

Summary

The following report represents data on Circle Leaders who have been a part of the National Circles Campaign since July 2008. Circle Leaders are low-income individuals who have made a commitment to build social capital with middle and upper-income Allies, attend community meetings, and work towards goal attainment for greater economic stability. Circle Leaders are asked to submit personal progress reports at six-month intervals.

There are several data points that Circle Leaders report on:

- **Income:** Earned Income, Social Security Income, Child Support
- **Public Assistance:** Food Stamps, Cash Assistance, Unemployment, etc.
- **Assets:** Checking and Savings Account, Other investments including property equity
- **Debts:** Back rent, overdue utilities, unpaid student loans, unpaid medical bills, wage garnishments, other unpaid credit (excluding home mortgage)
- **Employment:** Began employment (part-time or full-time) at some point in their participation of Circles
- **Education:** Enrolled in a formal training or educational program at some point in their participation in Circles
- **Insurance:** Obtained insurance at some point during their participation in Circles

Overview of Model

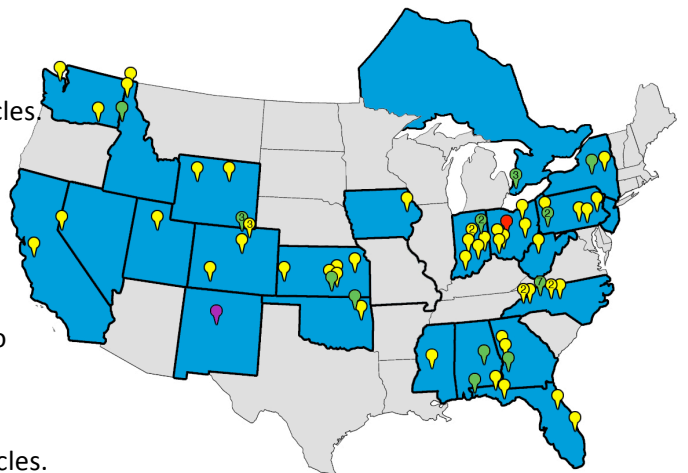
Circles is designed to not only help families out of poverty, but also to initiate changes in the community that result in eliminating barriers to economic stability. The long-range vision of Circles is to eliminate the condition of poverty altogether.

Circles USA has drawn wide-spread attention for helping families and inspiring communities to commit to new long-term solutions that address this persistent issue. Circles is interested in two levels of results: First of all, families are moving from poverty to economic stability and secondly changes are taking place in the community to build a bridge so others can move out of poverty. This report represents the economic stability results for low income families involved in Circles (**Circle Leaders**).

The core of Circles consists of two or more middle and upper income volunteers, “**Allies**,” who are matched with a family who is ready to move out of poverty. The Allies provide friendship, coaching, networking and anything else necessary to help families achieve their self-sufficiency goals. The participating families are known as Circle Leaders and are expected to set goals and take the action steps needed for them to become economically stable, while helping community leaders learn how to help others out of poverty.

Circles also provides weekly meals with free child development services while the adults focus on their economic stability goals. Existing community services are customized by the Circles to achieve results. In addition, each community’s Circles initiative is led by a **Guiding Coalition** comprised of five teams responsible for development and implementation of the Circles approach; conducting weekly meetings, generating resources, and linking families to education, training and jobs. The Guiding Coalition organizes a “Big View” meeting once a month, which is an open house for the community with the goal of illuminating participants on the barriers families face as they move towards becoming economically stable and eliminating these obstacles.

Poverty creates severe financial hardship for communities, states, and our nation. According to a report from the Center for American Progress (From Poverty to Prosperity 2007), our nation spends **\$500 billion dollars** a year on the fall-out from children raised in poverty. For a fraction of the cost, Circles provides an opportunity to develop a powerful new approach to helping families out of poverty, reduce wasteful spending and increase the number of economically stable households in every community that adopts Circles.



Evaluation Methods

This report is based on progress data that is collected from each Circle Leader at initial engagement and every six months following.

