

## **Program Description**

### **Girls Circle**

#### **Introduction:**

Girls Circle is a structured 8-12 week program for girls ages 9-18 years. The program integrates relational theory, resiliency practices, and skills training in a specific format. It is designed to increase positive connections, personal and collective strengths, and competence in girls.

When girls have the opportunity to voice their ideas and opinions in a safe environment it strengthens their confidence and promotes self-esteem. It also encourages them to think more critically about their behavior and choices. By exploring cultural expectations in a supportive environment, girls gain a greater awareness of their options and strengthen their ability to make choices that are consistent with their values, interests, and talents.

#### **Background:**

Founders Beth Hossfeld and Giovanna Taormina were motivated to develop the Girls Circle program due to the severe national epidemics of depression, body image problems, dating violence, self-harming behaviors, relational aggression, etc. among female youth.

Inspired by positive feedback from the Girls Circles, the first Girls Circle facilitator training was held in 1997. The gender based model has received recognition from mental health, child welfare, schools, and community based programs. In 2006, they partnered with experienced male and female facilitators to develop the Boys Council model in recognition of the need for healthy male role models.

This program has been successfully implemented several times in the Western Region and supported through the provision of community grants such as the Community Addictions Prevention and Mental Health Promotion fund. It has been delivered by community agencies and within schools. Feedback from these programs is positive.

#### **Purpose:**

Girls Circle aims to counteract social and interpersonal forces that impede girls' growth and development by promoting an emotionally safe setting and structure within which girls can develop caring relationships and use authentic voices.

#### **Goals:**

- Create a safe space to address risky behaviors
- Build on protective factors
- Improve relationships

**Target Audience:**

The target audience includes all girls and young women ages 9-18 years.

**Description of Activities:**

The Girls Circle guide offers step-by-step instructions to lead a support circle. The Girls Circle is usually held for 1-2 hours once a week. Each week, the facilitator leads the participants through a format that includes each girl taking turns talking and listening to one another respectfully about their concerns and interests. The participants have the opportunity to express themselves creatively through role playing, drama, journaling, and other activities. Gender specific themes are introduced including being a girl, trusting ourselves, friendships, body image, and drugs and alcohol, among others.

**Budget:**

Delivering the program within budgetary constraints is possible due to the in-kind contribution of other agencies that may also support clients in other program areas. The resources to deliver this program can be borrowed from Western Health. The budget may include activity supplies, space rental, snacks, transportation, program incentives and childcare.

*Sample Past Budget*

<b>Item</b>	<b>Estimated Cost</b>
Small Honoraria (2 Respect Team members to assist with delivery of program) \$50 each	\$100
Materials (mural paper, markers, Bristol board, string, balloons, art supplies, pens, glue sticks, buttons, etc.)	\$100
Snacks	\$200
Program Incentives	\$100
Equipment & space rental	In-Kind
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$500</b>

**Requirements to support staff:**

The human resource component consists of staff time for the preparation and delivery of this program. The Mental Health Promotion Consultant and the Addiction Prevention Consultant are also available for consultation and support throughout planning and running the program.

**Evaluation:**

Research conducted in 2007 on this program (available from <http://girlscircle.com/research.aspx>) suggests increases in skills were developed over the short term and that improvement in long-term outcomes was statistically significant.

Short term outcomes:

- Finding things in common with a new person
- Trying to see beyond girls' reputations
- Telling adults what they need
- Feeling good about their body
- Picking friends that treat them the way they want to be treated
- Telling people how much they mean to them

Long term outcomes:

- Increase in self-efficacy
- Decrease in self-harming behaviors
- Decrease in rates of alcohol use
- Increases in attachment to school
- Increases in positive body image
- Increases in social supports

**Indicators:**

Girls Circle: The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (SES) is administered with participants as a pre and post measure. It is a 10-item self-report measure of global self-esteem that consists of 10 statements related to overall feelings of self-worth or self-acceptance. It is in the public domain and free of charge.

An evaluation and feedback form can also be developed to ask the participants about their satisfaction with the group and the various activities.

**A Sample Timeline/Action Plan:**

Step One: Recruitment of participants including parental consents

Step Two: Arrangement of childcare for Mother's night

Step Three: Purchase Supplies

Step Four: Running of Program for 8-12 consecutive weeks. Administer pre-test

Step Five: Evaluation of the program and Celebration

<b>Week</b>	<b>Theme</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Required Materials</b>
1	<i>A Friendly Place</i>	Group Guidelines, Posters, and Name	Poster paper and markers
2	<i>Being My Own Friend First</i>	"The Qualities I Possess" Activity	Paper (color, white), scissors, yarn, markers, glue, and copies of cut-outs
3	<i>Being Included, Being Left Out</i>	Pair Sharing, Group Sharing	Paper and pens or markers
4	<i>Same and Different</i>	Questions sheets, Drawings	Questions sheet handout and crayons
5	<i>The Whole is Greater than All the Parts</i>	Mini-Group Posters and Whole Group Mural	Posters, mural paper, and markers
6	<i>Feuds, Followers, and Fairness</i>	Role-Plays	Situation Sheet, white board or poster paper, and markers
7	<i>Our Qualities &amp; Strengths</i>	Chain of Strengths	Colored index cards, markers, string, and hole puncher
8	<i>Appreciation Celebration</i>	Flower Petals	Colorful construction paper, scissors, felt pens, treats, and evaluation forms