

Grant Writer's Template



A guide for those seeking funding for the
Unity Circle™ model

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Table of Contents

About this Template	1
Our Mission	1
Unity Circle Vision.....	1
Brief Program Descriptions	2
Who is the Program Designed For?	2
Structure	2
Service Sectors & Settings	3
Theoretical Foundation	3
Evidence Base.....	3
Evidence-Based Practices	4
Training.....	4
Continuing Education	5
Curricula.....	5
Consultation.....	6
Quality Assurance Tool	7
Measurement Tools	7
Supplies.....	7
 Sector Specific Risks & Needs	
Justice	8
Schools: Program Strengths & Components	11
Public Health.....	14
Mental Health & Behavioral Health.....	16
 Endnotes	 19

About this Template

This guide provides information for use in writing grant proposals to implement the Unity Circle™ program. It includes: *Our Mission, Our Vision, Brief Program Descriptions, Who is the Program Designed for?, Structure, Service Sectors and Settings, Theoretical Foundation, Evidence Based Program, Evidence Based Practices, Additional Outcomes, Training, Continuing Education, Curricula, Sector-Specific Needs/ Program Components, Consultation, Quality Assurance, Measurement Tools, Supplies*, and more.

Information relevant to all settings where One Circle Foundation circle programs may be implemented.

Additional information pertaining to specific sectors such as schools, justice, mental health, etc. In this section, the guide breaks out the different service sectors, identifies risks and needs of youth within that sector, and/or that sector's objectives, then describes the program strengths that will reduce risks and provide needs to youth, and/or fulfill sector objectives.

Please note that certain information will apply across multiple sectors, as many youth receive services across multiple sectors (e.g., schools, justice, foster and child services, mental health) simultaneously or over time. **Therefore, read through the entire sector section to gain a more complete description of program strengths applicable to your setting.**

Please contact our offices for further questions or assistance: info@onecirclefoundation.org.

Our Mission

One Circle Foundation transforms lives through gender-responsive circle program models that promote resiliency and healthy relationships in children, adolescents, families, and adults.

We recognize health relationships are the central feature upon which individuals, families and communities grow and develop. We provide training, technical assistance, curriculum, and consultation on research-based, best practice circle program models to create, restore, and sustain healthy relationships.

We envision a world with an available and accessible “circle for every child and young person” to help them reach their highest potential, to be connected, engaged citizens and leaders, preparing them for higher education, technical training, and meaningful careers. Girls Circle, The Council for Boys and Young Men, Unity Circle, and Women's Circle are gender transformative circle models implemented in all systems of care, including education, behavioral and public health, juvenile justice and other child-centered services, non-profit agencies, institutions, and community-based programs, as well as federally - and state-supported programs, across the United States and internationally.

Unity Circle Vision

Through the inclusive, expansive and affirming experiences of the Unity Circle, all youth, young adults, and their communities know that they have safe places to be themselves; each person is valued, connected, and respected for who they are. Intersectional youth, LGBTQ+ youth, BIPOC and allies, as teens and adults, share challenges and strengths, express themselves authentically, gain support, and develop skills and resources to cope, to celebrate and to thrive.

Brief Program Description

Unity Circle™ is a structured support group model for youth and adults of all genders and races that addresses critical needs and strengths while honoring and celebrating the unique lived experiences of circle participants. Rooted in diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) principles, it aims to boldly counteract racial and social forces that impede growth and development in all types of environments. It promotes an affirming, emotionally safe and brave approach in which all youth and/or adults can develop supportive and healthy connections and resiliency.

While all One Circle Foundation circle models are culturally responsive and inclusive and expansive of diverse identities, the Unity Circle centers the voices, experiences, strengths, and needs of BIPOC and LGBTQ+ youth and adults and allies.

Who is the Program Designed For?

This model is a safe space beyond the gender binary that responds to the needs and strengths of LGBTQ+ youth, gender diverse and gender non-conforming youth, and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) populations, intersectional youth, allies and adults.

For youth ages 9-18; or teens and/or adults, depending on the selected curriculum.

Structure

- 1 or more sessions per week, depending on setting
- 90 minutes for in person delivery, or may be adapted for school days with more restrictive time limitations
- 40 minutes for online delivery
- 6-10 sessions or more, OR, in high transition settings (i.e., hospitals, detention, community schools) may be offered in distinct one-session units
- 5-10 youth of similar developmental age; or, for the MGRB-IA Activity Guide, may be offered for high school youth and/or adults
- 1 or 2 adult facilitators, ideally at least one person representing the diversity of identities or similar life experiences of participants in the circle
- Physically, culturally, and emotionally safe; protected, confidential
- Co-created circle agreements and expectations based on mutual respect, caring, inclusion, confidentiality
- Legal, ethical guidelines

The accessible 7-step Unity Circle format promotes safety, consistency, caring relationships, a range of expressive opportunities, skill-building and empowerment in the structure that follows:

1. Opening Ritual
2. Theme Introduction
3. Warm Up
4. Check-in
5. Activity
6. Sharing of Activity
7. Closing Ritual

Service Sectors & Settings

All youth-serving settings, especially vulnerable and marginalized populations in:

- Schools [4th-5th graders in Elementary; Middle and High schools through 12th grade; Charter; Community; Alternative]
- Justice [Across continuum of care, diversion, probation, detention, supervision, secure, residential, aftercare]
- Child Services; Foster Youth, Transitional Age Youth (TAY)
- Mental Health; Behavioral Health
- Public Health
- Community-Based Programs
- After School Programs
- Recreation Departments; Camps; Outdoor Adventure
- Faith communities
- Neighborhoods, Family settings

For curriculum programs serving adults, the above and additional settings:

- Colleges, Universities
- Justice: Parole and all levels of programming
- Workforce Development
- Workplace
- Organizations – staff, boards, consultants and advisors serving youth, adults and families
- Businesses
- Holistic Healing Settings

Theoretical Foundation

Relational-Cultural Theory¹ & integrates complementary approaches:

- Resiliency Theory; Strengths/Assets-based²
- Gender- Responsive and Expansive
- Gender-Transformative: critically explores cultural norms, gender/race/sexual orientation/identity stereotypes and intersectionality
- Preventative and Restorative
- Adolescent Brain Development and Interpersonal Neurobiology
- Trauma-Informed, Trauma-Responsive
- Intersectionality Theory³ and Minority Strengths Theory⁴
- Motivational Interviewing
- SEL – Social Emotional Learning
- Rite of passage

Evidence Base

The Unity Circle™ model is designed within the same principles, theoretical foundations, structure, and best practices of all One Circle Foundation circle models.

