



# Shifting the Trend: Cocoa Girls- I Am Worthy Project

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### Background

- Nationally, African American women age 15-24, are most impacted by disproportionately high rates of STDs and teen pregnancy when compared to their white counterparts.
- The prevalence of STD rates within Service Planning Area (SPA) 6 of LA County is 999.5 cases per 100,000 persons for chlamydia and 231.9 cases per 100,000 persons for gonorrhea; which is higher than all of LA County combined (LA County Indicators of Health, 2013).
- Of the almost 10 million residents of LA County, African Americans only make up 8.5% of the total population and primarily reside in SPA 6; making this the subgroup most affected by the local problem.
- Research has shown that this high prevalence within the target population is not simply due to individual behaviors, but is also influenced by social relationships, networks, and environmental factors.
- Research suggests the health problem be addressed through comprehensive interventions that incorporate “dual protection” strategies.

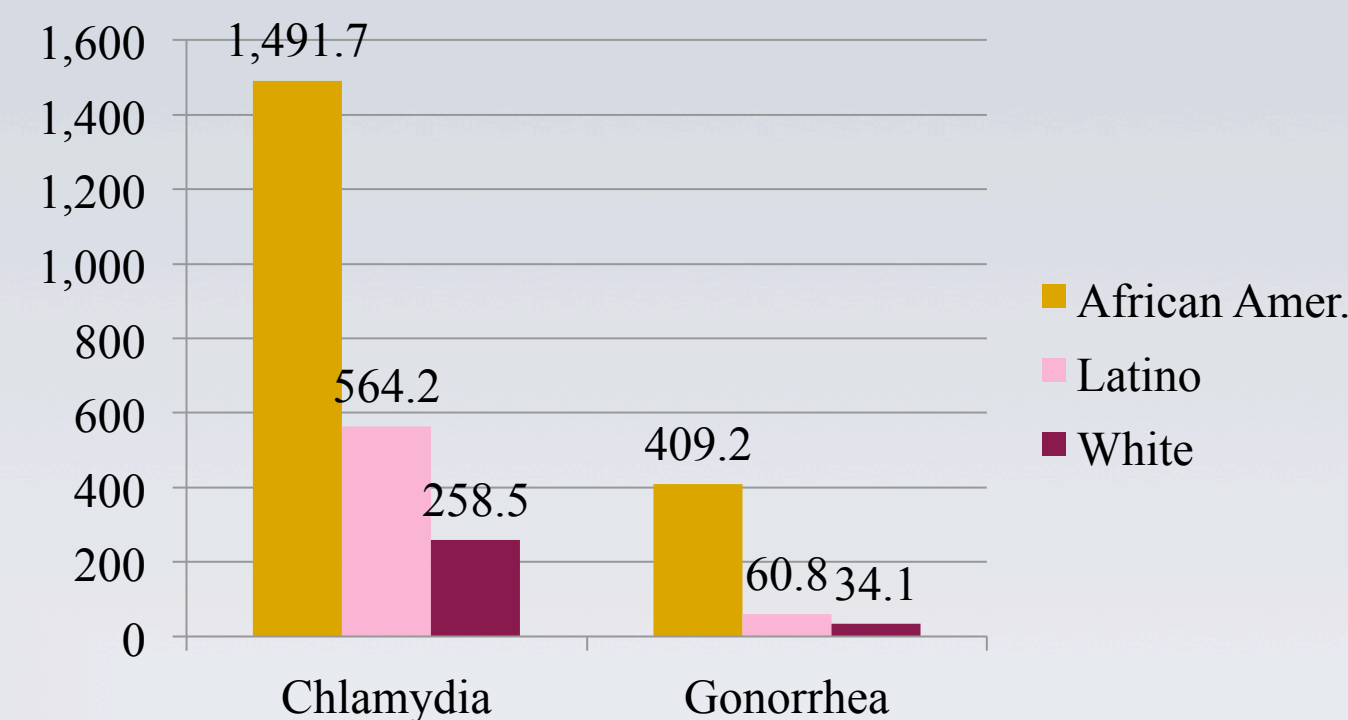
### Purpose

Cocoa Girls- I Am Worthy Project is the proposed pilot health intervention that will focus on the sexual and reproductive health of African American adolescents girls in South Los Angeles.

