

--- Networks for Girls ---

The Girls Circle Program

The Girls Circle program is a gender-specific model program that aims to support adolescent girls' development by increasing protective factors (such as self efficacy, body image, and perceived social support) while reducing known risk factors. The program offers a structured support group setting where girls are able to use authentic voices and comfortably absorb essential information relating to their social, emotional, and physical well-being. The curriculum of a Girls Circle will typically focus on and include interpersonal communication skills, body image, safe dating, substance abuse, decision making, conflict resolution, peer pressure, resiliency, goal setting, and healthy relationships, among others.

The Center for Dispute Resolution has contracted with Programs for Youth to facilitate the Girls Circle program, which will be offered to Networks for Girls program youth who have completed the Family Group Conference (FGC) process. Upon completing the FGC process, girls will be scheduled in the next available Girls Circle program course. Each Girls Circle program course will last for 8 weeks, followed by a graduation evening. The group will meet for 1.5 hours per week, one evening a week, for 9 weeks (for the 8-week program and a graduation night) at the offices of the Center for Dispute Resolution. Weekly sessions will include activities such as role playing, affirmation circles, craft projects, journaling, and guided discussions drawn from the Girls Circle Activity Guides and specifically designed for the development of the skills and outcomes described above. Groups will consist of approximately 8 adolescent girls. Certificates of Achievement will be presented to all participants at a small graduation ceremony within one week of the completion of the 8-week program. Parents and guardians are invited to the Girls Circle graduation to celebrate with their daughters.

Attendance and participation will be closely monitored by the Girls Circle facilitator, who will report back to the CDR's program director each week with a list of who attended and participated in each session. These reports will be compiled by the Networks for Girls program coordinator, and this information will be shared with the Greene County Juvenile Justice Center.

Current research into the efficacy of the use of the Girls Circle program in schools, community sites, and juvenile justice settings indicates that the structure and curricula of the Girls Circle program helps foster respect in adolescent girls for themselves and works to improve their relationships. Girls Circle participants reported an increase in six skills developed over the short-term: finding things they have 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; and telling people how much they mean to them. Participants also reported an improvement for four long-term outcomes: a decrease in self-harming behavior; a decrease in rates of alcohol use; an increase in attachment to school; and an increase in self-efficacy. Additionally, girls in the juvenile justice system who participated in the Girls Circle program were more likely to experience gains in perceived social support than were youth not involved in the justice system. The conclusion drawn from this research was that the program may help adolescent girls involved in the justice system "begin to develop the relationships they need to unravel cyclical involvement with the juvenile justice system."

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