

THE CIRCLES® JOURNEY: 2001-2014
Integrating Research, Practice and Application so that More Communities Thrive

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Summary of Research & Evaluation: (complete document available upon request)

PRINCIPLES/VALUES THAT MAKE CIRCLES® UNIQUE AND EFFECTIVE

Meeting “in circle” is a practice that has been used by communities throughout the world since ancient times to make decisions, solve problems and offer support.

Circles USA is all about collective impact

To finally decrease the rate of poverty in the U.S. Circles offers a longer-term three-phase support system to build capacity rather than providing short-term support and subsidies for basic needs.

Circles chapters work with local schools, businesses, churches, and agencies to answer the call for comprehensive, coordinated, integrated services.

Circles recognizes that poverty impacts different cultural groups in different ways; providing equality of opportunity for success means accounting for different levels of historical trauma as well as present experiences of differential treatment based on race, ethnicity, and other group categories.

Circles recognizes that poverty affects high numbers of women and single mothers.

Circles understands how race, ethnicity and gender work together to affect class mobility and also recognizes that poverty affects individuals in all cultural and social groups.

Circles recognizes that this is the time for a new conversation about poverty.

Tackling poverty requires many people working from many angles: The “Big View” Approach

Circles ensures that the model and curriculum are effective, high quality, and clearly relevant through being internally and externally data-informed and research-driven. As well, Circles is highly informed by participants, community members and ongoing assessment.

CHARACTERISTICS THAT MAKE CIRCLES® UNIQUE AND EFFECTIVE

Circles is a general model that is based on collective impact, has integrity, core elements that are generalizable, and elements that can be adapted to diverse settings and groups across the U.S.

Circles has a comprehensive and relevant theory of change, and a combined focus on individual, community and institutional level change.

Circles addresses eight primary barriers to economic stability.

Individuals moving out of poverty lead the Circle.

Circles includes progressive knowledge/skill development.

Circles is a long-term experience encouraging individuals to: remain involved; practice and grow leadership, financial and social skills; obtain support from multiple people and resources; provide support for each other; and increase the potential for communities to collaborate, problem-solve, and achieve sustainable community level change.

Circles enables those moving out of poverty to practice leadership and become contributors to community level changes.

Circles includes development of diverse forms of social, economic and cultural capital.

Circles creates resource and support networks that enable socioeconomic mobility through cross-class alliances, and sharing knowledge about community resources.

Circles provides training in communication skills in cross-class relationships, leadership, conflict management and problem solving along with tools for creating financial stability.

LOOKING AHEAD: APPLICATIONS OF CURRENT RESEARCH AND PRACTICE IN NEW DIRECTIONS

Circles is exploring “two generational strategies” in several ways.

Circles is working to enable adults and parents to build skills that are essential in ensuring that their children can better manage and minimize the effect of adverse factors on the family

Circles is coordinating a national call to action for Circle Leaders and their Allies to share their first-hand experiences around cliff effects; and with local, state and national leaders, take collective action to make subsidy program adjustments.