

**MOTION BY SUPERVISORS HOLLY J. MITCHELL
AND KATHRYN BARGER**

June 27, 2023

Implementing the Further Countywide Expansion of Mentorship Programs Serving Black Girls and Other At-Risk Children

Black youth comprised only 7% of the Los Angeles County (County) child population in 2018, yet they account for 24% of youth receiving services through the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). Among Black youth, Black girls disproportionately experience violence through their school, home, and community at an early age. They are also more likely to interact with the criminal justice system through the education and child welfare system at an early age. Collectively, prison pipeline systems set Black girls up to be the fastest growing demographic in our nation's prison population. Although Black girls only represent 7.4% of public-school enrollment, they comprise 11.2% of in-school suspensions and 13.3% of out-of-school suspensions. According to the Institute for Women's Policy Research, Black girls make up over 40% of arrests that stem from a school incident. In school, Black girls are:

- over four (4) times more likely to receive harsher discipline,
- three (3) times more likely to be arrested at school,
- six (6) times more likely to be suspended from school relative to Caucasian girls, and
- more likely to be referred to law enforcement (making up one-third of school referrals).

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Moreover, Black girls are often perceived as adults making them significantly vulnerable to human trafficking and sexual abuse. In the County, 92% of girls in the juvenile justice system who identify as victims of sex trafficking are Black and 62% were involved in the child welfare system. By the time Black girls reach adolescence, they are greatly at-risk of experiencing adverse physical and mental health outcomes relative to any other racial group. A 2019 study, published in the Journal of Community Health, found that suicide death rates for Black American girls ages 13-19 increased by 182% between 2001 and 2007.

Youth mentorship can be effective in disrupting cycles of abuse and victimization. Studies show that mentored Black youth are more likely to complete their education, pursue further studies, find employment, and develop a sense of belonging. For these reasons, the Board of Supervisors (Board) have supported youth mentorship for at-risk youth in priority locations.

On May 28, 2019, for example, Supervisors Kathryn Barger and Janice Hahn co-authored, "Friends of the Children Los Angeles," a motion that instructed the Department of Mental Health (DMH) to enter into an agreement with Friends of the Children-Los Angeles (FOTC-LA), to implement a pilot mentorship program to serve at-risk children residing in the Antelope Valley region. The mission of FOTC-LA is to select children between the ages of 4 and 6, facing the most significant barriers to future success and provide them and their families with intensive, individualized guidance from full-time, highly trained, paid professional mentors (called Friends) for 12+ years. Their unique model integrates a two-generation approach that strengthens caregiver protective capacities, builds social capital, and meets concrete needs to support whole family stability and wellbeing. To date, none of the children enrolled in the pilot program have entered foster care; they have all remained safely at home with their families. Additionally, 92% percent of families report that FOTC-LA connected them to concrete supports that enriched and stabilized their families.

On May 4, 2021, the Board approved my motion titled, "Supporting Innovative Mentorship Programs for At-Risk Black Male Youth in South Los Angeles," to pilot mentorship to at-risk Black boys in South Los Angeles given its home to the largest

percentage of Black youth in the County. Through the pilot, the Fostering Resilience Project, administered by FOTC-LA received 116 referrals and mentored 102 Black males aged 11 – 19 between September 2021 – June 2022.

On December 6, 2022, the Board approved my motion, titled “Mentorship for At-Risk Black Girls in Los Angeles County,” to expand mentorship opportunities Countywide and, in particular, to at-risk young Black girls from ages 4 - 6 to throughout their teen years. As a result, efforts are underway for DMH to more than double the current enrollment in mentorship programs in the year 2026. This mentorship expansion was included in the Mental Health Service Act (MHSA) Annual Update for Fiscal Year 2023-24, which was approved by the MHSA stakeholders and adopted by the Board on June 6, 2023. It is anticipated that this expansion will impact 176 families – over 792 individual caregivers and children – receiving Emergency Response and Family Maintenance services through DCFS. At least 100 Black girls will be prioritized through this phased program expansion.

WE THEREFORE MOVE THAT THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:

1. Delegate authority to the Director of the Department of Mental Health (DMH), or her designee, to:
 - a. Sign and execute an amendment to the Friends of the Children Los Angeles (FOTC-LA) contract, to extend the term of the contract through June 30, 2026, with one optional extension period, for the continued provision and Countywide expansion of professional mentoring services. The Total Contract Amount (TCA) will be \$13,593,663 for the term of the contract, fully funded by Mental Health Services Act funds;
 - b. Execute future amendments to the contract with FOTC-LA, to revise the boilerplate language; revise and/or replace the Fee Schedule; shift unspent funds to future years; add, delete, modify, or replace the Statement of Work; and add or reflect Federal, State, and County regulatory and/or policy changes provided that: 1) the County’s total payment will not exceed 10% of the Board of Supervisors (Board)-approved TCA; and 2) sufficient funds are available. The amendments will be subject to prior review and approval

as to form by County Counsel, with written notice to the Board and Chief Executive Officer; and

- c. Terminate the Contract with FOTC-LA in accordance with the Contract's termination provisions, including Termination for Convenience, with written notice to the Board and Chief Executive Officer of such termination action.
2. Direct the Director of DMH, in collaboration with the Director of the Department of Children and Family Services to report back in writing to the Board in 90 days and biannually thereafter on the selection criteria, the program's progress, and outcomes.

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