

Grant Writer's Template



A guide for those seeking funding for Girls Circle®
& The Council for Boys and Young Men® models

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How to Use This Guide

This guide provides information for use in writing grant proposals to implement Girls Circle®, The Council for Boys and Young Men®, and Women's Circle® programs. 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.

PAGES 1-7: Information relevant to all settings where One Circle Foundation Circle programs may be implemented.

PAGES 8-36: 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 (schools, justice, foster and child services, mental health) simultaneously or over time. Therefore, reading through the entire sector section may provide a more complete description of program strengths applicable to your setting.

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

About this Template

Below, you will find information for use in writing grant proposals to implement Girls Circle® and/or The Council for Boys and Young Men®. Please note: One Circle Foundation circle models address service needs and goals for youth across multiple sectors – *juvenile justice, schools, public health, and mental and behavioral health and apply to child/foster services and community based programs as well.* Sector-specific information is provided, and certain information will apply across multiple sectors. This guide 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.*

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.

Our Vision



GIRLS CIRCLE

Within Girls Circle, girls* and young women* and gender-expansive youth experience a safe, welcoming and inclusive community that offers caring, support, healthy connections and skills to navigate relational and social-emotional challenges. Buoyed by these strengths, they grow and develop beyond imposed cultural limitations as connected, active, engaged and authentic young women.

By “girls” and “young women” we mean all girls, young women, girl-identifying, and gender-expansive youth (cisgender, transgender, gender non-conforming, nonbinary, and all gender diverse youth who relate to girl/youth women identities).



BOYS COUNCIL

The Council for Boys and Young Men is working toward a future where boys* and young men* and gender-expansive youth develop healthy and diverse masculine identities which allow them to grow as respectful leaders and connected allies in their communities.

By “boys” and “young men” we mean all boys, young men, boy-identifying, and gender-expansive youth (cisgender, transgender, gender non-conforming, nonbinary, and all gender diverse youth who relate to boy/youth men identities).

Brief Program Description

GIRLS CIRCLE

Girls Circle is a structured support group for girls from 9-18 years that integrates relational theory, resiliency practices, and skills training in a specific format designed to increase positive connection, personal and collective strengths, and competence in girls. Originally developed in 1995, 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.

BOYS COUNCIL

The Council for Boys and Young Men (aka Boys Council) is a strengths-based group approach to promote boys' and young men's safe and healthy passage through pre-teen and adolescent years. Boys Council meets a core developmental need for positive relationships, the opportunity to address masculinity definitions and behaviors and to build leadership capacities individually and collectively. Developed in 2008.

Who is the Program Designed For?

GC

Pre-teen and adolescent girls and young women, and LGBTQ+ youth who identify with female adolescent development – 9-18 years, regardless of risk level.

BC

Pre-teen and adolescent boys and young men, and LGBTQ+ youth who identify with male adolescent development – 9-18 years, regardless of risk level.

Structure

GIRLS CIRCLE

- 1 or more sessions per week, depending on setting
- 90 minutes, or may be adapted for school programs
- 8-12 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 more in classroom adaptations)
- 1 or 2 adult female facilitators, typically¹
- Physically, culturally, and emotionally safe; protected, confidential
- Co-created circle agreements and expectations based on mutual respect, caring, inclusion, confidentiality
- Legal, ethical guidelines

The 6-step Girls Circle format promotes safety, consistency, relationships, a range of expressive opportunities, skill building and empowerment as follows:

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

BOYS COUNCIL

- 1 or more sessions per week, depending on setting
- 90 minutes, or may be adapted for school programs
- 10 or more sessions, OR, as distinct one-session units in high transition settings (i.e., hospitals, detention, community schools)
- 5-10 youth of similar developmental age (or more in classroom adaptations)
- 1 or 2 adult male facilitators, typically²
- Physically, culturally, and emotionally safe; protected, confidential
- Co-created circle agreements and expectations based on mutual respect, caring, inclusion, confidentiality
- Legal, ethical guidelines

The 7-step format of The Council for Boys and Young Men promotes safety, consistency, relationships, a range of expressive opportunities, skill building and empowerment as follows:

