



# COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES PROBATION DEPARTMENT

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## NEWS RELEASE

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### **GIRLS UNDER PROBATION SUPERVISION TO RECEIVE TAILORED SERVICES INDICATED BY NEW EVIDENCE-BASED HEALTH SCREENING**

For the first time, all girls in the Los Angeles County juvenile system will begin to receive tailored services determined by a new medical screening tool, the **Girls Health Screen**, (GHS), the nation's only evidence-based health screen designed for young women. Girls in juvenile systems often have more significant health needs and require more tailored interventions, but those needs are ignored in a justice system largely designed to serve boys and men.

GHS assists juvenile corrections facilities in identifying, prioritizing, training, and tracking girls' physical and mental health needs. After getting screened, girls can more quickly access health services, ranging from asthma inhalers and glasses to trauma counseling for violence and prenatal care.

Sheila Mitchell, L.A. County's Chief Deputy Probation Officer who oversees the County's juvenile facilities said, "The rollout of this important tool will allow us to quickly improve the services we provide to the girls under Probation's care. With this expansion, we are taking a major step in the direction of moving the L.A. juvenile system toward our goal of an effective, rehabilitative system utilizing research-based tools to help stabilize the lives of young people and set them on a path to success."

The GHS was piloted at Camp Scudder (now known as Camp Scott) from 2012-2016 as a partnership between the National Girls Health and Justice Institute and the County's Department of Health Services, Department of Mental Health and Probation. Dr. Mitchell Katz, director of the Department of Health Services stated, "The results of the Girls Health Screen pilot were excellent, and I am very happy to be expanding this research-based tool that will result in every girl in Probation's care receiving the treatment she needs."

The GHS was introduced on a pilot basis at Camp Scott, and in June will be expanded to Barry J. Nidorf Juvenile Hall, followed by an expansion to Los Padrinos and Central Juvenile Halls.

Of the 331 girls (age 11-17) confidentially screened during the four-year L.A. County pilot program, more than 21% of the girls reported being homeless in the final year. More than 30% had lived in foster care or a group home. 74% reported having been suspended or expelled from school. 15% reported not having enough to eat at home. 29% had recently

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witnessed the traumatic injury or death of a loved one. Ten percent of girls reported having been forced to have sex; 20% of girls reported having been pregnant at least once; 6% were pregnant when they arrived at the camp.

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National Girls Health and Justice Institute's Leslie Acoca, who developed the Girls Health Screen said, "L.A. is taking the lead nationally in adopting this tool which will enable the County to provide vital services to girls who often have very serious physical and mental health needs."

Third District County Supervisor Sheila Kuehl, whose office provided the final funds needed to make the tool available to girls under Probation's supervision, said, "With this tool, we will be able to provide girls with the services they need, and reduce recidivism. That's a huge win-win."

On any given day, L.A. County's juvenile division supervises between 180-200 girls in its juvenile detention facilities. The GHS is a project of the National Girls Health and Justice Institute and was developed by Leslie Acoca. The screening tool, which includes 117 questions written in fourth grade language, was validated in collaboration with the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, Juvenile Law Center, the University of Washington, and Probation Departments in California, Pennsylvania and New Mexico.

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