map, visit the AFG website:

www.alliance4girls.org/research.

ALLIANCE FOR GIRLS (AFG) IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY

AFG is the country’s largest regional alliance of girl and gender-expansive youth-serving organizations of more than 130 organizations that collectively reach 300,000 girls and gender-expansive youth across Bay Area counties and Los Angeles (LA). Using girl-centered research, intergenerational leadership development, and collective advocacy, AFG works with its network to advance gender and racial equity to ensure all girls and gender-expansive youth can thrive.

In 2017, the Los Angeles County Women and Girls Initiative (WGI) and several local girl-serving organizations reached out, asking AFG to bring its collaborative model to the region. From the exploratory conversations AFG had with these organizations, it was clear they needed to start by listening to girls and gender-expansive youth and then uplift what these youth say they need to thrive.



Having to deal with being a girl of color - it's hard enough being a girl, but being a girl of color on top of that, you have to deal with all these people hating on you, having to look perfect, make sure you don't get in trouble with the police because they misunderstand everything. People don't know what you're going through.



- Girl from Inglewood

from AFG's Girl, You Can Do Anything report

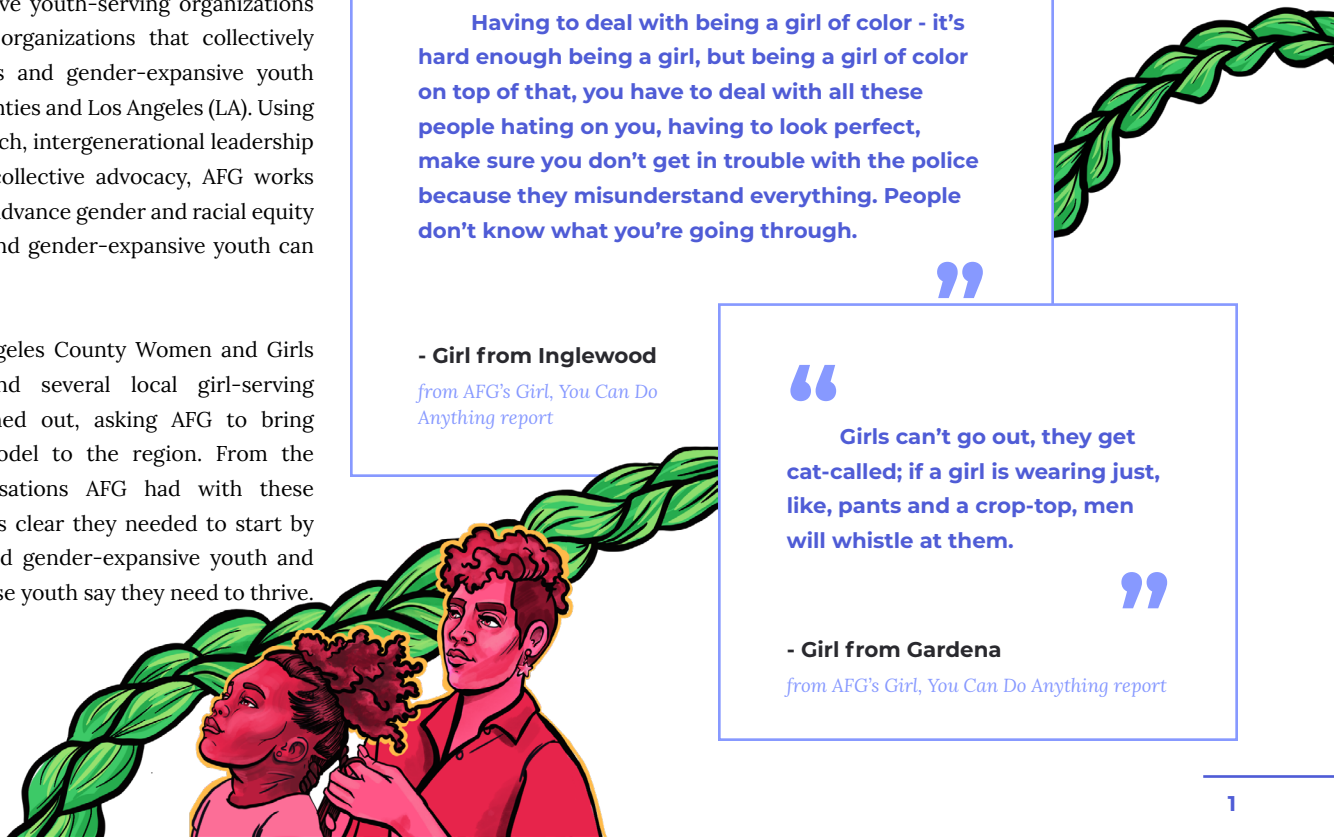


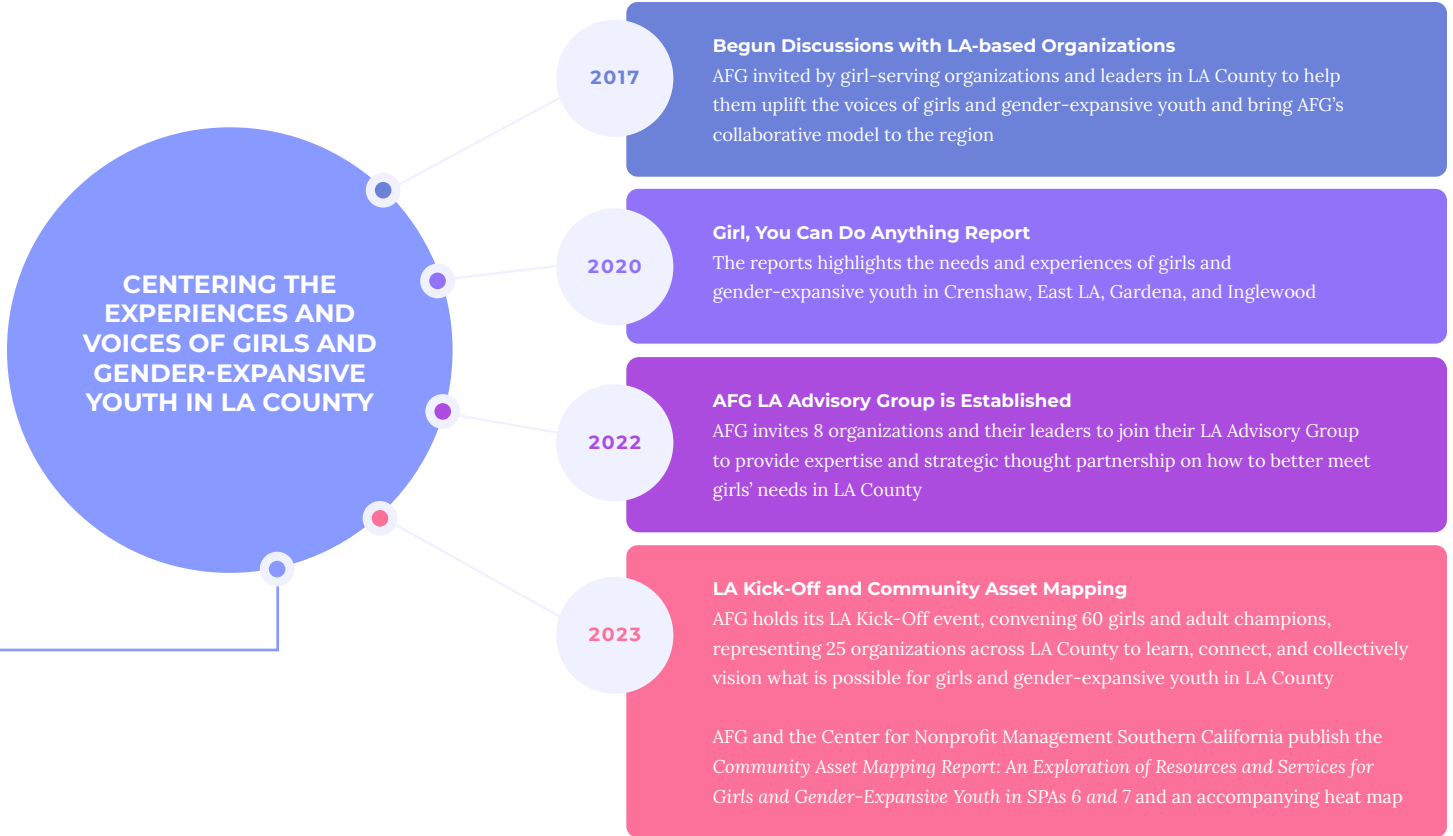
Girls can't go out, they get cat-called; if a girl is wearing just, like, pants and a crop-top, men will whistle at them.