- The One Circle Foundation's Girls Circle® model has been established as an evidence-based program and has shown efficacy in community and justice settings. Girls Circle demonstrated effectiveness in reducing delinquency/reducing recidivism for girls.⁵ Girls Circle is the first ever gender-specific program to have demonstrated effect on reducing delinquency in rigorous evaluation sponsored by the OJJDP (Gies, 2015).
- The Council for Boys and Young Men® has been studied in community and justice settings and shown increases in educational engagement and pride in ethnicity, and reductions in conflict and adherence to rigid and harmful masculinity beliefs.

The Unity Circle model and curricula build and expand upon previous years of outcomes with One Circle Foundation circle models that have demonstrated⁶:

- increased positive relationships with peers
- increased positive relationships with adults
- increased school engagement
- increased school efficacy
- increased self-efficacy

Evidence-Based Practices

Fully integrated within the Unity Circle model and all One Circle Foundation programming:

- Strengths-Based Approach^{7,8,9}
- Motivational Interviewing¹⁰
- Gender-Transformative^{11,12}
- Trauma-Informed¹³

Training

For all service providers, facilitators and program administrators of Unity Circle model programs AND for those implementing any or all One Circle Foundation circle programs, the following trainings are highly recommended. *One Circle Foundation is a sole source provider of these trainings.*

- **Mitigating Gender & Racial Bias: Intersectionality and Allyship (MGRB-IA) Training**

Additionally, for understanding the One Circle Foundation's overall approach and best practices, Unity Circle facilitators should attend *either or both*.

- **Girls Circle Facilitator Training**
- **The Council for Boys and Young Men Facilitator Training**

Please see the training page on our website for more information: www.onecirclefoundation.org/training. *Those seeking grants for training are strongly encouraged to contact training@onecirclefoundation.org for an accurate quote prior to submission of grant proposals.*

The Mitigating Gender & Racial Bias: Intersectionality and Allyship Training (MGRBI-IA)

Explores the impacts of gender and racial bias on youth, families, organizations and communities. It will consider the dominant narratives that further disparities in safety, education, physical and mental health, and opportunity for those who live at the intersections of discriminated identities such as gender, race, age, ethnicity, culture, sexual orientation, and gender identity. Through an exploration of implicit bias, participants will recognize how internal and often hidden assumptions around gender and race will harm relationships and add further trauma and disconnection for youth and adults with intersectional identities. The training ultimately promotes skills to develop allyship and to mitigate gender and racial bias within an organization's youth development framework including One Circle Foundation's (OCF) program models – *Girls Circle* and *The Council for Boys and Young Men*.

Participants across all youth-serving sectors will learn foundational principles for inclusive and expansive culturally responsive programming. The training provides knowledge and skill- building to promote healthy youth development, empathy, and allyship for youth of color and LGBTQ+ identities. Content and activities are designed to reduce gender and racial bias and to build resilience and effectiveness within organizational culture and youth services. Training presentation includes current trends, statistics, national reports, and research.

This is an experiential and interactive training that utilizes lecture, role play, demonstration, video, small group discussion, activities, and brainstorming to stimulate participants' learning and skills development. Trainers provide strengths-based, relationship-focused techniques and best practices that create a safe and positive learning environment.

The subject matter relates to the scope of practice for service providers in education, behavioral health, justice, drug and alcohol services, public health, child welfare, and community-based services.

- Private In-Person Training: \$11,475 for 20-27 people, \$299 per each additional person + expenses (location rental fee, continental breakfast, supplies)
- Private Online Training: \$7,475 for 20-27 people, \$299 per each additional person
- Public Trainings: Online – 2 half-days / In-Person – 1 full day. \$299 per person
- 15% curricula discount provided upon attending a training. Certificate upon completion of full training.

Continuing Education

Mitigating Gender & Racial Bias: Intersectionality and Allyship (MGRB-IA) Training: 7 CE's for LCSW's in states approved by the NASW; 7.5 CE's for LMFT's, LCSW's, LPCC's, and LEP's by CEPA for the CA BBS. Approved provider by CEPA-CAMFT, Provider #132313; 7.25 Hours offered to MFT's, LPCC's, and Social Workers in Ohio approved by the OH CSWMFT Board. *One Circle Foundation maintains responsibility for this program/course and its content.*

Please also see foundational trainings (Girls Circle and/or The Council for Boys and Young Men):

www.onecirclefoundation.org/training

Curricula

Mitigating Gender & Racial Bias: Intersectionality and Allyship Activity Guide: This curriculum is adapted for in-person and online delivery. \$200 | *For Teens and/or Adults* | 8 Sessions

Mitigating Gender & Racial Bias: Intersectionality and Allyship is an 8-session Unity Circle activity guide that promotes dialogue and understanding around racial inequities and discriminatory views and practices toward youth and/or adults of diverse racial and gender identities and sexual orientations and builds resilience through allyship strategies and relational healing. From within this relational context, it offers discussions and experiential activities to promote awareness and equity, and ultimately to improve health and well-being for youth and/or adults of color and LGBTQ+ identities through knowledge, empathy, and allyship skills and actions. Includes instruction for in-person and online facilitation. Appropriate for older teenagers and adults. Each of the eight fully developed sessions is designed for 90-120 minutes. Also available as a digital flipbook for \$120.

Session 1 Theme: Establishing Our Circle | *Activity/Description: Community agreements, discussion, community builders*

Session 2 Theme: Implicit Bias | *Activity/Description: Large group discussion, small group discussion, creative activity*

Session 3 Theme: How We Are Defined, Intersectionality | *Activity/Description: Large group discussion, small group discussion, creative activity*

Session 4 Theme: Promoting Connection; Intersectionality Part 2 | *Activity/Description: Video clip, large group discussion, small group creative activity*

Session 5 Theme: The Story That is Told – Exploring Dominant Narratives | *Activity/Description: Large group discussion, small group creative activity*

Session 6 Theme: SOGIE: Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity & Expression | *Activity/Description: definitions with discussion, gender norm drawings, role-play*

Session 7 Theme: Supporting Others: Allyship | *Activity/Description: Large group discussion, small group creative activity*

Session 8 Theme: Community Resilience: Onward as Allies | *Activity/Description: Commitments to action, discussion, creative activity, community appreciation*

All Together Rising: Sessions for Youth in Adversity: \$147 | Ages 12-18 | 10 Supplemental Sessions

These in-depth sessions address eight familiar but adverse conditions affecting many youth. Designed as trauma-responsive supplemental sessions to implement individually within any One Circle program, this collection serves as a go-to resource for specific topics offering enhanced awareness, support, and tools for youth. While Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) disrupt adolescent development, Positive Childhood Experiences (PCEs) counter these effects and promote overall well-being. Topics were requested by certified facilitators to respond to needs and harness strengths of youth in Girls Circle®, The Council for Boys and Young Men®, Unity Circle™, or other youth development programs. PLEASE NOTE: This is not a standalone activity guide; rather, it's a collection of topic-based sessions specifically designed to be used individually to supplement existing activity guides. Also available as a digital flipbook for \$88.