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

Service Sectors & Settings

All youth-serving settings, especially vulnerable 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

Theoretical Foundation & Research-Based Components

GIRLS CIRCLE

Relational-Cultural Theory³ and integrates complementary approaches:

- Resiliency Theory; Strengths/Assets-based
- Female Responsive; Female Identity Development
- Gender-Transformative: critically explores cultural norms, stereotypes
- Preventative *and* Restorative
- Adolescent Brain Development
- Trauma-Informed, Trauma-Responsive
- Motivational Interviewing
- Rites of Passage
- Positive Youth-Development

BOYS COUNCIL

Relational-Cultural Theory and integrates complementary approaches:

- Resiliency Theory; Strengths/Assets-based
- Male Responsive; Masculinity Identity Development
- Gender-Transformative: critically explores cultural norms, stereotypes
- Preventative *and* Restorative
- Adolescent Brain Development
- Trauma-Informed, Trauma- Responsive
- Motivational Interviewing
- Rites of Passage
- Positive Youth Development

Evidence-Based Program

GIRLS CIRCLE

Yes.

Girls Circle® demonstrated effectiveness in reducing delinquency/reducing recidivism for girls.⁴ 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).

BOYS COUNCIL

Research-based; two completed studies show promising findings (See Additional Outcomes section below).

A four-year rigorous evaluation sponsored by the CDC in partnership with Cornell University and the New York State Department of Health was disrupted due to covid. Quantitative data was not accessible; however, feedback was very positive. Youth and facilitators valued their time, experience, topics, activities and relationships.

Evidence-Based Practices

Evidence-based practices inherent in both models include the Strengths-Based Approach^{5,6,7}, Motivational Interviewing⁸, and Gender-Transformative^{9 and 10} practices.

Additional Outcomes from Pre-Post Evaluations

GIRLS CIRCLE

Increases:

- School Attachment
- Educational Expectation
- Educational Aspirations
- Social Support
- Positive Body Image
- Self-efficacy
- Communicating with Adults
- Use of Condoms (if sexually active)

Decreases:

- Number of Sex Partners (if sexually active)
- Alcohol and Drug Use
- Self-Harm

Find all reports under Research at

www.onecirclefoundation.org/gc-research

BOYS COUNCIL

Increases:

- School Engagement
- Educational Goals
- Confidence in Avoiding Fighting
- Ethnic Pride and Tolerance for Diversity
- Conflict Skills

Reduces:

- Aggression
- Rigid/ harmful beliefs about male identity sometimes referred to as “Man Box”, such as you must “*be tough; don’t show feelings; don’t ask for help; dominate (physically, sexually, etc.)*.”

Find all reports under Research at

www.onecirclefoundation.org/tc-research

Training

One Circle Foundation is a sole source provider of the following facilitator trainings. Those seeking grants for training are strongly encouraged to contact training@onecirclefoundation.org for an accurate quote prior to submission of grant proposals.

GIRLS CIRCLE

Girls Circle Facilitator Training:

A comprehensive course on the Girls Circle model for participants of all experience levels sets the foundation for implementing female responsive programming via Girls Circle support groups. *Workshop facilitators use an experiential model of learning to include lecture, demonstration, group discussion, case studies, simulation, small group interaction, and brainstorming to stimulate participants’ learning.*

- Public Trainings: Online – 3 half-days / In-Person – 2 days. \$449 per person
- Public In-Person Training: \$8,837 for 13-15 people, \$449 per each additional person. 55 max. capacity. Public marketing required for a minimum 35 attendees.
- Private Online Training: \$11,225 for 20-27 people, \$449 per each additional person. 40 max. capacity
- Private In-Person Training: \$14,225 for 20-27 people, \$449 per each additional person + expenses (location rental fee, continental breakfast, supplies). 55 max. capacity

(Cont’d)

BOYS COUNCIL

The Council for Boys and Young Men Facilitator Training:

A comprehensive course on the program model The Council for Boys and Young Men, for participants of all experience levels and sets the foundation for implementing a dynamic strengths-based group approach to promote boys’ and young men’s safe and healthy passage through pre-teen and adolescent years. The training incorporates a relational-cultural framework and masculinity research practices to help participants build on boys’ abilities and create opportunities for resiliency and healthy relationships in boys’ and young men’s lives. *Workshop trainers use an experiential model of learning to include lecture, demonstration, group discussion, case studies, simulation, small group interaction, and brainstorming to stimulate participants’ learning.*

- Public Trainings: Online – 3 half-days / In-Person – 2 days. \$449 per person
- Public In-Person Training: \$8,837 for 13-15 people, \$449 per each additional person. 55 max. capacity. Public marketing required for a minimum 35 attendees.

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GIRLS CIRCLE

- Girls Circle Facilitator Manual included. 15% curricula discount provided after training. Certificate upon completion of full training.

Mother-Daughter Circle Facilitator Training:

A training for facilitators serving mothers and female caregivers and girls 9-18. Applies the evidence-based Girls Circle model to a parent-child, female-responsive program.

- Public Trainings: Online – 2 half-days / In-Person – 1 day. \$375 per person
- Private Online Training: \$9,375 for 20-27 people, \$375 per each additional person. 40 max. capacity
- Private In-Person Training: \$12,375 for 20-27 per each additional person + expenses (location rental fee, continental breakfast, supplies). 50 max. capacity
- Mother-Daughter Circle Activity Guide* included. 15% curricula discount provided upon attending a training. Certificate upon completion of full training.

BOYS COUNCIL

- Private Online Training: \$11,225 for 20-27 people, \$449 per each additional person. 40 max. capacity
- Private In-Person Training: \$14,225 for 20-27 people, \$449 per each additional person + expenses (location rental fee, continental breakfast, supplies). 55 max. capacity
- The Council for Boys and Young Men Facilitator Manual included. 15% curricula discount provided after training. Certificate upon completion of full training.

Continuing Education

GIRLS CIRCLE

Girls Circle Facilitator Training: 12.5 CE's. Approved provider by NASW (In NASW approved states); 13 CE's. OH-CSWMFT Board; Approved provider by the California Association of Marriage and Family Therapists to sponsor 13 CE Hrs. for LMFTs, LCSWs, LPCCs, and/or LEPs.

Mother-Daughter Circle Training: 7 CE's CA CAMFT-CEPA for LMFTs, LPCC's, LEP's, LCSW's. 7 CE's for LMFTs, LCSWs, LPCC's in OH. 6 CE's NASW.

One Circle Foundation maintains responsibility for this program/course and its content.

BOYS COUNCIL

The Council for Boys and Young Men Facilitator Training: 11 CE's. OH-CSWMFT Board; Approved provider by the California Association of Marriage and Family Therapists to sponsor 13 CE Hrs. for LMFTs, LCSWs, LPCCs, and/or LEPs. 11 CE's for NASW.

One Circle Foundation maintains responsibility for this program/course and its content.

Curricula

GIRLS CIRCLE

A manual and 15 fully developed activity guides provide step-by-step sessions for implementation.

Girls Circle Facilitator Manual – Foundational theory, structure, principles and practices of the Girls Circle Model. The Manual is included with training registration, OR, a hard copy can be purchased separately for \$104.

(Cont'd)

BOYS COUNCIL

A manual and 7 fully developed activity guides provide step-by-step sessions for implementation.

The Council for Boys and Young Men Facilitator Manual – Foundational theory, structure, principles and practices of the model. Included with training registration OR a Hard Copy can be purchased separately for \$104.