- Girl from Gardena

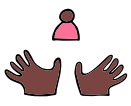
from AFG's Girl, You Can Do Anything report






SNAPSHOT OF SPAs 6 AND 7: SOUTH AND SOUTHEAST LOS ANGELES DEMOGRAPHICS AND LANDSCAPE


According to our *Girl, You Can Do Anything report* (August 2020), there are over [400,000 girls and young women between the ages of 11-17](#) living in Los Angeles County. Due to the high need for supportive services in South and Southeast Los Angeles and the limited data available regarding the needs of girls and gender-expansive youth in these communities, AFG and its collaborators narrowed the scope of their study to SPAs 6 and 7.




POPULATION




50% are female



of those **22%** fall between the ages of 10-24 years old




RACIAL BACKGROUND*



72% of the total population for both SPAs are Latino/a/x or Hispanic

12% of the total population for both SPAs are African American/Black**

**African American/Black people makeup 22% of the SPA 6 population versus 3% in SPA 7



EDUCATION ACCESS*

374 middle and high schools

8 community colleges

6 4-year colleges

*Data sources are available in full report

Despite [female-identified folks being over 50% of the LA County population](#) – our [Community Asset Heat Map](#) is one of the few maps of programs, services and resources available for youth in LA County that we know of that is gender-specific. Throughout our research girls and gender-expansive youth, especially those of color in LA County, told us what they need to thrive and it is our responsibility to listen.

WHAT GIRLS AND GENDER-EXPANSIVE YOUTH ARE CURRENTLY EXPERIENCING IN SPAs 6 AND 7

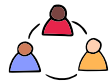
Bringing together all the research, data and information AFG has already collected in LA County, through our [Girl, You Can Do Anything report](#), LA Advisory Group meetings, the [LA Kick-Off](#), and the LA Community Asset Mapping report and [heat map](#), we learned what girls are currently experiencing, what programs, services and resources are currently available to them in their communities, and what they need in order to thrive.

Girls and gender-expansive youth highlighted the positive factors that support them in their communities, and the barriers that impact them.

We found that girls and gender-expansive youth of color have powerful connections and relationships with other youth and their family, friends, community and often teachers and adults from community-based organizations. Girls overwhelmingly reported that they rely on two groups for support: their mothers and their friends. Girls defined “receiving support” as having people in their life who show up, listen, and provide encouragement and comfort; the people in girls’ lives who do this for them form their support system. The support they receive is primarily moral and motivational but sometimes girls receive physical support as well. Girls mentioned mothers as a source of support at the same rate as they mentioned friends.

In addition, what is outlined below aligns with what girls and gender-expansive youth who participated in the Community Asset Heat Map study shared. In their responses to the survey and in the focus group discussion, they reported that they rely on peers, family, and other caring adults to connect them to programs and services. This was also reinforced by the fact that respondents noted they heard about the survey through friends.

Although girls and gender-expansive youth find support in their communities, they also experience strict gender norms and chronic gender-based violence, resulting in a lack of safety, reduced sense of agency, and scarcity of opportunities within their communities in South and Southeast LA.



COMMUNITY



SCHOOL



HOME



RELATIONSHIPS

WAYS THAT GIRLS FIND SUPPORT



Girls engage positively through teams, clubs, resource centers, or houses of worship.

Girls find support at school, mostly through friends and sometimes in counselors.

Girls say their mothers are their main supports, primarily emotional, but sometimes also as physical supports.

Girls feel encouraged by their friends during tough times.

CHALLENGES GIRLS FACE



Girls experience gender-based violence in their community and fear for their safety.