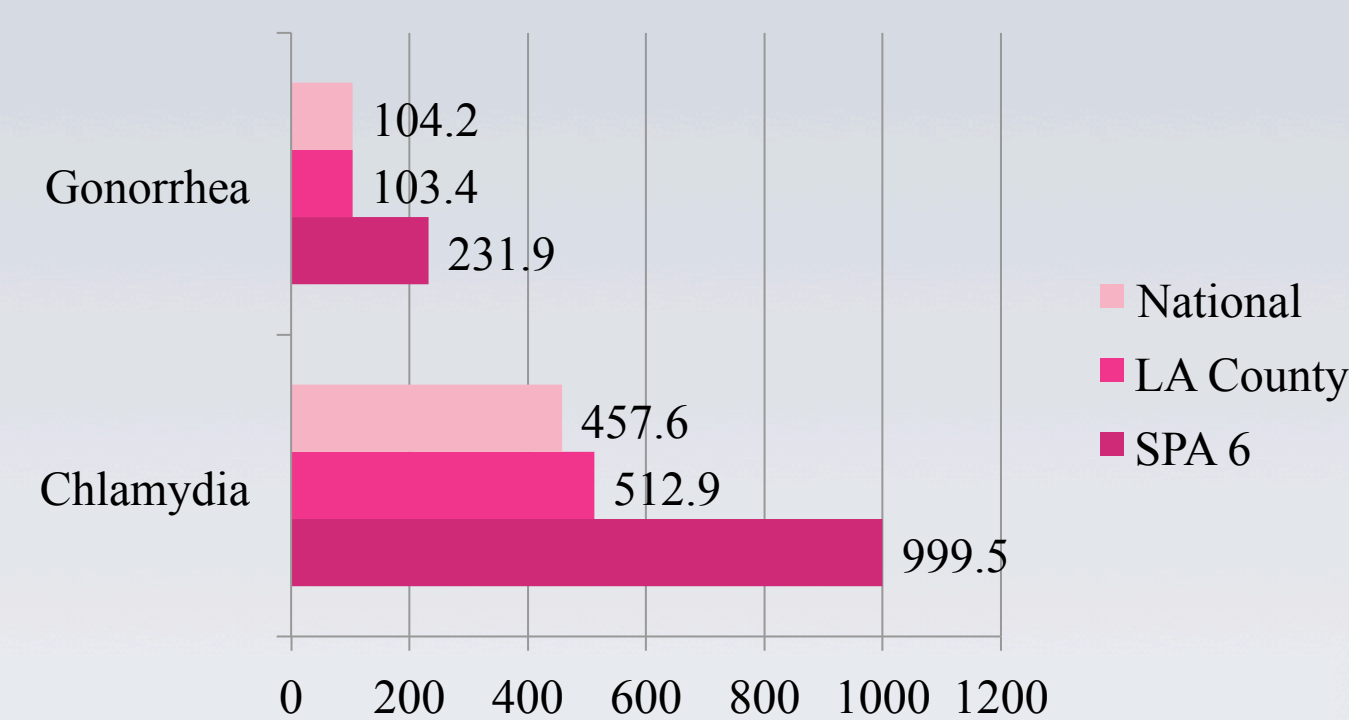
The program will incorporate dual protection strategies while also addressing the role of interpersonal relationships, social, and environmental factors in increasing sexual and reproductive health risks.

Program Goals:

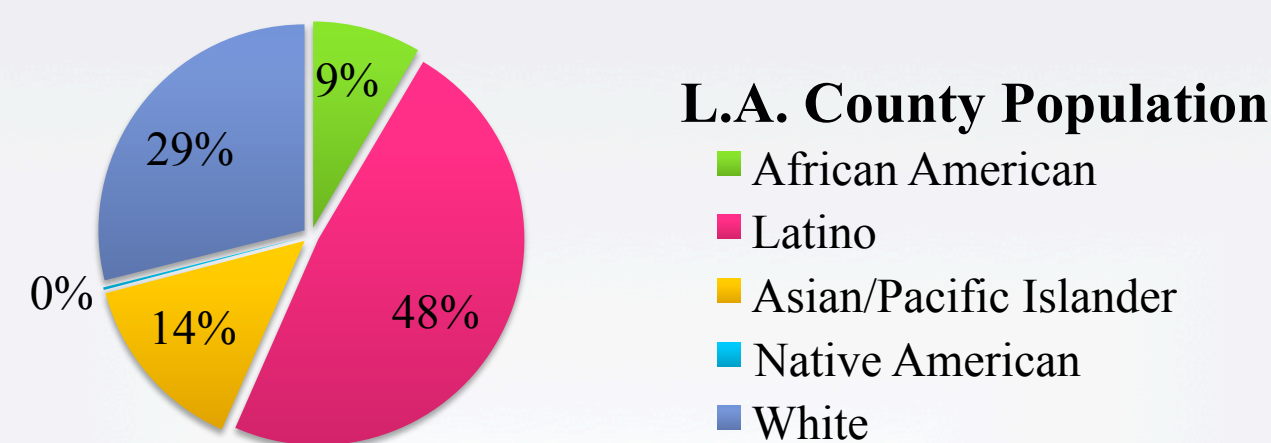
- To decrease sexual health disparities amongst African American adolescent girls in South LA through development of a sexual health education curriculum and esteem building activities.
- To increase accessibility to sexual health education and resources for teens within South Los Angeles.



National STD rates per 100,000 population by race/ethnicity; Source: CDC STD Surveillance



Rate of STDs per 100,000 population by locale- SPA, County, & National; Source: L.A. Key Indicators of Health



### Implementation

#### Program Description

- Setting: Jordan Downs Housing Project within SPA 6 of Los Angeles County
- Cohort of 20 African American adolescent girls
- Dosage: 10 weeks- one session per week
- Curriculum Focus: increasing sexual health knowledge, increasing self-esteem/worth; increasing self-efficacy when practicing safer sex
- Increasing access to sexual health resources through community health events and mobile testing units

#### Theoretical Basis

The project curriculum and activities are built upon several constructs of the Health Belief Model (HBM) and Social Cognitive Theory (SCT).

- HBM constructs: perceived susceptibility, perceived barriers, perceived benefits, and self-efficacy
- SCT constructs: facilitation and observational learning

#### Program Recruitment

The strategies to recruit program participants and garner program acceptance/support are to work with populations who currently participate in other programs provided by organizations in the area, and to incentivize program participation.

- Building partnerships with organizations currently serving the target community like, Black Women for Wellness, Planned Parenthood, and Shields for Families, to network and promote program
- Providing program incentives for participants like gifts cards to top retailers and meals during weekly sessions
- Working with neighborhood councils and area representatives from the Los Angeles Gang Reduction & Youth Development department to build relationships with community members

### Evaluation

#### Method

The Cocoa Girls intervention will be executed through the process of a pilot demonstration design, utilizing purposive sampling of 20 African American adolescent girls living in SPA 6 of Los Angeles County.

- The intervention is a non-experimental, one-group, before and after design.
- The intervention will utilize pre and post questionnaires and skills demonstrations to assess changes in participants’ sexual health knowledge, behaviors, and skills, and their level of self-esteem.
- The intervention will conduct formative and summative evaluation through participant, partner, and program health educator evaluation forms administered at the 5<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> week mark, and health educator weekly observation logs.

### Conclusion

- Disparities in sexual and reproductive health such as STDs, teen pregnancy, and low-weight infant birth rates are of significant concern, particularly among African American women.
- The prevalence of STD rates is particularly high amongst African American adolescent girls in SPA 6 of Los Angeles County.
- There is a need for comprehensive and effective intervention approaches to combat this health concern.
- Cocoa Girls- I Am Worthy Project is the key to positively affecting sexual health behaviors, fostering greater self-efficacy, and ultimately shifting the trend in South Los Angeles.

### References

- Los Angeles County Department of Public Health. (2013). *Key Indicators of Health*
- Center for Disease Control. (2013). *Sexually Transmitted Disease Surveillance 2013*

**Building dynamic, self-confident, and sexually healthy teen girls in South Los Angeles**