

Circles®

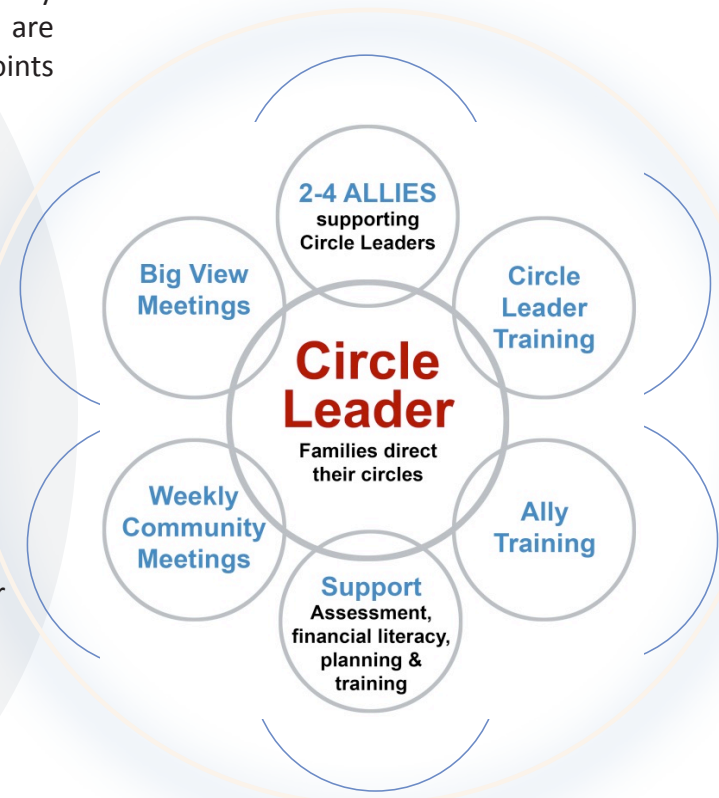
NATIONAL CAMPAIGN

2011 National Circles® Impact Report

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 persons who have made a commitment to build relationships with middle-income persons, 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, Individual Development Accounts
Debts:	Back rent, overdue utilities, unpaid student loans, unpaid medical bills, wage garnishments, overdue credit, other bills
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 as some point in their participation of Circles®
Insurance:	Obtained insurance at some point during their participation in Circles®
Transportation Housing:	Change in stability of transportation and housing
Community Engagement:	Having support system and being connected to the broader community (volunteerism)



Overview of Model

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

The National Circles® Campaign has drawn widespread attention for helping families and inspiring communities to commit to new long-term solutions that address this persistent issue. The National Circles® Campaign 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 the Circles Campaign (**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 self-sufficiency goals. Existing community services are customized by the Circles® to achieve results. In addition, each community’s Circle® Campaign 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 Institute for Research on Poverty, 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 the following intervals: prior to the initial Circle Leader training component, at the completion of training, and every six months after.

Wilder Research, a division of the Amherst H. Wilder Foundation based in St. Paul, Minnesota, worked with National Circles® Campaign 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®. Staffs in participating sites are 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 campaign. 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 Economic Stability Team of the National Guiding Coalition 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 every six months.

Charts of Data collected from July 2008-December 2011

This chart reflects 340 people who have completed at least a 6 month survey, and are based on improving at ANY point after completing Circle Leader training.

Data Indicator	Initial Survey Answered NO	Follow up Survey Answered YES	Percentage
Employed	98	45	45.9%
Enrolled in Education	246	77	31.3%
Opened Savings Account	338	131	38.7%
Paid off Credit Card or Payday Loan	297	84	28.2%
Has Valid Driver's License	77	28	36.3%
Received a Car	267	83	31.0%
Has Reliable Transportation	74	53	71.6%
Has Health Insurance	136	42	30.8%
Has Safe Housing	45	40	88.8%
Has Volunteered in Community	186	135	72.5%
Increased "Number of friends and family members that I can count on for help."			69.9%

Included in the data results are 1724 initial surveys that Circle Leaders have completed and 837 follow up assessments. There are 149 Circle Leaders that have completed 12 month surveys and 80 that have completed 18 month surveys.

Conclusion

This report focuses primarily on indicators measuring levels of improved economic stability. Additional tools are currently being used and are in development that reflect the more complete picture of Circles® impact including: Community improvements, Ally growth and Child outcomes. For more information on the results reflected in this report please contact the National Campaign Office at

marlo@circlescampaing.org.