Girls face academic pressure and the stress of managing workloads, test preparation, and family expectations.

Girls feel fathers’ lack of support or presence coupled with fathers’ rigid gender expectations, like caring for younger siblings, block educational and career opportunities.

Girls feel they must live up to body images, intelligence, and physical expectations that others put on them.

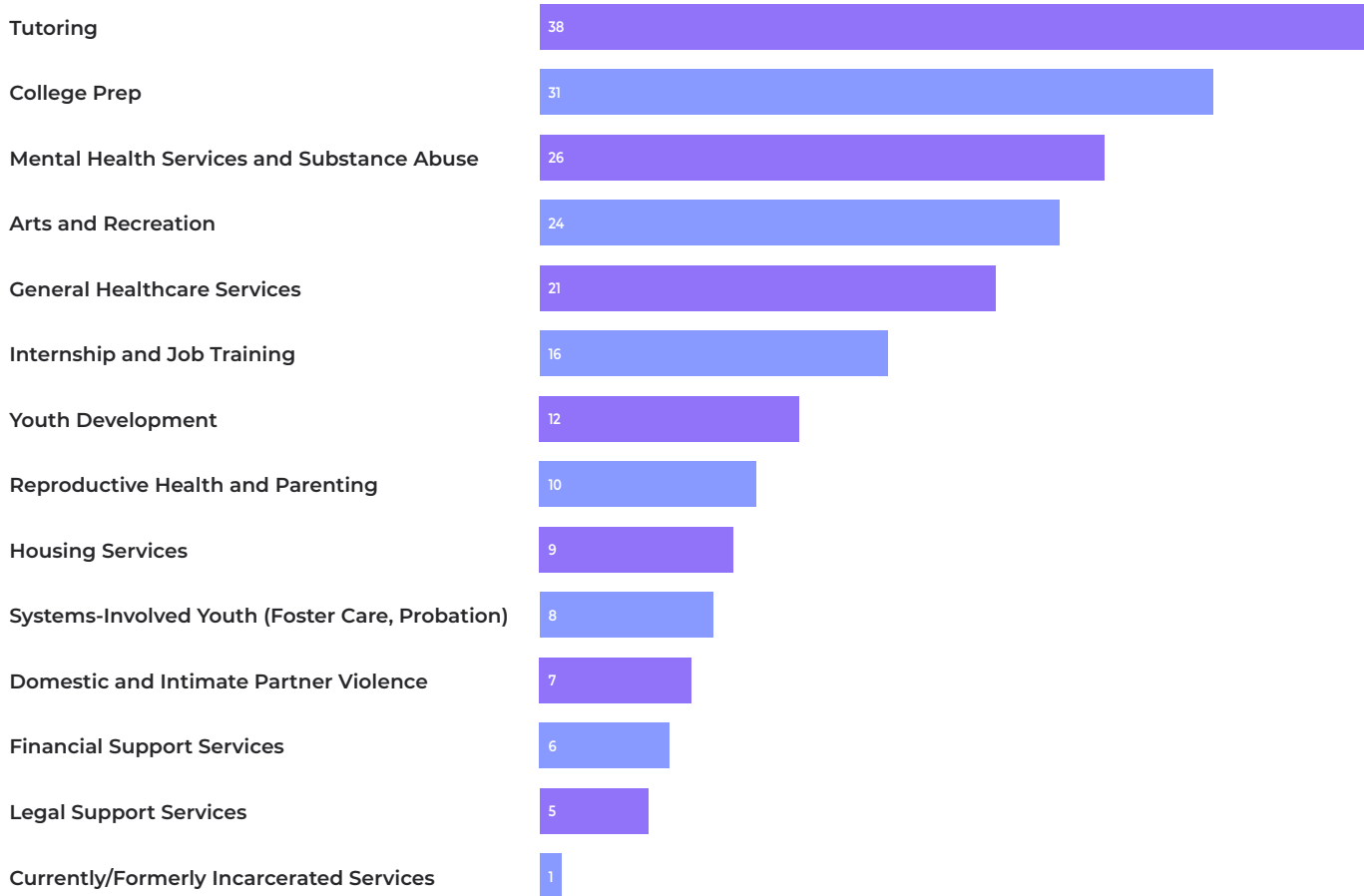
* This chart is adapted from the [Girl, You Can Do Anything report](#). To learn more, [view the report](#).