Session 1 Theme: Community Violence – Part 1 | *Activity/Description: Discussion: Community Violence; Small groups: Break It Down and Prevent*

Session 2 Theme: Community Violence – Part 2 | *Activity/Description: Discussion: Community Violence – Roots and Effects; Creative activity: Healing Pathways; Optional additional activities at end of session*

Session 3 Theme: Dealing with Loss & Grief | *Activity/Description: Discussion: What Are Loss and Grief?; Creative Activity: Healing Heart Puzzles*

Session 4 Theme: Food Insecurity | *Activity/Description: Discussion: Food Insecurity with brief video; Community Mapping: Food Access and Food Deserts*

Session 5 Theme: Homelessness & Housing Insecurity | *Activity/Description: Discussion with Stories: Homelessness and Housing Insecurity; Creative activity “My Home” and “What I Need” (for younger teens) or Pair Shares (for teens of all ages)*

Session 6 Theme: Labor Trafficking | *Activity/Description: Discussion: Labor Trafficking of Youth; Posters: Safety and Resources for Teens*

Session 7 Theme: Sex Trafficking | *Activity/Description: Sex Trafficking: Misconceptions & Facts; Pairs Task and Group Discussion: Signs and Effects of Trafficking, and How to Prevent or Assist a Youth Being Trafficked; Decorating a notes box*

Session 8 Theme: Teen Depression – Part 1 | *Activity/Description: Posters Walk and Symptoms Talk: Understanding Teen Depression; Drawing or Journaling for Self-Expression*

Session 9 Theme: Teen Depression – Part 2 | *Activity/Description: Teen Experts Panel; Caring Messages Exchange; Optional: Seven-Day Activity Plan*

Session 10 Theme: Teen Suicide Prevention | *Activity/Description: Discussion: Teen Suicide Prevention; Creating Teen Suicide Prevention Posters*

PRIDE Activity Guide: This curriculum is adapted for in-person and online delivery. \$225 | Ages 9-18 | 10 Sessions

A 10-Session Unity Circle guide for LGBTQ+ youth of all gender identities, sexual orientations and allies: *transgender, cisgender, nonbinary, gender non-conforming, agender, gender fluid, gender questioning, two-spirit; gay, bisexual, lesbian, straight, and pansexual*. This circle program provides a safe and supportive environment for all youth with expansive gender identities and sexual orientations and their allies. It actively counters isolation, internalized self-rejection and other adverse health and mental health effects on LGBTQ+ youth due to marginalization. With respect for individual safety, control and preference, and with no requirement for self-disclosure, the circle promotes belonging, inherent value, and community resilience. Includes instruction for in-person and online facilitation. *Also available in Spanish – **ORGULLO:** \$225*

Session 1 Theme: Establishing Our Circle | *Activity/Description: Community agreements, brief discussion, community building*

Session 2 Theme: Identity – Born This Way & Role Models | *Activity/Description: Discussion about role models, values activity*

Session 3 Theme: Choices – Closets, Coming out, & Comfort Zones | *Activity/Description: Brief video and discussion, If You Could See Me – individual drawing*

Session 4 Theme: Culture/Ethnicity and Family | *Activity/Description: Concentric circles pair-shares, Caterpillar-to-Butterfly*

Session 5 Theme: Struggle | *Activity/Description: Struggle board, Compassion Creation*

Session 6 Theme: Self-Acceptance | *Activity/Description: Tapping introduction and videos, Tapping Together*

Session 7 Theme: Healthy Intimate Relationship Behaviors | *Activity/Description:* Don't Lose Your Marbles: A Decision-Making Game, The 3C's Word Match

Session 8 Theme: Rights, Equity, Resistance & Allyship | *Activity/Description:* Rights Identification Knowledge Hunt and History of LGBTQ+ community, video: Youth Resilience in Philly and Strategy Brainstorms

Session 9 Theme: Resilience | *Activity/Description:* Resilience discussion, Power Shields

Session 10 Theme: Celebrating Our Journey | *Activity/Description:* Celebrate Who We Are – discussion, My Journey – individual writing and drawing, certificates

Sex in the Digital Age: A Supplemental Guide to Talking with Teens about Pornography and Sexting: \$90 | Ages 11-18 | 6 Sessions

A supplemental curriculum with essential tools and resources to promote healthy development for youth of all genders growing up in today's digital world. Providing skills development for media literacy, digital citizenship, and more accurate public health and sexual safety information, this curriculum harnesses the relational strengths of youth to effectively explore the complex intersecting topics of technology, sexuality, and relationships.

Session 1 Theme: Sex in the Digital Age | *Activity/Description:* Community agreements, brief discussion, community building

Session 2 Theme: Whose Body is it Anyway?! | *Activity/Description:* Discussion about role models, values activity

Session 3 Theme: Consent Must be Invited to the Party! | *Activity/Description:* Brief video and discussion, If You Could See Me – individual drawing

Session 4 Theme: Reel vs. Real | *Activity/Description:* Concentric circles pair-shares, Caterpillar-to-Butterfly

Session 5 Theme: Self-Advocacy is Safe & Sexy – Communicating About What We Want | *Activity/Description:* Struggle board, Compassion Creation

Session 6 Theme: Sharing Your Super Sexy Brain | *Activity/Description:* Tapping introduction and videos, Tapping Together

Consultation

All phases including: planning, training, implementation, adaptations for special populations or settings, facilitator learning communities, evaluation, quality assurance & fidelity, specific populations and more. Available by arrangement.

Quality Assurance Tool

One Circle Foundation provides guidance on maximizing quality assurance and fidelity processes for optimal results.

- A Quality Assurance tool for use with all One Circle Foundation programs is available upon request for both facilitator's self-assessment and program fidelity assurance through our offices.
- Organizations may contract One Circle Foundation to provide Q/A and fidelity services or coaching by arrangement.

Please contact our offices at info@onecirclefoundation.org for more information.

Measurement Tools

Please speak with our Director of Programs or Executive Director if your organization is interested in measuring outcomes or exploring measurement instruments.

One Circle Foundation recommends that evaluation instruments align with the purpose, theory, practices and aims and objectives of the Unity Circle programs, and may be adapted from public domain validated instruments, and/or adapted using the surveys previously applied in studies of Girls Circle® and The Council for Boys and Young Men®.

Supplies

Initial supplies (paper, tape, markers/art supplies, etc.) range in costs. Estimated approximately 100. +/- for a ten-week program, bulk purchases reduce costs significantly for subsequent programming. Additionally, snacks are highly recommended for after school programs. The curricula outline/overview for each guide lists supplies required to estimate costs.

For online circle programs, the cost for supplies would depend on whether supplies are provided via mail or drop off to the participants' homes, OR, if supplies are gathered by the participants within their own homes. In these instances, the materials identified for the online activities are everyday items that youth will be able to access in their homes in most instances (paper, pencil, crayon, etc.).

