



Gisselle Gonzalez-Perez
SPA 7 Youth Advisor

In December 30, 2001 I was born in a city where today over 200,000 youth live in poverty, a city with the highest share of the homeless youth population, and a city that has higher than average high school dropout rates. I am truly honored to speak with you all today, representing the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health Youth Advisory Council. The Youth Advisory Council is a new program for youth ages 16-21 that focuses on creating opportunities for our voices to be heard on public health issues impacting our communities. As a council, we will be working in partnership with the Department of Public Health to promote the well-being, and advocate in the best interests of all youth in LA county. I represent this Service Planning Area, and strongly support the Our S.P.O.T. Program. East Los Angeles, California is the city I was born in and till this day I call Los Angeles my home, but it is not just my home; Los Angeles is home to over 800,000 youth lives ranging from the ages 10 to 24. I live in a city where being a young person is difficult and to lose hope in life is easy, but here I am today sharing with you all why I have not and will not ever lose hope in the bright future ahead of me. Youth developmental programs such as the Our S.P.O.T. program are very beneficial to the young lives in Los Angeles because youth development programs can reduce youth living in poverty, decrease youth homelessness, and finally help prepare youth for success.

There are over 200,000 young lives in Los Angeles living below the poverty level. It is a very devastating issue because there are so many negative consequences. Youth living below poverty level are less healthy, less likely to go to school, and are less likely to graduate. Youth can turn to substance abuse with the stress of living in unstable living arrangements. This is a main reason why youth programs are beneficial to youth lives. The youth programs I am in such as Friday Night Live, advocate and promote youth to live an alcohol and drug free life.





- June 13, 2019 - Youth Advisor,
- Gisselle Gonzalez-Perez speaks at
- the Our S.P.O.T. Program launch
- event at Salazar Park in support
- of creating more youth-focused
- programming for Los Angeles
- County youth.

Secondly, according to the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority's most recent homeless count, there are more than 3,000 youth between the ages of 0-24 homeless. The disconnection between youth lives who are homeless is very serious because they are not enrolled in school, not graduating high school, and finally unemployed. Youth programs can play a huge role in a young person's life by motivating youth to go to school and graduate. Youth programs can lead youth in the right direction in life such as youth workforce programs, they can help those youth who are homeless. Youth will benefit from these programs and they are sincerely needed in our community.

Finally, youth programming in our community helps prepare youth for success which is critically important because the youth in LA are the faces of the future. According to the Advancement Project's Report on Youth Development for Los Angeles City, 68,000 young people are not working or enrolled in school. This is such a serious matter because if youth are not in school they are not living up to their potential and capability. Youth programs play a central role in preparing young people for a higher education. 81% of Los Angeles youth are of color and these higher quality youth programs benefit low-income youth. Youth programming such as the Our S.P.O.T. program promotes career growth and career opportunities.

I thank you all for allowing me to share why I support youth programming such as the Our S.P.O.T program in the community. I support youth programming because youth development programs can reduce youth living in poverty, decrease youth homelessness, and finally help prepare youth for success. Because of youth programs in my school the Applied Technology Center High School and in my community I am able to be a strong leader representing youth lives. We need to invest in our youth now and recognize that they are the future leaders of our communities. This means we need to create more opportunities and resources that empower young people with skills they need to thrive. I want all youth in Los Angeles to have the opportunity to join youth programs that will inspire them to pursue their dreams, make a difference, and become a strong leader."