WHAT SERVICES AND RESOURCES ARE CURRENTLY AVAILABLE TO GIRLS AND GENDER-EXPANSIVE YOUTH IN SPAs 6 AND 7

Throughout the Community Asset Mapping research, it became clear that although South and Southeast LA has a number of powerful programs and organizations working on issues that impact youth – girls and gender-expansive youth are rarely centered in this work.

TYPE OF SERVICES

NUMBER OF ORGANIZATIONS



**The organizations reviewed often provide more than one type of service. The numbers above demonstrate the types of services provided by the 97 organizations reviewed.*

As outlined in the chart above, most of the services available in SPAs 6 and 7 that girls and gender-expansive youth can access focus primarily on tutoring, college prep, and mental health services/substance abuse.

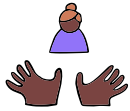
THERE ARE LIMITED PROGRAMS AND SERVICES CENTERING THE EXPERIENCES OF GIRLS AND GENDER-EXPANSIVE YOUTH IN SPAs 6 AND 7

Girls and gender-expansive youth have unique needs that differ from their male peers. Without programming that directly and explicitly focuses on girls and gender-expansive youth, especially those of color, these unique needs are often not met.

Of the 97 organizations included in the [heat map](#), only 17 of them explicitly focus on girls as their target population, with only *one* organization of the 17 inclusive of gender-expansive youth. Programs and services for girls and gender-expansive youth tend to be concentrated in SPA 6, specifically in the Crenshaw neighborhood, while the southeastern areas of SPA 7 tend to have limited programming and organizations catering to girls' needs.

One of the most glaring pieces of data from the research is the lack of programming and organizations that explicitly serve LGBTQIA+ youth. Despite the growing anti-transgender and anti-LGBTQIA+ rhetoric and policy emerging across the country, less than 1% of all organizations reviewed explicitly serve LGBTQIA+ youth. Only one of these organizations is based in SPA 7, leaving Southeast LA with limited to no programs and services explicitly for their gender-nonconforming youth.

Furthermore, there are some gaps between what programs and services are available and what girls and gender-expansive youth themselves say they need. Gaps in the current girl and gender-expansive youth serving landscape in SPAs 6 and 7:



There are few organizations that prioritize girls as their primary population.



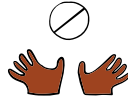
Only 17 of the 97 organizations explicitly focus on girls as their primary population.



There is limited programming explicitly for gender-expansive youth.



7 of the 97 organizations explicitly provide services to LGBTQIA+ youth.



Gender-based violence prevention and intervention programming is lacking.



7 of the 97 organizations focus on domestic and intimate partner violence.



Systems-impacted girls and gender-expansive youth including those in foster care and on probation are not being centered.



9 of the 97 organizations explicitly provide programming to systems-involved youth.



More culturally and ethnically relevant programming is needed.



20 of the 97 organizations provided services in Spanish or other languages.

GIRLS AND GENDER-EXPANSIVE YOUTH'S ACCESS TO PROGRAMS, SERVICES, AND RESOURCES IN SPAs 6 AND 7

When asked how girls and gender-expansive youth access programs, services, and resources they noted that school-based programs such as tutoring, counseling, life skills, college prep, sports, and arts are available to them. Many community-based organizations and nonprofits partner with schools to provide these programs to ensure they are easily accessible.

Despite this, only 30% of girls surveyed indicated that they currently participate in a community-based program. Furthermore, of the 30% who are in these programs, 35% indicated struggling with accessing this programming.

