



Circles® Model

Circles® is an intentional way for people to build relationships across class and race lines to end poverty in their communities. Circles® is a high impact strategy that will:

- Change the mind-set of the community so it wants to end poverty
- Change goals, policies, and approaches to end poverty and,
- Empower people in poverty to help solve community problems while transitioning out of poverty themselves.

High impact strategies are the actions taken to move the community from the current reality of poverty to a preferred future for individuals, families, and the community. One aspect of the preferred future is for individuals and families in poverty to build resources to become economically self-sufficient and to meet other needs on a consistent basis so they can thrive. Through Circles® people can find reasons, relationships, and the resources to thrive.

A Circle is a supportive, intentional, reciprocal, befriending relationship made up of one Circle Leader who is living in poverty and two to five Circle Allies who are financially stable and are usually from middle class. A Circle typically meets once or twice a month to build friendships and to work on the Circle Leader's dreams, plans, and goals.

A Circle Leader is an individual or family with a low-income who is interested in meeting her/his household needs on a consistent basis and becoming self-sufficient.¹ The Circle Leader is responsible for her or his Circle; convening, leading, and giving and receiving support. She or he will work with the Allies to complete her/his plan that was developed in the Getting Ahead group and with the Circles® Coach. Getting Ahead prepares Circle Leaders to take a leadership role in the Circle and to use their knowledge and skills as problem solvers to work on poverty issues in the community as well. In Monroe County, child care and dinner are provided to course participants during classes. Participants receive a small, weekly stipend while they are engaged in the Getting Ahead training.

Circle Allies are community members who want to be in a supportive, intentional, befriending relationship with an individual or family working to get out of poverty. Circle Allies work with the Circle Leader to figure out how to accomplish her or his plan. Within the guidelines set by the Community Guiding Coalition, Circle Allies do what makes sense and what brings joy to the relationship, and provide Circle Leaders with a link to the larger community. Circle Allies are trained in Bridges out of Poverty as a way to work with Circle Leaders in supporting their plans to get out of poverty.

Allies and Circle Leaders build and use social capital across class and race lines to build a healthier community. A special vocabulary is learned to understand the relationships among poverty, economic class, race, and community prosperity that builds relationships of mutual respect.

¹ In general, it takes 200% of the OMB Poverty Income Guidelines for a family to meet its basic household needs on a consistent basis without subsidy. The actual amount will vary by state and by region within a state.

A Community Guiding Coalition designs the local community-based Circles® initiative. The Guiding Coalition is a representative group that includes people from all economic classes and races who are committed to building their community and ending poverty. The Guiding Coalition is responsible for Circles® implementation and assures it is a high-impact strategy that changes the mind set of the community. Guiding Coalition members learn the Circles® lexicon by attending an orientation on the Circles® model and a workshop on Bridges out of Poverty constructs.

The Circles® Campaign is led by a National Guiding Coalition that is made up of experts in the anti-poverty field, people in poverty, people of color, people from many disciplines, and people from nationally recognized anti-poverty organizations including:

Move the Mountain Leadership Center, aha! Process, Inc., Wider Opportunities for Women, the Charitable Giving Resource Center, and the Wilder Research Center.

The Circles® Campaign will initially work with up to 50 communities which commit to working with 12-25 Circles® each, for a national total of 1000 families. There are currently over 60 communities hosting a Circles® campaign. Once the model has been tested, evaluated, and refined, we will reach out to 1000 communities in the next decade through a network of Training Centers.

In Monroe County, the South Central Community Action Program is the lead agency initiating the Circles® model. SCCAP is providing staff support, housing and initial funding for the Monroe County Circles® Initiative, but the project is owned by the community and the Guiding Coalition determines direction. Following the Getting Ahead training for Circle Leaders and Bridges training for Allies, Circle Leaders will attend weekly meetings with youth activities, dinner and a program provided. Allies are encouraged to attend these whenever possible. One weekly meeting per month is a “Big View” meeting, to which all community members are invited to work on problems that commonly keep people impoverished.