Sector Specific Risks & Needs

Justice

YOUTH RISK/NEED: ACHIEVE SELF-EFFICACY

Self-efficacy is the belief a person holds in their ability to do the things they need to do to accomplish goals, for example, complete an assignment, navigate a conflict, get to work on time, or practice a healthy lifestyle.

However, self efficacy is compromised for youth of color and LGBTQ+ youth who experience high degrees of discrimination and inequities for who they are. Racial microaggressions amongst young adults in a college setting showed damage to the self esteem, self efficacy, and psychological well being of young people, while positive ethnic identity spaces and experiences reduced the negative impacts of discrimination¹⁴.

Whether in systems, institutions, media, community and/or within families, the relentless traumas, disparities, bullying, rejections and microaggressions for who they are or who they are perceived to be impact the individual youth's self-image and self-efficacy.

PROGRAM STRENGTHS: Unity Circle programs provide youth a safer and affirming environment, a richer understanding of who they are and how they are perceived by others beyond their physical appearance, and can see themselves in a new light. Cultural, ethnic, and sexual identities are accepted and valued, their experiences are acknowledged and understood, and strengths are emphasized.

- Youth feel seen, heard and respected.
- Youth explore the current legal and civil rights of LGBTQ+ and marginalized youth.
- Realize that others value them; they matter; they're not alone.
- Gain skills to cope with difficult situations.
- Self-efficacy and collective self-efficacy increases.
- Restore or develop hope in themselves and their futures.

Through discussion, activities and videos, youth explore their rights and how to support others. Youths' skills are strengthened and resources are made available.

Mitigating Gender & Racial Bias: Intersectionality and Allyship, Session Seven, offers an opportunity to review the legal status of LGBTQ+ and intersectional people, the profiling of people of color, and the effects.

PRIDE – Session Seven – Promotes awareness of connection between body, thoughts, emotions, behaviors and self-care.

YOUTH RISK/NEED: OVERCOME A SENSE OF VICTIMIZATION

Trauma's Role and Trauma-informed Approaches in Behavioral Problems

Chronic or multiple traumas during childhood bathe a child's brain in toxic stress "as excessive cortisol disrupts developing brain circuits"¹⁵ and promote an overdeveloped threat response at the expense of the development and activation of the frontal lobe where decision-making, control over impulses, consequential and right and wrong thinking happens.

An analysis of multiple studies of system-involved youth show significantly higher ACE (Adverse Childhood Experience) scores, overrepresentation of minority youth, and documented associations between these ACE's and increased behavioral, legal, mental health, substance abuse, pregnancy, victimization, and educational problems (Folk, Kemp, Yurasek, et al, 2020).

Practitioners and justice staff serving justice-involved youth at all stages should become knowledgeable about the relationship between ACE's and problematic behaviors, and provide trauma-informed programmatic and systems-level environments¹⁶.

PROGRAM STRENGTHS: Supportive, responsive relationships as soon as possible can prevent and reverse the damages to the brain (Harvard, 2021). When system-involved youth experience caring, predictable and supportive relationships with adults and peers in Unity Circle™ and all One Circle Foundation programs, their stress response can turn off and therefore their *capacity to access the frontal lobe processes to self-regulate, self-reflect, and act with accountability grows.*

Facilitators share power and control in a balanced and safe way focusing on having safe and supportive relationships. They provide choices, offer predictability, and demonstrate respect and consistency. Participants work together to develop and uphold safe community spaces where they receive resources, develop relationship skills, and provide support to others.

Throughout all OCF circle programs:

- Youth co-create community agreements and collective and self-monitoring processes to uphold them.
- Youth decide the pace of their sharing; they can pass.
- Variety of self-expression tools offered.
- Team building and fun games or activities promote safety.
- Environments honor and reflect diversity of experience and culture.

PRIDE – Session Three – Through discussion and activities, provides participants with an opportunity to explore the challenges that some youth may face with being in the closet and coming out.

Sex in the Digital Age, Sessions Two, Three, Five and Six support self-advocacy, personal decision making, sexual behavior and consent, and more.

YOUTH RISK/NEED: FAMILY ACCEPTANCE

The Trevor Project 2020 reported 29% of LGBTQ youth have experienced homelessness, been kicked out, or run away and 1 in 3 have been physically threatened or harmed in their lifetime due to their LGBTQ identity.

PROGRAM STRENGTHS: The Unity Circle Model reaches youth ages 9-18. Positive relationships with peers, adult role models and allies promotes belonging, a sense of family, and a place to receive support for stressors that often stem from home, families and communities.

PRIDE – Session Four – through discussion and activities, participants will explore individual experiences of culture, family, identity and belonging.

YOUTH RISK/NEED: CULTURAL HUMILITY, CULTURAL RESPONSIVENESS

The fields of public health, social work, education and mental health have identified *both* cultural competence *and* cultural humility as essential and foundational principles, to more effectively reach and serve populations with diverse racial, ethnic, gender, sexual identity, sexual orientation, ability, immigration status, and more.

Cultural competence skills and cultural humility include recognizing one's own biases, centering others' differing perspectives, experiences and values, recognizing and appreciating multiple world views, removing barriers to services and healthy development, and working together toward establishing social, racial and health equity across communities (Greene-Moton, Minkler, 2019).¹⁷

PROGRAM STRENGTHS: Unity Circle Model curricula and format are inclusive and expansive, reflective of cross cultural and indigenous practices, and culturally adaptive to the communities where offered. The model honors all cultural and traditional practices that are relevant to participants. It invites and welcomes all populations including marginalized and minority youth. Sites can “make the group their own” while maintaining fidelity by adhering to the core principles, format, and practices of the model.

Facilitators acknowledge participants' diverse life experiences, knowledge, customs, styles, and traditions. When facilitators invite participants to share their varied cultural life experiences, benefits to youth or adult participants increase all the more.

- *PRIDE* – This guide provides a curricula for circle program for LGBTQ+ youth and allies, including youth of all races, ethnicities and backgrounds. The purpose is to support, empower and equip youth with expansive orientations and identities with a respectful and affirming environment for healthy development.

- *PRIDE – Session Two* – Through discussion and activities, provides participants with an opportunity to identify what they value as role models. Youth have an opportunity to find supportive relationships and that they are not alone.
- *Mitigating Gender & Racial Bias: Intersectionality and Allyship training for providers*
- *Mitigating Gender & Racial Bias: Intersectionality and Allyship Activity Guide* – 8-Session guide for teens and/or adults

The MGRB-IA training prepares adults working with intersectional and diverse youth and communities to examine perspectives and practices that impose or remove barriers to healthy development and relationships across all service sectors.