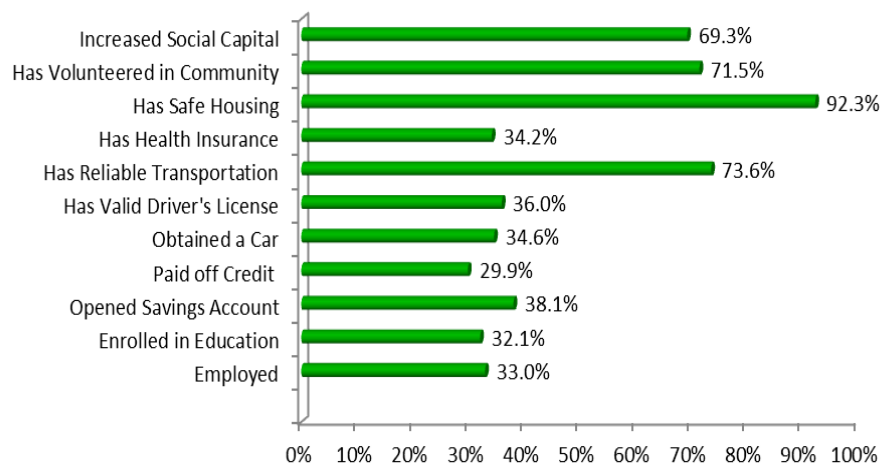
Wilder Research, a division of the Amherst H. Wilder Foundation based in St. Paul, Minnesota, worked with National Circles® staff in the development of a consistent evaluation instrument for use in all participating sites. The **Circle Leader Progress Report** is completed by each Circle Leader and at least one trained staff, volunteer, or Ally working together to answer the questions. It includes closed-ended questions that assess household composition, financial status (including sources and amounts of income, public benefits, assets, and debt), health conditions and health insurance, education, employment, housing, social support, child care, transportation, and community engagement. It also includes two open-ended questions to identify the most important goals the Circle Leader has set for the coming six months as part of Circles® and the goals that have been accomplished during the preceding six months as part of involvement in Circles®. Staff in participating sites is trained in the use of the instrument.

The national data collection process began in July 2008 and baseline data for each community was compiled as new Circle Leaders joined the movement. On May 1, 2010, the data collection system moved to an on-line administration, overseen by Communities Collaboration Incorporated (CCI). Data from July 1, 2008 through April 30, 2010 was merged in the new on-line database. The National Circles® Leadership Team partners with CCI and local sites to ensure that data is consistently being entered into the web-based system and that aggregate reports are generated annually.

Percentage of Improvement

Charts of Data collected from July 2008-December 2012

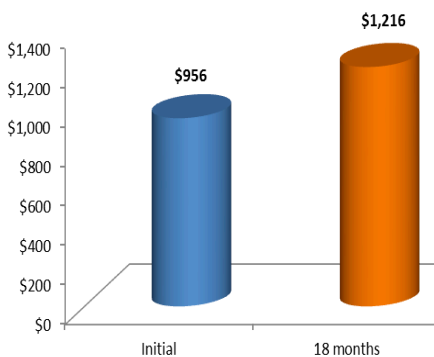
This chart reflects **518** people who have completed at least a 6 month survey, & is based on improving at ANY point after completing Circle Leader training.



Included in the data results are:

- **2178** initial surveys that Circle Leaders have completed
- **1014** follow up assessments
- **518** Circle Leaders that have completed 6 month surveys
- **269** Circle Leaders that have completed 12 month surveys
- **143** Circle Leaders that have completed 18 month surveys

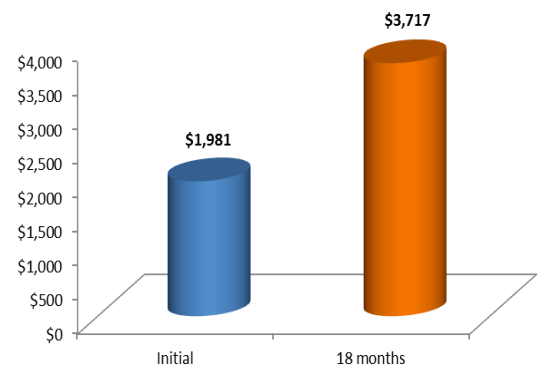
Income after 18 months of involvement – 27% Increase



Public Benefits after 18 months of involvement – 27% Decrease



Assets after 18 months of involvement – 88% Increase



Additional Evaluation Information

This report focuses primarily on indicators measuring levels of improved economic stability. Additional reviews/evaluations of Circles can be found at www.circlesusa.org.