For information or to volunteer locally, you may contact Circles® Staff.

Linda Patton, Circles® Coordinator
Carrie Felton, Circles® Coach
South Central Community Action Program
1500 W. 15th St.
Bloomington, IN 47404
812-339-3447 x 206
lindap@insccap.org

If you would like to become a Circle Leader, please see “Circle Leader Job Description” and “Circle Leader Criteria” and fill out the “Circle Leader Application.”

If you are a social service provider and believe that you have a client who would qualify as a Circle Leader, please review the documents listed in the previous paragraph, have the client fill out the “Circle Leader Application,” and fill out the “Circle Initiative Referral Form.” Return to staff through the e-mail or SCCAP mailing address listed above.

All of these documents, and the “Ally Questionnaire” for community members who would like to apply to become Allies, can be found on the South Central Community Action Program website at www.sccap.monroe.in.us. Feel free to print, photocopy and distribute information and forms.

Circle Leader Job Description

The Circle Leader has three primary goals:

1. Create life changes that lead to permanent self-sufficiency
2. Develop your unique gifts and leadership skills to lead the circle, contribute to the Circles® initiative, and give back to the community
3. Use your experience of poverty and leading your family to self-sufficiency to advocate within the community for changes in the systems barriers that keep poverty in place

The Circle Leader commitment:

1. Complete Circles® orientation
2. Complete 18 week Getting Ahead curriculum focused on self-sufficiency
3. Commit to be part of the Circles® initiative for 18 months or more
4. Attend weekly dinner meetings with other Circle leaders/allies
5. Identify ways that you can contribute to the Circles® initiative in reciprocity for the support you will receive
6. Meet monthly with your circle
7. Make progress on the goals you identify in your movement to self-sufficiency

Support Circle leader receives:

1. Getting Ahead and Circle Orientation
2. Two to five caring allies to join you in your journey to self-sufficiency
3. Weekly meetings in which meals and childcare are provided
4. Program features such as a access to a car program/car repair help, revolving loan fund or IDAs
5. Staff available to answer questions, provide mentoring, and assist with conflict resolution

How can I be sensitive of differences across class lines?

1. Remember that allies may not have any experience with poverty and may make mistakes.
2. Remember that the allies on your circle are your friends, not social workers. Don't expect them to "fix" your situation.
3. When you have strong feelings about the Circles® initiative or allies, be willing to look at how your own fears or rules are being activated and talk to someone about it.

Circle® Referral Criteria

Not every family is appropriate for the Circles® Initiative. Below is a list of criteria to consider before referring a client as a potential Circle Leader.

- **Relative Stability:** If the family is currently homeless, if there is active domestic violence in the household, active and untreated drug or alcohol abuse or active and untreated mental illness, the family is not stable enough to be successful in Circles®. They will need to resolve those crises first. A person with an alcohol or drug dependence should be sober/clean for at least 6 months to participate in Circles®. Participation in programs such as AA/NA to help the participant stay clean is also helpful. Participants with mental illness should be receiving regular treatment, stabilized with therapy/medication, and compliant with this treatment for at least 6 months.
- **Motivation and Potential:** Is the family eager to change their situation? Do they have the physical and mental capability to be employed, increase their income and transition out of poverty? Participants who receive disability benefits or intend to pursue disability benefits are not appropriate for Circles® because one measure of Circles® success is that the family's need for government benefits ends. Would the family attend weekly classes and meetings if supports such as child care, meals and occasional help with emergency transportation, were in place? Do they follow through with their appointments and other meetings, home visits, and goal setting? Do they attempt to take steps to achieve their goals (it is understood that lack of supports may have prevented them from making much progress)?
- **Goal Setting and Relationship Building:** Circles® participants set goals related to Income and Assets, Academics and Training, and Friends and Meaning. Is the client interested in increasing their income; obtaining further education/training; developing meaningful relationships with people in the community to help them reach their goals? Relationships with people in the outside community are a different dynamic from relationships with the social service/welfare system. Has the client been open to your help? Are they open to building relationships with diverse people?
- **Family Engagement:** If this is a two-parent family, are both parents open to Circles®?
The Circles® process does not work well if one parent/significant other is resistant to the family's involvement. Allies work with the whole family, though it is not necessary that both partners participate in Circles® activities.
- **Family Definition of Self-Sufficiency:** A key measure of outcomes is the family's transition from reliance on government benefits to a thriving self-reliance. Is the family comfortable with this as the ultimate goal? What do they see as their role?

