To remain relevant and engaging, it is important that Girls on the Run stays abreast of current trends reflected in academia and mainstream media. This report highlights trends that are pertinent to the Girls on the Run program, mission and vision which impact key stakeholders: girls, women, schools, families, parents/guardians and volunteers.

This inaugural report focuses technology, an important and emerging trend. Future reports will focus on topics such as gender, education and physical health.

The trends report is scheduled for release three times per year. Each report will focus on one trend and will include the following components:

Summary of the Trend - supported by links which provide further reading on the topic.

Why It Matters – linking the trend to our mission and its impact on stakeholders.

What We Do – explores how Girls on the Run is addressing the issue, contributing to the solution, and/or could become a part of the conversation.

The trend report will be archived on the Intranet *and shared in the quarterly Boardroom newsletter.*

Trend: Technology

Summary: A 2015 report from the Pew Research Center found that 24% of teenagers ages 13-17 reported being online "almost constantly," and that 73% had a smartphone or access to one.

Technology and social media have a profound effect on the lives of young people - their emotional lives, social lives and development. While technology can have a positive influence, the current trend focuses on the detrimental impact on youth. Some argue that technology is not creating new issues for teens and young people, but merely exacerbating developmentally normal concerns: social standing, identity development, and self-expression. The effects are profound and can include increased anxiety, isolation, abuse/social exclusion, and decreases in self-esteem and social/emotional competence.

- **Increased Anxiety:** consistent comparison to others; perpetually connected to peers and romantic partners; seeing/creating perfectly curated lives via social media; unreachable standards; fickle nature of social media relationships; social exclusion (see isolation).

- **Increased Isolation:** lack of real life interaction or meaningful peer relationships; feelings of inclusion/exclusion based on social feeds, tags, likes, etc.; cyberbullying and intentional exclusion.

- **Cyber dating abuse:** this is considered an emerging challenge for today's youth. Here, technology is used to control, intimidate and harass teens or young people in the context of a dating relationship (i.e. monitoring or controlling the activities or whereabouts of a partner; demanding unwanted sex, nude photos and publicly distributing nude or seminude photos of peers.)

  In a recent study, more female participants reported cyber dating abuse victimization (44.6% vs 31.0%) than their male counterparts.

- **Lower self-esteem:** positive and/or negative feedback to posts; primping for "likes"; number of followers; mentions and tags; impulsive activity such as sexting; imposter syndrome (i.e. Insta vs. Finsta accounts).

- **Decreased social competence:** lack of face-to-face communication (i.e. texting rather than calling someone because calling is considered "too intense."); inability to read facial and body cues; lower social and emotional intelligence; lack of empathy (no connection to the real world).

Why it matters - Changes in how young people rely on technology, and the prominent role of social media in their lives, significantly changes communication and impacts peer relationships. It also changes emotional development, how young people see themselves and the world. Young people are particularly affected by the instant gratification provided by technology and social media – this is because the prefrontal cortex (where rational decisions are made and impulse control lives) is still developing.

Additionally, parents/guardians are wrestling with ways to monitor their children's use of social media and technology. One-in-three parents say they have had concerns or questions about their child's technology use in the last year. At the same time, adults are equally over-engaged with technology, ultimately, changing the ways families connect and interact with one another.

Specific impact on girls:

Boys and girls use social media and technology in different ways.

The negative effects discussed above are exacerbated for girls who already experience decreases in self-esteem, confidence, and who already face societal pressures to look and behave a certain way (social media increases this expectation). Recent studies noted a significant uptick in depression and suicidal thoughts over the past several years for teens, especially those who spend multiple hours a day using screens - especially girls.

Sexting: Recent research shows that girls face extreme pressure and conflicting messages when making decisions about sending photographs of themselves to others or sexting. Girls reported sending photos to male counterparts in hopes of gaining a relationship or because of coercion, threats, anger, and persistent requests against them.

Young women also reported taking on the responsibility of negotiating these pressures, experiencing feelings of confusion and not having the necessary resources to face the stressors or navigate these decisions.

Boys are four times more likely to pressure girls to send naked images and girls bear the brunt of responding to requests for nude photos or sexting. Adults often tell teens not to send sexualized selfies but don't tell adolescents to stop asking for nudes from one another.

What we do – In so many ways, Girls on the Run addresses the issues girls face because of increased technology and social media. Girls on the Run is an in-person, technology-free, safe space designed specifically for girls to make friends, grow their confidence, collaborate with others and truly connect with peers and adults in a meaningful way. The small team size and intentional curriculum create an environment where girls build genuine friendships and learn from their coaches - committed adult role models that provide social and emotional support.

Girls on the Run focuses on developing confidence and competence which are antidotes to anxiety, isolation and lowered self-esteem. In fact, a recent external evaluation of our program provides evidence that girls in the program improved significantly in the areas of **confidence** and **connection.** As one parent shared, "This program has given her so much. [She has made] new friends that she would not have interacted with at school as well as compassion, empathy and teamwork." In addition, girls who were more sedentary at the start of Girls on the Run reduced screen time by 20% from pre- to post-season.

Many issues around technology stem from impulsive actions, inability to successfully resolve conflict (in person or online) and inability to manage strong emotions. 97% of girls say that because of participating in Girls on the Run they learned how to manage emotions, resolve conflict, help others or make intentional decisions. Furthermore, girls are using these skills in other areas of their lives - at home, at school and with their friends – and these skills can be easily transferred to the realm of social media as well.

Finally, Girls on the Run teaches girls to stand up for themselves and others—a useful skill both online and offline. Another parent shared, "She has learned to stand up for herself and her friends. She recently wrote, 'Girls on the Run makes me powerful'."