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Female athletes gaining equity in Santa Paula

SAN FRANCISCO — [State data show](#) that many schools and many [park and recreation departments](#) across California offer girls and boys unequal sports programs. Equity has been required by federal law since 1972.

Santa Paula High School (SPHS) is making significant improvements after a legal team led by the Legal Aid Society-Employment Law Center ([LAS-ELC](#)), the California Women's Law Center ([CWLC](#)), and Simpson Thacher & Bartlett ([Simpson Thacher](#)) brought attention to potential issues in Santa Paula's facilities and sports programs for girls. LAS-ELC and its co-counsel have been shining a light on athletic gender inequities in schools throughout the state in recent years, spurring changes.

"Title IX demands equity in publicly-funded educational programs, including on the field, in the gym, and inside the locker room," says Kim Turner, an LAS-ELC attorney. "Forty-four years after Title IX's passage, there is still a long way to go to ensure that female students are on an equal playing field with their male counterparts."

Santa Paula Unified School District in Ventura County adopted [a resolution reflecting its commitment to gender equity and Title IX](#) compliance and [a new plan to update](#) to all of its facilities. The district retained Donna Lopiano, former CEO of the Women's Sports Foundation and a nationally-recognized Title IX expert, as an adviser. SPHS has improved its girls' locker rooms and added teams. It plans to continue to ensure that training, coaching, transportation and other services related to girls' athletics are on par with what boys in the school receive.

"These changes will be felt far beyond the sports field," says Betsy Butler, executive director of CWLC. "High school girls who participate in team sports have lower rates of teen pregnancy, are less likely to smoke or drink, and are more likely to graduate. We are pleased to see positive change take place for the girls at Santa Paula High School."

"We are thrilled that SPHS has responded quickly and comprehensively," says Jayma Meyer, counsel with Simpson Thacher. "The number of girls participating and their respective accomplishments in newly provided sports teams such as golf and water polo are a testament to the power of Title IX. We hope SPHS continues to expand these potentially life-defining opportunities for its girls and maintains them as it does for those available to male students."



About the California Women's Law Center

The California Women's Law Center (CWLC) breaks down barriers and advances the potential of women and girls through transformative litigation, policy advocacy and education. Founded in 1989, CWLC focuses on the following issue areas: gender discrimination, women's health, violence against women, reproductive justice and the unique concerns of women veterans. CWLC continues to be a leader in Title IX enforcement in California schools. Visit www.cwlc.org

About LAS-ELC

Legal Aid Society-Employment Law Center, founded in 1916, advances justice and economic opportunity for low-income people at work and school and in the community. LAS-ELC provides free legal services and public information, advocates for policy change, and litigates cases with broad impact. Our litigation in *Ollier v. Sweetwater* in Chula Vista, Calif., led to the first federal court post-trial rulings expressly applying Title IX to K-12 schools regarding treatment, benefits, and retaliation. Visit www.las-elc.org.

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