The MGRB-IA Activity Guide equips providers with a circle curriculum for teens and adults of all races and genders. It incorporates the principles of cultural competence and cultural humility in a strengths-based program that promotes dialogue and understanding around racial inequities and discriminatory views and practices toward people of diverse racial and gender identities and sexual orientations and builds resilience through allyship strategies and relational healing.

While all of the MGRB-IA training and the MGRB-IA Activity Guide are built to promote cultural competence and cultural humility, the following session exemplifies cultural humility:

- *Session 5 – “The Story That is Told – Exploring Dominant Narratives”*, acknowledges that society promotes and reinforces certain stories, it leaves out the perspectives, experiences, and stories of many, especially people of color and/or other aspects of diversity (gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, ability/disability, and more), and invites expression of authentic and hidden or overlooked narratives.
- *Sex in the Digital Age: A Guide to Talking with Teens about Pornography and Sexting Supplemental Guide* – A 6-Session Guide for youth of all genders. This guide provides essential tools and resources to promote healthy development for youth growing up in today’s digital world. The sessions may supplement Unity Circle, Girls Circle, or The Council for Boys and Young Men and are inclusive and expansive sessions to address the diverse challenges, needs, and skills for youth to more safely navigate sexual content, behaviors and relationships that are portrayed, presented, and promoted on devices.

YOUTH RISK/NEED: SCHOOL TO PRISON PIPELINE, YOUTH OF COLOR, MINORITY & MARGINALIZED YOUTH

This risk/need segment applies to youth across justice, education, and community services.

LGBTQ+, African American, Latinx, and tribal youth have higher rates of school suspensions and are over-represented in the justice system. Youth of color and ethnic minority youth were placed on probation at two (American Indian, Latinx) or three times (Black youth) the rates of white youth in 2019¹⁸. Disparities in school-to-prison pipeline punishments and zero tolerance policies have impacted minority and marginalized youth negatively with effects on education, mental health, court involvement, and economic domains. HRC 2017 research showed that although LGBTQ+ youth represent only 7-9% of youth nationally, 20% of LGBTQ + youth are involved in justice system facilities and that 85% of those youth were of color.

PROGRAM STRENGTHS: One Circle Models and the Unity Circle™ acknowledge and support the diversity of cultural, ethnic, racial, socioeconomic and gender identities of youth and the intersectionalities that shape the experiences of youth, families and communities.

The strengths-based and restorative programs honor cultural differences and traditions and build healthy relationships preventing and reducing risks, diverting youth away from the school to prison pipeline, eliciting strengths and assets to address and overcome barriers and increase student engagement and educational aspirations.

Previous evaluations of One Circle Foundation’s programs have demonstrated significant increases in attachment to and engagement in school, increases in educational aspirations and attainment goals, as well as self-efficacy, and increased positive relationships with peers and adults. These findings support the purpose of circle programming to promote healthy relationships and resiliency in order that each participant might develop to their fullest potential.

MGRB-IA – Session Six – Through discussion and activities, participants will explore gender norms and rigid beliefs and their harmful health effects and social outcomes.

MGRB-IA – Session Seven – Participants identify action goals and steps in personal, educational or professional relationships or setting to promote expansive environments and equity for all.

Schools: Program Strengths & Components

YOUTH RISK/NEED: EDUCATORS AND HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS NEED TO RECOGNIZE SIGNS OF MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS AND DIRECT STUDENTS TO APPROPRIATE SERVICES

During the covid-19 pandemic “more than 140,000 children in the United States lost a primary and/or secondary caregiver, with youth of color disproportionately impacted.¹⁹”

“Black youths are two times more likely to die by suicide compared to their white counterparts.”²⁰

LGBTQ+ youth showed significantly higher anxiety and more negative emotions during the 2020-2021 covid-19 period, according to research from University of California.²¹

PROGRAM STRENGTHS: Providing Unity Circle™ allows more youth to be served, to connect in a safe and caring community, reduce isolation, find refuge from harmful environments, and build trusting relationships with the adult facilitator(s) and peers. Students are more likely to indicate distress or needs to a trusted facilitator and/or peer group once a relationship has been established. Circles provide opportunity for staff to have increased student-staff contact and connection and to observe student behavior. Unity Circle™ offers the possibility of increased adult-student check ins, for example, just before or after the circle, to identify possible concerns, and direct students to appropriate services and provide referrals more efficiently.

Suicide Prevention session: A session devoted to the topic of Suicide Prevention is being developed and will be available later in 2022 for use in all One Circle Foundation programs. Peers are often the first to see hints or signs of possible suicidal thoughts through statements overheard or posts on social media. To provide a suicide prevention topic within the circle strengthens the capacity of youth to not only find and provide support to each other but also to know what to do with concerns about others.

YOUTH RISK/NEED: SAFE ENVIRONMENT AND POSITIVE SCHOOL CLIMATE

LGBTQ+ youth consistently report experiences of feeling unsafe at school. Significantly higher rates of youth who self-identified as LGBTQ+ were bullied, electronically bullied, felt unsafe on the way to/from or at school, missed school, were threatened with a weapon, experienced physical or sexual violence, and/or had suicidal thoughts or attempts than their self-identified heterosexual peers²². Black and Hispanic students reported feeling unsafe on their way to or from school at higher rates than their white LGBTQ+ peers and were more likely to be threatened with a weapon or injured than their white LGBTQ+ peers (YRBS, 2019).

HRC Research 2017 showed that only 26% of LGBTQ+ youth felt safe in the classroom and only 27% felt comfortable speaking to a school counselor.

PROGRAM STRENGTHS: Unity Circle prioritizes physical, emotional, cultural, relational and social safety of all persons. The core objective is to create safe environments in addition to safe and caring peer and adult relationships as the foundation upon which youth can develop.

The circle model and curricula promote change in peer culture that extends beyond the circles into classrooms and school environments. Helps resolve bullying and relational aggression, homophobia and racism. Breaks down social barriers and debunks stereotypes as the youth participants and adult facilitator co-create an atmosphere of respect, a listening environment, opportunity to express views and experiences, and examine assumptions and myths. Enhances and develops allyship skills. Gets at the roots of gender-associated bullying, such as adherence to rigid definitions about female, male and/or non-conforming youth in appearance, style, and/or behavior. Offers a place and community within which youth are free from threats of harassment. A place where they do not need to identity shift but can be themselves. This model also promotes leadership for the youth and adults.

Format, facilitator approach, and content of curricula address, promote and reinforce healthy peer interactions. Serves as an excellent routine component to promoting safe and affirming environments, and key to comprehensive anti-bullying planning. Supports critical environmental messages that aim to prevent bullying. Acts as follow up and consistent carry through of assembly-based and one time empowerment programs and activities.

MGRB-IA – Session Six – Through discussion and activities, participants will explore gender norms and rigid beliefs and their harmful health effects and social outcomes.

MGRB-IA – Session Seven – Participants identify action goals and steps in personal, educational or professional relationships or setting to promote expansive environments and equity for all.

