



# **A Holistic, Community-Driven Approach to School Safety**

## **LA County Office of Violence Prevention (OVP)**

### **COC Panel on School Resource Deputies July 27, 2023**



## Vision for a Violence Free LA County

OVP **strengthens collaboration, capacity and partnerships** to prevent multiple forms of violence and promote healing across communities in LA County.

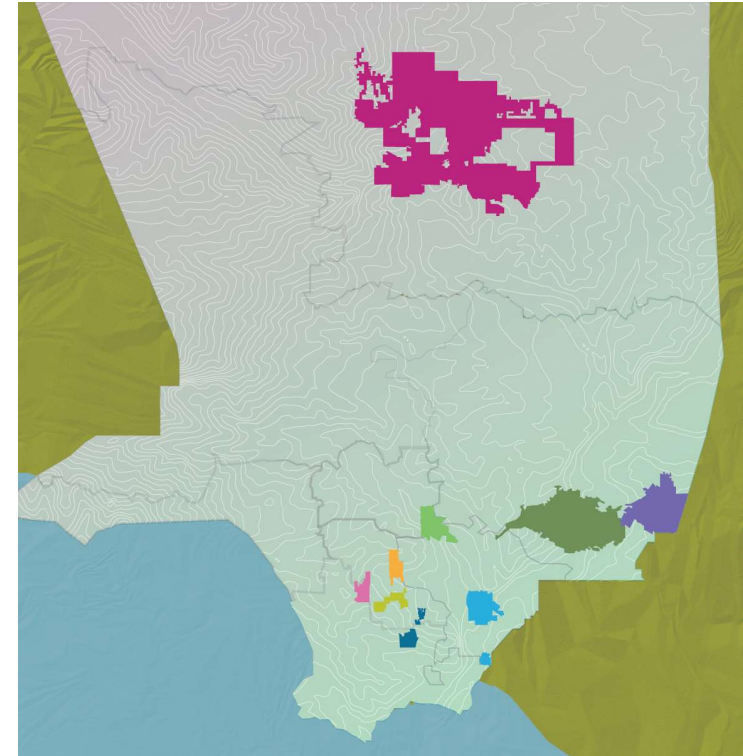
Established by the Board of Supervisors in **February 2019 in the Department of Public Health.**

**Governance Structure:** County Leadership Committee & Community Partnership Council guide work of the office and implementation of the strategic plan.

# Trauma Prevention Initiative (TPI) Overview

A community-based approach to public safety that is comprehensive, place-based, invests in peer intervention strategies and community leadership, and adapted to the unique needs of communities

- 2016: Implemented in 4 South LA communities
- 2022: Expanded to 9 communities



# Collaboration Across Systems

- **Incident notification protocol with Sheriff's and other law enforcement agencies**
- **Safe passages protocol with Parks and Rec**
- **Regional Intervention Council Meetings** with law enforcement, Community Intervention Workers, and Parks to solve safety concerns
- **Community Action for Peace networks** to promote positive community identity and build collaboration
- **Hospital Partnerships** to provide peer case management to victims of violence
- **Advisory Committee** to connect county partners to align work to support communities





# School Safety Innovation Pilot

*Proposal pursuant to July 12<sup>th</sup>, 2022, Board Motion.*

## Directives:

- **Identify 2-3 school districts** in communities most impacted by violence and COVID-19 to partner with on a pilot.
- **Collect input from students, families, and school staff** on needed services and supports.
- **Identify effective school safety practices and programs** to highlight and expand efforts.
- **Identify resources and strategies needed** to support safety goals of school stakeholders.
- **Develop recommendations on how the County can best support schools**, including trauma and healing informed supports for school personnel, students, and families.

# Definition of School Safety

*School safety reflects a climate where students, families and staff feel safe from violence, bullying and harassment including the influence of substance use, and violence perpetrated by individuals and systems. Enhancing school safety requires addressing the root causes of violence and trauma that occur in schools, in school-related activities, and in the surrounding communities, through policies and practices that strengthen the network of prevention and response services using an equity and healing-centered lens.*

# Key Recommendations from Youth Sessions

- **Define “safe school” as having respect for the struggles and concerns of students**, allowing for constant and open dialogue, and listening to students and addressing issues that they may be facing.
- **Define a “safe school” as having more of an emphasis on mental health** with more funding for counselors and therapists, and safe spaces, like student wellbeing centers, at all school sites with full-time staff available throughout the school day.
- **Students can be treated as criminals instead of as a kid who made a mistake.** Schools need to have youth-friendly and non-gendered protocols, and focus on checking in on students, using conflict mediation instead of punishment.

# Key Recommendations from District Sessions

- **Increase partnerships with CBOs to provide programming and services to address urgent school safety issues;** including youth substance use, bullying linked to protected identities such as race or sexuality and cyberbullying via social media, community and gang violence prevention and safe passage.
- **Increase mental health capacity of schools and employ more restorative practices over punitive practices** to promote healing and collective wellbeing on school campuses by hiring more full-time mental health specialists, school counselors, and other student support professionals on campus.
- **Expand student-centered safe spaces,** such as existing HRC Dream Centers and DPH Wellbeing Centers to all school sites.
- **Provide more opportunities for youth in decision making** on school safety and climate issues, such as youth leadership bodies, and meetings with school leadership to build youth advocacy and empowerment.



# Pilot Goals and Approach

**Build capacity of school districts to address the systemic issues that are root causes of violence to ensure that all youth feel safe and supported.**

- Assure that the pilot aligns with current effective programs and safety mandates, and the county provides added value to support schools to address concerns of the community.
- Support school districts to shift to a care first, restorative, community-driven approach that enhances partnerships with community organizations.
- Center youth and families in transformative school safety efforts and ensure they have a leadership role in implementation.

# Proposed Pilot Strategies

- Identify funding to provide Transformation Grants to 5 pilot school districts to support transformative school safety efforts.
- Establish a School Safety Learning Community in partnership with the LA County Office of Education, to provide technical assistance and peer learning for a cohort of up to 20 interested districts.
- Continue to convene the County Partners Workgroup to act on systems change priorities identified by the pilot.
- At the close of the pilot, recommend long-term systems change to the County Board of Supervisors.

# Contact Information

Andrea Welsing, MPH  
Director, Office of Violence Prevention  
LA County Department of Public Health  
cell: 213-550-6407  
email: [awelsing@ph.lacounty.gov](mailto:awelsing@ph.lacounty.gov)

Kelly Fischer, MA  
Deputy Director, Office of Violence Prevention  
LA County Department of Public Health  
cell: 323-236-6858  
email: [kfischer@ph.lacounty.gov](mailto:kfischer@ph.lacounty.gov) s

<http://ph.lacounty.gov/ovp/>