(Cont'd)

Girls Circle Facilitator Activity Guides:

- Fifteen Activity Guides containing 8-12 sessions per guide. Address a wide range of topics such as friendships, body image, relationships, setting boundaries, coping skills, alcohol, marijuana, family substance use, communication, assertiveness, goals, dreams, self care, and more.
- Step by step, fully developed with gender-relevant themes, discussions and activities, recommended ages per each guide.
- Flexible and adaptable to range of populations/settings.
- Prices range from \$116 to \$225 per guide, or \$2,285 for the full set of Girls Circle guides.
- Programs can offer all sessions from one guide, or select sessions from a wide array of material according to the needs, strengths and interests of the participating girls and young women. In high transition settings, sessions can be offered as independent units.
- **Family component:** *Mother-Daughter Circle: Heart of the Matter* is an 8-session guide to be lead by two facilitators and up to 12 pairs of mothers or female caregivers and daughters, 11-18 years. Mother-Daughter Circle includes online adapted sessions as part of the Activity Guide.
- **For Latinas:** *Mind, Body, Spirit for Latinas/ Mente, Cuerpe y Espritu para Latinas* is a curriculum in English and Spanish and culturally adapted for Latinas. Additionally, *La Marioposa* is a personal empowerment program for adolescent Latinas, which is culturally responsive (English only).
- For a full list with descriptions and week-by-week overviews, visit Curricula at www.onecirclefoundation.org/curricula

The Council Facilitator Activity Guides:

- Eight Activity Guides in total
- Seven guides containing ten sessions per guide, including a two-guide set (*Men of Honor*)
- One guide with 18 sessions, integrating nature-based sessions to explore significant themes further in ecological approach.
- Two guides geared for 9-14 year olds
- Two guides geared for 11-14 year olds
- Four guides geared for teen years
- Topics relevant to male youth development, such as: school, power and status, teamwork, bullying, masculinity beliefs, emotional expression, competition, standing up as allies, respecting boundaries, conflicts, diversity, substance use, relationships w/girls, homophobia, and more.
- Flexible and adaptable to range of populations/settings.
- Prices range from \$147-\$225 per guide, or \$368 for the two-guide *Men of Honor Set*, and the complete set of Council curricula, including the manual for \$1,371.
- Programs can offer all sessions from one guide, or select sessions from wide array of material according to the needs, strengths and interests of the participating boys/young men. In high transition settings, sessions can be offered as independent units.
- *Brothers as Allies* includes online adapted sessions as part of the Activity Guide.
- **Spanish-language:** *Brothers as Allies* is also available in Spanish (*Hermanos como aliados*).
- For a full list with descriptions and week-by-week overviews, visit Curricula at www.onecirclefoundation.org/curricula

Consultation

For all One Circle Foundation circle models – 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. Monthly Facilitator support meetings, for online, in-person, and hybrid programs, at no cost. Must be certified through training to attend.

Quality Assurance Tool

GC

Yes. Available inside the Facilitator Manual. For evaluations, a similar tool for quantifying and scoring is available by request. One Circle Foundation can provide guidance on maximizing quality assurance and fidelity processes for optimal results. Please see Best Practices for Holding Online Circles: www.onecirclefoundation.org/virtual-solutions

BC

Yes. Available inside Facilitator Manual. One Circle Foundation can provide guidance on maximizing quality assurance and fidelity processes for optimal results. Please see Best Practices for Holding Online Circles: www.onecirclefoundation.org/virtual-solutions

Measurement Tools

GC

Yes. For purchase, replicable within organization as per copyright. **Girls Circle® Evaluation Tool Kit** and **Younger Girls Survey**. Survey in English and Spanish. Includes Consent Form, Instructions for Administering and Scoring.

BC

Yes. **The Council for Boys and Young Men® Evaluation Packet**. Tools are surveys and sub-surveys of public domain instruments. Consent Forms, Instructions included. Available at no charge by download at: www.onecirclefoundation.org/research

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. An overview inside each guide lists supplies required in order to estimate costs. **For circle programs facilitated online**, supply costs are reduced substantially. Organizations may choose to mail supplies to each participant's home in advance of each session, and/or to use simple items such as paper and pens that are typically available within homes.