YOUTH RISK/NEED: POSITIVE BEHAVIORAL INTERVENTION & SUPPORTS

BIPOC students of color, LGBTQ+ students, and those with disabilities and intersectional identities experience racial, social, sexual and gender-based inequities, disparities and discrimination, and these are multiplied for those with intersectional identities. Truancy, school disengagement, poor performance, disruptive behaviors, or poor relationships with peers or staff in part stem from a complex array of factors that include discrimination, micro or macro-aggressions, implicit bias and other traumatic experiences that interfere with an individual’s ability to learn.

PROGRAM STRENGTHS: The Unity Circle model and Activity Guides provide research-based programming for youth when individual, group, and classroom level preventions and interventions aim to improve both achievement and student behavior, from a relational, social justice, and restorative lens.

Unity Circle responds to Positive Behavioral Interventions Support (PBIS) focused behaviors and interventions through the lens of trauma, equity, diversity and inclusion.

Unity Circle programming prioritizes safety, belonging, support, restorative and interpersonal skill building for intersectional youth, and offers strengths-based fundamental principles and practices for application across the school system toward ending discrimination and becoming transformative learning communities.

The National Association of School Psychologists report²³, *Ensuring High Quality, Comprehensive Pupil Services – Supporting LGBTQ+ Youth During Troubling Times* (2021), provides recommendations to support diverse students, including “Facilitate integration within communities such as LGBTQ+ persons and intersecting identities (persons of color, other religious groups, etc.) to assess needs, build community support, and foster culturally sensitive practice” and “Allow and support the formation of Gay/Straight Alliances or other student activities with the goal of addressing homophobia and heterosexism in the school setting.”

Youth are motivated by respectful interactions with adults and peers, genuine interest, relevant topics, consistency, and diverse and experiential activities to learn to self-monitor and self-correct behavior. Motivation for more positive behaviors is achieved through healthy relationships, affirming environments, and consistent structures.

MGRB-IA – Session Seven – Participants will define allyship and increase empathy for experiences of intersectional youth.

MGRB-IA – Session Eight – Participants will identify and make a commitment to action steps.

YOUTH RISK/NEED: SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING – S.E.L.

CASEL (the Collaborative for Academic and Social Emotional Learning) defines SEL (Social Emotional Learning) as: “*the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions*”.²⁴

SEL is most effective when intentionally promoted across the primary domains of home, school, and community, as a range of strengths-based practices and programs that provide opportunities for youth to experience safe and supportive relationships, security, and belonging. SEL has well-established science that has demonstrated the positive impact on education and mental health domains of youth development. Learning and academic success happen in environments where youth feel safe and secure and in environments with supportive relationships.

PROGRAM STRENGTHS: Youth learn specific skills in self-awareness, emotion identification, listening, empathy, emotional identification and expression, self-regulation, interpersonal communication skills, decision-making skills. Youth are motivated to attend when relationships are caring and consistent, and topics are relevant and applicable to their daily lives.

All Unity Circle Activity Guides begin with Session One. Session One focuses on:

- Creating a Safe Space
- Defining the Circle and its Purpose
- Co-Developing Circle Agreements
- Develop connections, relationships and allyship.

Through the use of discussion, check-ins, activity and application youth have an opportunity to have a voice while learning to respect the voice of others.

PRIDE – Session Five – Through discussion and activities, participants identify and share struggles around being or supporting LGBTQ+ youth and developing compassion and healthy ways of coping.

Mitigating Gender & Racial Bias – Session Two – will discuss and identify stereotypes, characteristics and conditions that create implicit bias, explore each participant’s implicit biases, and how to recognize and work to make conscious, intentional decisions.

YOUTH RISK/NEED: LGBTQ+ YOUTH RESPONSIVE

LGBTQ+ youth are known to have increased risks for mental health and substance abuse and benefit from safe spaces and safe relationships. Responds to the data and policy recommendations of multiple associations and reports (see NASP, 2021).

Studies of supportive safe spaces for youth, such as the GSA or other LGBTQ+ support programs in schools, show significant positive experiences for LGBTQ+ youth, including belonging, less victimization, less suicidality,²⁵ and less truancy, less smoking and drinking, less sexual activity with casual partners for students generally, in these schools, across gender identities and orientations²⁶. These positive effects were demonstrated by the presence of GSAs in schools, whether or not the students participated.

PROGRAM STRENGTHS: Unity Circle is expansive, inclusive and accepting of diverse sexual orientations and identities, and honors the dignity of all members. Youth who identify with any adolescent development are welcome.

For example, the PRIDE curriculum centers the needs, strengths and experiences of LGBTQ+ youth and allies. This Unity Circle program addresses youth with affirming messages for being who each person is, accepts and celebrates each one, provides support, skills and resources needed to manage and develop resilience even through the stressful social conditions that put these youth at particular risks for bullying, harassment, isolation, homelessness, mental illness, substance abuse, sexually transmitted infections and HIV, and suicide.

In circle practices, each person’s unique strengths are seen and valued. There is equality, respect, connection, emotional safety, a caring community, authentic self expression, and development of skills, knowledge and resources to navigate challenges, become advocates, and develop to their full potential. See the outline of the specific topics and activities in the *PRIDE* curriculum, above, under “Curricula.”

PRIDE – Session Nine – Recognize individual and group strengths and capacities that help through adversity. Fosters protective factors of social support and meaningful participation.

Public Health

YOUTH RISK/NEED: VIOLENCE – PHYSICAL, SEXUAL, COMMUNITY AND SCHOOL

Suicide and suicide attempts are especially heightened for LGBTQ+ adolescents and those LGBTQ+ youth of color. A 2020 report on trends in violence and victimization of LGBTQ+ students between 2015 and 2019 based on the CDC's Youth Risk Behavior Survey Study^{27, 28} found:

- LGBTQ+ students continue to have a greater prevalence of violence victimization and suicidal behavior than their heterosexual peers. LGBTQ+ students are as much as three times more likely to have attempted suicide than heterosexual students. In 2019, more LGBTQ+ females (49 %) reported seriously considering suicide than LGBTQ+ males (40.4%).
- In 2019, Black (15.2%) and Hispanic (13.7%) LGBTQ+ students were more likely to feel unsafe at school than their white LGBTQ+ peers (11.1%) and Black LGBTQ+ students (12.9%) and white LGBTQ+ students (12.9%) were more likely to be threatened or injured with a weapon than Hispanic LGBTQ+ students (7.7%).
- In 2019, the percentages of LGBTQ+ youth who reported persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness over past year was high: Black LGBTQ+ youth (51.1%), Hispanic LGBTQ+ youth (64.1%), and White LGBTQ+ youth (71.6%).
- In 2017, LGBTQ+ high school students experienced more bullying at school than their heterosexual peers (33% among LGB students and 17% among heterosexual students).
- LGBTQ+ students (26.6%) reported greater rates of online bullying and harassment than heterosexual students (14.1%).
- LGBTQ+ high school students experienced more sexual dating violence by dating partners (LGBTQ+, 16%; heterosexual, 6%).

