



**CIRCLE**of **PARENTS**<sup>®</sup>  
*Sharing Ideas. Sharing Support.*

**April 2019 Virginia Prevention Month  
Conference**

# WHY MUTUAL SELF-HELP SUPPORT GROUPS?

- Parent mutual self-help support groups play an active role in strengthening families.
- In group settings, families find support and gain information, both of which help parents develop resilience and the ability to better handle life's stressful events.
- The premise of parent mutual self-help support groups is that they help promote protective factors



# What is Circle of Parents?

Circle of Parents is a weekly parent support group program which provides parents a place to connect with each other, learn from each other and be sources of strength to each other.

Established in 1999, Circle of Parents is a national network of parenting support groups in 18 states throughout the United States.



# How does Circle of Parents “Work”?

Weekly meetings are co-led by Parent Leaders and Practitioners. Groups size varies (Usually 5 – 9 participants but can be more or less

- Participating parents gain a sense of belonging and relief as they learn that family dynamics and their child’s behavior are more typical than problematic.





Parents become resources to each other inside and outside of the group by sharing coping strategies and parenting skills from parents who have “been there”.

- Parents advocate for themselves and other parents as they both give and receive help and thereby recognize that seeking help is a sign of strength – not a sign of weakness.

# Foundations of Circle of Parents

Circle of Parents is built on **three** foundations:

Family support

Mutual Self-help

Parent Partnerships



# What are the strengths of this family?



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Family's strengths line drawing

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# Circle of Parents® Model


## Foundational Protective Factors....

- Parental Resilience
- Social Connections
- Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development
- Concrete Support in Times of Need
- Social and Emotional Competence of Children



- One Way to Remember the Protective Factors.





# Research results indicate that Circle of Parents is an effective child abuse prevention program

- **Parent mutual self-help support groups adhere to these five guidelines in their core philosophy and have gained national recognition in the campaign to prevent child abuse and neglect.**
- **Over the past four decades, research on risk factors and conditions associated with child abuse and neglect have pointed to the need for social support and the benefits that a parent support group can provide. (Falconer, 2006; Pion-Berlin and Kolinsky, 2000).**



# 2011 Protective Factors Survey

## National Circle of Parents Research

- The **Circle of Parents National Evaluation Project** had ten states/major metropolitan areas participate. Circle of Parents groups in Milwaukee, Illinois, Colorado, Connecticut, Kansas, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Vermont, Washington and Florida contributed to this study.

### **Conclusion:**

- Based on this set of results, there is evidence that these Circle of Parents® participants had statistically significant changes in the expected response directions across 4 out of 5 protective factors categories with both the conventional pre/post and the retrospective pre/post formats.



# Why A Parent Leader? ....

- Improves the quality of programs, services and the community itself
- Increases responsiveness of service providers
- Shares responsibility for maintaining the group
- Builds an advocacy base
- Increases understanding of cultures
- Brings fresh and creative solutions
- Increases visibility and respect for program in the community
- Improves the ability of the program to accomplish its mission, prevent child abuse and neglect and strengthen families through mutual self-help parent support groups.



# A Parent Leader's Voice

*"Parent self-help support groups are effective because parents are the experts; parents have been there and done it. When you get information from someone who has already been through it in some way, it is more effective."*

*- parent leader*

# A Parent Leader's Voice

"Sometimes I feel like, oh, maybe I should just have the answers. And I don't. It's way better not to have answers because we draw upon the wisdom of the whole group. And sometimes there is no answer. It's just a matter of being there and saying we feel for you, we care about you, and we want to see you next week, and we're with you on this."

- parent leader

## Let's hear from our panel about their experiences with Circle of Parents

Olyvia Wilson - Greater Richmond SCAN

Keli Lichty – NRV CARES - Christiansburg

Cecilia Gonzales – Family Focus – Newport News



# Need more information?

- Check out the Circle of Parents website at [www.circleofparents.org](http://www.circleofparents.org) and [familiesforwardva.org](http://familiesforwardva.org).
- Julie Rivnak-McAdam – Families Forward VA Program Director (804)39-6166 X 311  
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