Getting Ahead/Circles® Selection Process

- Referral or self-referral
- Application
- Complete interview with Circles® Coordinator and/or Coach
- If selected, attend weekly leadership training (Getting Ahead In a Just Gettin' By World) meetings and successfully complete this training
- Attend Participant Orientation to understand the Circles® process
- Choose to participate as a Circle Leader

Monroe County Circles® Initiative
Referral Form

Date _____

Participant's Name: _____

Participant's Address: _____

Participant's Phone Number(s): _____

Referral Source Agency: _____

Referral Source Contact Name: _____

Referral Source Contact Phone #: _____

Participant meets the following criteria (check):

_____ Is below 200% of the federal poverty guidelines and receives public assistance

_____ Does not receive disability assistance or wants to discontinue disability assistance

_____ Is not in major crisis (untreated mental illness or drug/alcohol addiction, domestic violence situation, homeless); major crises have been stabilized

_____ Participant has given permission for Circles® staff to talk to referring source about participant's life situation, strengths and barriers.

_____ Is willing to work with others to become self-sufficient; i.e., independent of public assistance

Brief description of current strengths/barriers: _____

How many in household? _____

Please mail or fax to:

Circles® Initiative

Attention: Linda Patton, Circles® Coordinator

Carrie Felton, Circles® Coach

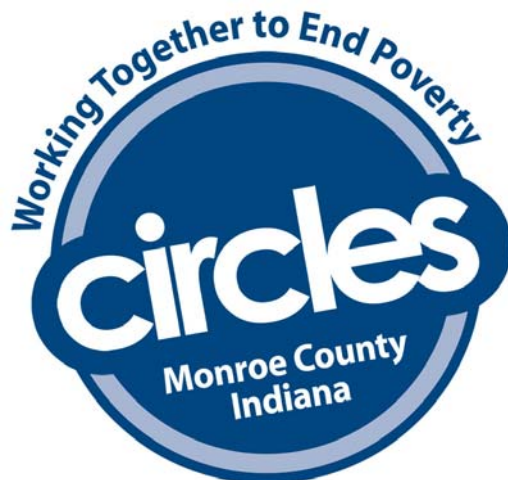
South Central Community Action Program

1500 W. 15th St.

Bloomington, IN 47404

Fax: 812-334-8366

Note: Potential Circle Leaders must also complete and submit an application.
Monroe County Circles® Initiative



Working Together to End Poverty
In Monroe County

We are so glad that you are interested in the
Monroe County Circles® Initiative!

Our hope is that this initiative will help bring community support and resources to people who are on their journey to get out of poverty. It is intended for people who are highly motivated and want to seek and maintain full time employment.

Each participant will set goals in the areas of budgeting, educational training, friends and other things that are important in their lives. Participants will work toward meeting these goals with the support of volunteers from our community.

Hard work, communication, leadership training and meeting attendance are required. Joining Circles® means that you are willing to do whatever it takes to move to a place where you have enough resources and friends in your life to feel successful.