The report states that these findings reinforce the need for “policies and practices within school environments that reduce victimization and bolster the mental health of LGBTQ+ students. Substantial evidence exists for the role of antiharassment policies, gay-straight alliances (or other student-led clubs designed to support sexual minority students), and programs aimed at improving staff support of LGBTQ+ students in improving school environments for these students.”²⁹

LGBTQ+ youth school and community-wide supportive and affirming policies and practices have been associated with significantly reduced suicides and suicide attempts.³⁰

A study of LGBTQ+ students in 52 Massachusetts schools found that those students in schools with support groups for LGBTQ+ youth showed less victimization and suicidality than those in schools without supportive programs.³¹

PROGRAM STRENGTHS: Unity Circle promotes healthy relationships and prevents violence within the circle and develops skills that youth apply in their relationships with family members, authority figures, peers, dating partners, and more. Every guide incorporates skills relevant to emotional awareness, gender norms, communication, coping skills and prosocial behaviors.

The Unity Circle model and all OCF circle models provide safe emotional environments, physically, emotionally, and socially. The non-negotiable steps of the circle format provide structure and consistency in caring, respectful environments, along with the session-specific topics and activities.

Sex in the Digital Age – This supplemental guide provides six sessions to add to an established One Circle Foundation circle program [Unity Circle, Girls Circle, The Council for Boys and Young Men] filled with skills development for media literacy, digital citizenship, and more accurate public health and sexual safety information. Addresses sexting, pornography, sexual decision making, respectful communication in relationships. The curriculum helps youth to prevent unwanted or unintended sexual harm and to recognize and respond to risk.

PRIDE – Session Five – Addresses a wide range of stressors affecting LGBTQ+ youth disproportionately and provides social support and resources.

PRIDE – Session Six – Focuses on tools for self-acceptance as a significant mental health buffer and strengthens resiliency through collective support.

PRIDE – Session Seven – Activities address sexual risk behaviors and identify healthy, safer (nonviolent and consensual) sexual skills and behaviors through scenarios, discussions, and a word game.

PRIDE – Session Eight – Addresses legal rights of LGBTQ+ people in the United States, including those of students in public schools.

YOUTH RISK/NEED: UNDER-RESOURCED, MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES

Food Insecurity/Housing Insecurity/Health Disparities/Access to Healthcare

“700,000 adolescent minors ages 13-17 experienced homelessness in the course of a year, 1 of every 30 adolescent minors. There is a disproportionate number of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) youth among the homeless youth population. Multiple studies have shown that up to 40% of homeless youth are LGBT.³²

Many factors increase a young person’s odds of experiencing homelessness. Demographic risk factors for becoming homeless/unhoused include being Hispanic or black; parenting and unmarried; or LGBTQ+, with LGBTQ+ youth having more than twice the risk of being homeless/unhoused than their cisgender or heterosexual peers. In a March 2019 report, the Congressional Research Service identified family conflict and family dynamics, a youth’s sexual orientation, sexual activity, school problems, pregnancy and substance use as primary risk factors for youth homelessness. Also noted in the congressional report, females are more likely than males to run away, and among white, black and Hispanic youth, black youth have the highest rates of running away with approximately half of youth running away before the age of 14.³³

The White House and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services have recognized the barriers to access of health care, mental health care and behavioral health care, especially to marginalized youth populations, even while youth have experienced increasing levels of severe anxiety, depression, and substance abuse problems, and have instituted multiple strategies through the American Rescue Plan to remove barriers and increase care for youth of color, LGBTQ+ youth, and indigenous and disenfranchised communities. See Fact Sheet: *Efforts Across HHS to Promote Behavioral Health for Children and Youth*.³⁴

Food Insecurity speaks to the insufficient resources that youth and families have available, when they worry they will not have enough food to last until the next paycheck; skip meals even though hungry because they didn’t have enough to eat or to assure that others in the household could eat. The rates of food insecurity amongst LGBTQ+ youth are distressingly high: According to *The Trevor Project National Survey on LGBTQ Youth Mental Health 2021*³⁵, more than 30% of LGBTQ+ youth overall and half of the Native/Indigenous LGBTQ+ youth said they worried that food at home would run out in the last month before they or their family had money to buy more. Being hungry, and worrying about not having enough food, affects the health and the mental health of these youth, draining energy and depriving them of the stable nutrition and the security they need for healthy development.

Percentages of LGBTQ+ youth that reported experiencing food insecurity in the past month (2021) by race/ethnicity:

- 18% Asian/Pacific Islander
- 35% Black
- 36% Latinx
- **50% Native/Indigenous**
- 27% White
- 36% More than one race/ethnicity

PROGRAM STRENGTHS: Throughout the Unity Circle programs, during the circle experiences and activities, resources are available for participants that provide support, guidance, education, role models and local and available resources needed for healthy development.

Youth are invited to share their stressors during the **check-in step of the circle format**, where some may describe their specific worries and needs such as housing instability, shortages of food, or a health care question.

Even when they do not share such personal concerns within the circle, youth can reach out to the caring adult facilitator(s) with whom they’ve developed a relationship through the program, and will gain information, local resources and contacts they need for support.

One Circle Foundation trainers and certified facilitators have observed that when youth hear one another share concerns in circle, they feel safer and braver to approach and ask for help from caring adults, and often, their peers as well. Further, they realize that they are not alone, and that there are people and services that can be accessed to alleviate or help to remedy basic needs and how to navigate those steps.

The MGRB-IA circle program addresses disparities, dominant narratives, inequities and rights of LGBTQ+ and youth of color. Through the topics, discussions and activities, participants, both teens and/or adults, recognize systemic practices and policies, and implicit biases that impede healthy relationships in working with youth, families and communities. This examination within a relational, safe environment invites participants to address the inequities and stressors which they are witnessing and/or experiencing in their communities. These disparities in food resources, health care, and housing security for these young and marginalized communities speak to the systemic biases that have profound detrimental impacts on the economic, health, safety and mental health of marginalized and intersectional youth.

PRIDE – Session Eight – Resources are provided and through discussion and activities participants learn how to identify where to locate specific resources and how to contact and access those resources.