OF THE 35% OF GIRLS AND GENDER-EXPANSIVE YOUTH WHO SELF-REPORT STRUGGLING TO ACCESSING SERVICES IN THESE TWO SPAs, ALMOST 90% INDICATED TRANSPORTATION WAS THE BIGGEST BARRIER TO ACCESSING PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

CHALLENGES GIRLS FACE



Less accessibility to public transportation and stops in some areas of SPAs 6 and 7



High cost of public transportation + gas



High cost of services



HOW IT IMPACTS GIRLS AND GENDER-EXPANSIVE YOUTH



Have to travel further to access the program and services they need



Are not able to access the programs and services they need

As exhibited on the [heat map](#), SPA 6 benefits from more public transportation access and stops than in SPA 7. In SPA 7, public transit stops are concentrated in the western neighborhoods, leaving the eastern and northern areas without much access to public transportation. This may result in girls and gender-expansive youth in some areas of SPA 7 having to travel further than their SPA 6 counterparts to access certain programs, services and resources.

WHAT GIRLS AND GENDER-EXPANSIVE YOUTH NEED IN ORDER TO THRIVE

Throughout AFG’s research, girls and gender-expansive youth highlighted that they want to be able to input on the development and implementation of programs and services that purport to target their needs. During our May 2023 LA Kick-Off Event, girls and gender-expansive youth were joined by adult champions in brainstorming what girls and gender-expansive youth in LA County need to thrive on an individual, organizational, community, and public policy level. What we heard aligns with our [Girl, You Can Do Anything](#) report and with the LA Community Asset Mapping report including:



Image that artist Kathy Liang created for AFG based on the key takeaways from our Collective Visioning exercise on May 23, 2023.

HOW TO USE THIS DATA

AFG's LA Community Asset Mapping report and heat map show that girls and gender-expansive youth currently have limited programming and services that center their needs in SPAs 6 and 7. We hope organizations that serve girls and gender-expansive can use this research and data for fundraising purposes and to band together to demand better investment in girl and gender-expansive youth programs and services in their communities.

WHAT'S NEXT

2024

AFG will work closely with its LA Advisory group, the girls and gender-expansive youth that participated in our research, and the larger LA girl-serving community to develop key data-driven and girl and gender-expansive youth centered policy recommendations that begin to address these gaps in SPAs 6 and 7 and Los Angeles County

1. Strategic partnerships and advocacy action plan development

- 🏡 Co-create key policy recommendations based on what girls said that they need and want and the gaps that we found in our research
- 🔍 Research and identify what girl-centered advocacy is already happening in LA County
- 📌 Develop an advocacy action plan based on the top 1-2 policy recommendations from community discussions and shareback meetings

2. Implement our advocacy action plan

- 👥 Conduct regular meetings with advocacy collaborators
- 📄 Create a policy memo that reflects the issues and girl-centered solutions and use it in meetings with policy and decision makers
- 🗣️ Engage girls and gender-expansive youth to design and execute policy advocacy campaigns on the issues that matter most to them
- 💎 Hold shareback meetings inviting key stakeholders and media to share progress and advocacy wins

At every step of the outlined process, we will monitor and evaluate whether our advocacy actions are achieving key objectives and our overall collective goal through discussions, shareback meetings and surveys with advocacy partners to assess the process and impact.

In addition, we have already launched our [Girls* Resource Hub](#), formerly the Girls Service Directory. Developed for girls, by girls, this free, publicly accessible online directory was heavily youth-led and informed and provides information on programs and/or services for girls and gender-expansive youth across California, with a particular focus on the Bay Area and LA County.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This report would not have been possible without funding from the California Community Foundation and the ongoing support of AFG funders. We also want to thank the [AFG LA Advisory Group](#) for their guidance and participation, including Black Women for Wellness, EmpowHer Institute, Girls Inc. of Los Angeles, MOSTe, the Positive Results Center, Public Counsel, YWCA Greater Los Angeles, and Young Women's Freedom Center. A special thanks goes to Black Women for Wellness for supporting the CNM team with setting up focus groups with girls within their programming and the Vera Institute of Justice, LA County Departments of Public Health and Youth Development, and the LA County Women and Girls' Initiative for sharing their generous time and resources with the research team. A special thanks to the CNM team for all their work and dedication to ensure this data and report was as thorough and useful as possible to the LA community and girls and gender-expansive youth themselves.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

 alliance4girls.org

    @AllianceforGirls