For more information, contact:

Linda Patton, Circle® Coordinator
812-339-3447, extension 206
e-mail: lindap@insccap.org

Carrie Felton, Circle® Coach
812-339-3447 extension 263
Email: carrie@insccap.org

Circles® Volunteer Coordinator
Circles@volunteer@insccap.org

Monroe County Circles® Initiative
Application
Working Together to End Poverty in Monroe County

Name _____ Date _____

Address _____ City _____

State _____ Zip _____ Phone(s) _____

Email: _____

Please list the names of all adults in your household: _____

Please list your children's names and ages:

Name _____ Age ____ Name _____ Age ____

Name _____ Age ____ Name _____ Age ____

Name _____ Age ____ Name _____ Age ____

Do your children live with you Y N If not, where do they live? _____

Do you have visitation rights? Y N Are other children in the household? Y N

I was referred to Monroe County Circles® by: _____ Phone: _____

(This person may be contacted to discuss your situation)

Place of employment

Job Title

Date hired

Highest grade completed (circle) 1-6 7-8 9 10 11 12 Assoc. BA/BS Masters

Currently enrolled in _____

Education Program

Date enrolled _____ Anticipated Completion Date _____

Please circle all sources of income: Wages TANF SSI Unemployment Child
Benefits Support

Total monthly income from all sources _____

Do you have a working vehicle? Yes No Are you on a bus route? Yes No

Please circle all assistance/services your family currently receives: Head Start

Energy Assistance Section 8 BHA Housing Indiana Legal Services

Food Stamps Free/Reduced School Lunches WIC Academic Financial Aid

Centerstone (CBH) Lifeline Linkup Phone Service IDA FSS CASY

MCUM Child Care Salvation Army Child Care Hoosier Healthwise

VIM Clinic HIP Program IMPACT Vocational Rehab Adult Education (GED)

Please list the names & contact information for all people you are currently working with for supportive services:

Agency	Contact Name/Extension
Adult Education	_____
CASY	_____
Centerstone (CBH)	_____
DCS/Child Protection	_____
Food stamps	_____
Free/sliding scale child care	_____
IMPACT	_____
Indiana Legal Services	_____
Probation/Parole	_____
SCCAP Family Development	_____
Section 8 or BHA	_____
TANF	_____
VIM Clinic	_____
WIC	_____

Please provide the names & contact information of any other professionals you receive ongoing supportive services from:

Alcohol/Drug Treatment	_____	Phone	_____
Counselor/Therapist	_____	Phone	_____
Vocational Rehab	_____	Phone	_____
Other Service Provided:	_____		
Name:	_____	Phone	_____
Service provided:	_____		
Name:	_____	Phone	_____
Service provided:	_____		
Name:	_____	Phone	_____

When you sign this page you are giving permission for us to exchange information with the above people if necessary. Information will be used to determine eligibility for the Monroe County Circle® Initiative and track progress toward goals.

Signature	Date
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Place a check next to the areas where you are experiencing difficulties:

Employment Transportation Training/Education Budget
 Legal Parenting Isolation/Friendships Housing
 Alcohol/Drugs Child care Health care costs

I am willing to participate in an interview with Circles® staff. Please initial _____
It is your responsibility to arrange child care during your interview – about 1.5 hrs.

I am willing to participate in a 17-19 week training course. Please initial _____
(every Thursday night, approximately 2.5 hours nightly, child care/dinner provided)

Following successful completion of training course, I am willing to participate in weekly meetings, child care/dinner provided. Please initial _____

I am willing to participate in separate monthly meetings with my allies.
Please initial _____

This is an application for the *Getting Ahead In a Just Gettin' By* training and the Circle Leader position. It does not guarantee you will be accepted and it does not mean you are required to be a Circle Leader. Thank you for your interest and for taking the time to fill out this application.

Please return application to:

Linda Patton, Circles® Coordinator
812-339-3447, extension 206
e-mail: lindap@insccap.org

Carrie Felton, Circles® Coach
812-339-3447 extension 263
Email: carrie@insccap.org

Circles® Volunteer Coordinator
Circles@volunteer@insccap.org