Mental Health & Behavioral Health

YOUTH RISK/NEED: DEPRESSION, MOOD DISORDERS, ANXIETY, ADHD, PTSD, SUBSTANCE ABUSE

During the pandemic year of 2020, rates of suicidal thinking, panic, anxiety and other mental health problems surged, as demonstrated by rates of emergency room visits increased by 31% for adolescents in the United States (NYTimes, 2021) as a loss of virtually every routine from school, to activities to social occasions came to a halt for much of the year and resulted in intense feelings of loss.³⁶

The chances of developing a mental health condition for youth who had experienced a covid-19 diagnosis are much higher for those youth with ACE's (adverse childhood experiences).³⁷ LGBTQ+ and youth of color report more trauma and higher ACE's scores than the general population.³⁸ For intersectional minorities, the risks of mental health and substance abuse problems are substantially increased³⁹. For example, a study of Latinx sexual minority young adults showed that discrimination was highest amongst female Latinx sexual minority groups and that the higher the discrimination rates, the higher the substance abuse rates⁴⁰.

Cumulative effects of discrimination negatively influence mental health. A UCLA study published in 2021 in the journal *Pediatrics* found that young adults who experienced higher rates of discrimination, especially cumulative experiences of discrimination, including factors such as sex and race, had significantly higher rates of mental health conditions, and lesser access to appropriate and needed services and poorer treatment outcomes⁴¹.

In 2020, researchers recommended a strengths-based approach to mental health services for racial-ethnic and LGBTQ+ populations based on preliminary evidence that endorses a minority strengths approach to promote resilience and positive mental health⁴².

PROGRAM STRENGTHS: The Unity Circle™ model is a culturally responsive, strengths-based model that centers the experiences, needs and assets of LGBTQ+ and youth of color and allies. It recognizes culturally responsive relationships and environments as fundamental protective factors to health and mental health. Unity Circle programs reduce isolation, dispel myths, provide acceptance, affirmation, social-emotional support, tools and resources. The programs offer support, healing, acknowledgement, connection, affirmation and reductions in stress.

The 7-Step format and trauma-informed approach offers stress reducing elements:

- A caring and safer community
- A predictable structure
- Self-pacing
- Voice and choice in co-creating agreements, selecting topics, level of participation in activities
- Respectful and culturally responsive practices, empowerment activities, and discussions applicable across populations

Curricula: Every Unity Circle program and each circle session provides an environment and interpersonal experiences that promote mental and behavioral health.

While all One Circle Foundation models promote belonging, acceptance, and affirmation of identities, the *Mitigating Gender & Racial Bias: Intersectionality and Allyship Activity Guide* (MGRB-IA) is especially relevant to countering the effects of discrimination on mental health and behavioral health for teens and/or adults. It is an 8-session activity guide that promotes dialogue and understanding around racial inequities and discriminatory views and practices toward youth and/or adults of diverse racial and gender identities and sexual orientations and builds resilience through allyship strategies and relational healing. A specific session in the MGRB-IA guide that addresses mental health is:

Session Six – Exploring gender norms and rigid beliefs and their harmful health effect and social outcomes participants through discussion and role plays learn how to prevent further harm and foster healthy development.

PRIDE – A 10-Session Unity Circle guide for LGBTQ+ youth of all gender identities, sexual orientations and allies: *transgender, cisgender, nonbinary, gender non-conforming, agender, gender fluid, gender questioning, two-spirit; gay, bisexual, lesbian, straight, and pansexual*. For ages 9-18. A specific session in PRIDE that addresses mental health is:

Session Six – Through discussion and activities, provides participants with an opportunity to identify trauma and the skills needed to develop self-acceptance.

Sex in the Digital Age – A 6-session supplemental guide for early adolescents and teens of all genders, this guide empowers youth with the knowledge and tools to protect against and prevent unwanted or harmful sexual behaviors and activities, especially sexting, pornography, and intimate partner behaviors. When implemented within a circle that has already established trust, such as through experiencing MGRB-IA, PRIDE, or any Girls Circle® or The Council for Boys and Young Men® program, this guide acknowledges the risks and helpful skills around sexual health behaviors for youth growing up in the digital age.

YOUTH RISK/NEED: LACK OF AVAILABLE PSYCHOLOGICAL OR EMOTIONAL COUNSELING

According to the Trevor Project 2020 National Survey, 48% of LGBTQ+ youth reported not having access to services⁴³.

PROGRAM STRENGTHS: Reduces isolation. Youth can benefit from a support circle, and more youth can be served through the circle program.

In circle, youth experience NOT being alone, not being weird or different. Supportive. Kind. Stress reducing, trauma-informed elements:

- Predictability
- Choices
- Consistent structure to promote security and empowerment applicable to varied populations

Activities and application questions at the end of each session encourage personally motivating action steps to improve situations within their control (re: school work, attendance, substances, family relationships, etc.).

Structure and activities in the program provide practice with impulse control, thinking through behaviors, self-reflection, empathy, decision making, etc. Assists youth with behavioral symptoms of PTSD, anxiety, depression, ADHD, other mood disorders.

The program as a whole invites youth through direct discussions, experiential activities, or by role modeling, to recognize their emotions, thoughts, behaviors, beliefs, options, and opportunities to live in a way that each one can personally respect in/of themselves, which promotes intrinsic self worth, leadership, motivation. Resources are made available to participants.

PRIDE – Session Six – Focuses on tools for self-acceptance as a significant mental health buffer and strengthens resiliency through collective support.

YOUTH RISK/NEED: TRAUMA-INFORMED

Most children experience at least one adverse childhood experience (ACEs), and many youth who benefit from support programs have three, four or more ACE's, but youth in marginalized communities and intersectional youth have increased trauma and rates of interpersonal trauma including threats of physical harm, sexual assault and violence, and more, including minority strain.

Understanding trauma-informed care is essential knowledge for all youth service providers. Trauma-informed care means to understand what trauma is, how it affects child and adolescent development – including the brain and nervous system, social-emotional development, cognitive development and learning, relationships and behavior – and recognizing that difficult or challenging behavior may be a coping mechanism and learned response to trauma-associated stimuli for the child or adolescent.

Further, trauma-informed care requires prioritizing the emotional safety of youth through caring relationships, active listening, demonstrating respect, providing reasonable choices, shared decision making, noticing strengths, predictability and consistency. Rather than an authoritarian approach that may heighten the alert system for youth, trauma-informed care in programs and settings focuses on building secure and safe relationships as the key toward building engagement, learning, and resiliency.

PROGRAM STRENGTHS: Integrates strategies and best practices based on neuroscience⁴⁴, attachment, empathy – especially caring, supportive, listening and avoiding re traumatization; recognizes PTSD influences on emotional regulation development, decision making, and social-emotional development; recognizes experiences of trauma – gender-relevant trauma especially sexual abuse and assault, sexual harassment, domestic violence, neglect, intimate partner violence; Applies client-centered principles, relationship-based approaches including listening skills, choices, shared decision making/ control, empowerment; promotes resiliencies; nonhierarchical.

PRIDE – Session Six – Focuses on tools for self-acceptance as a significant mental health buffer and strengthens resiliency through collective support.

PRIDE – Session Seven – Describe qualities and characteristics of healthy relationships. Develop safer behaviors in sexually intimate relationships.

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