Sector Specific Risks & Needs

Juvenile Justice

GIRLS CIRCLE

YOUTH RISK/NEED: OVERCOME A SENSE OF VICTIMIZATION

“Studies show that as many as 50% of girls in juvenile justice systems have experienced physical, sexual and/or emotional abuse (Pasko, Okamoto, Chesney-Lind, 2014).”¹¹

“Girls are committed for less serious offenses, more likely to have family-related offenses and have more extensive trauma and sexual victimization than boys in the juvenile justice system (Zahn et al., 2010).”¹²

“Early victimization of females has the potential to produce lifelong consequences, including mental health disorders, substance abuse issues, engagement in criminal behavior, and continued victimization as an adult. Gender-specific intervention and programming efforts are crucial for supporting in females to overcome emotional, physical, and/or sexual abuse that led to the development of mental health disorders.”¹³

Chronic or multiple traumas during childhood bathe a child’s brain in toxic stress “as excessive cortisol disrupts developing brain circuits” 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.

It is crucial to understand that girls with a victim mentality are not merely “dramatic.” This response is oftentimes a result of true victimization and can act as a coping method for abuse and/or trauma. Since girls in the juvenile justice system experience these unfortunate events at a disproportionately higher rate than their male counterparts and girls who are outside of the system, proper care and guidance is needed for their personal growth.

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BOYS COUNCIL

YOUTH RISK/NEED: VIOLENCE AND VICTIMIZATION

Harmful Definitions of Masculinity, Trauma, and Trauma-informed Approaches to Behavioral Problems

For marginalized youth, violence is the primary pathway into the school-to-prison pipeline and the juvenile justice system. Harmful or “toxic” masculinity describes rigid norms and beliefs about being male that emphasize dominance, devaluing women and LGBTQ+ people, and violence. Globally, boys and men are more likely to engage in domestic and sexual violence toward women, become victims of physical violence and homicide themselves, more likely to engage in substance abuse, and more likely to die by suicide.¹⁴

Rigid, stereotyped masculinity definitions have been linked to an unwillingness to intervene against bullying in peer-group situations for middle school boys¹⁵ and to uphold views supporting gender inequality.

There are many definitions of masculinity that are not toxic or harmful. However, the effects of a culture of rigid gender beliefs put boys and young men at risk for perpetrating violence and experiencing victimization.

Complex trauma and intergenerational trauma intersect with toxic masculinity, with serious and dangerous implications for adolescent youth development.

- Boys and young men who perpetrate intimate partner violence are also more likely to have experienced trauma in childhood through their own physical and sexual abuse and victimization.¹⁶
- Chronic, complex, or multiple traumas during childhood bathe a child’s developing brain in toxic stress from excessive levels of cortisol that disrupt neural connections.

(Cont’d)

PROGRAM STRENGTHS: Facilitators share power and control in a balanced and safe way with girls, so that girls get to talk, pace themselves, and participate in decision-making. Activities assist girls to develop healthy boundaries.

YOUTH RISK/NEED: OVERCOME FAMILY FRAGMENTATION

“Family conflict is related to the increase in girls’ disproportionate involvement in the juvenile justice system for assault offenses (Chesney-Lind, 2002; Sherman & Balck, 2015; Strom et al., 2010; Vaughn et al., 2010).” Restorative practices such as Girls Circle and the Mother-Daughter Circle matter. Girls of color and gender-expansive youth are overrepresented in the justice system due to marginalization, oppression, and policies that have contributed to trauma, poverty, intergenerational trauma, family fragmentation and rejection, educational barriers and more severe health and mental health outcomes. Family acceptance for girls and gender expansive youth goes beyond individual and family treatment.

Researcher Sarah Mountz describes a transformative approach to addressing root problems with strengths-based, egalitarian and restorative circles:

“Facilitating family acceptance is part and parcel of drawing an end to the intergenerational family fracture and weakening of ties facilitated by historical trauma. Other restorative practices such as peacemaking circles have proven themselves integral to this strengthening of family relationships (Boyes-Watson, 2005). For example, peacemaking circles, grounded in indigenous ways of knowing, are a traditional method for solving problems and restoring harmony when troubles arise or harm has been enacted within families and communities (Boyes-Watson, 2005).

(Cont’d)

- Complex trauma has many physical, cognitive, emotional and interpersonal effects.¹⁷ It promotes an overdeveloped threat response, problems with impulse control, disruption in the development of the hippocampus for memory and learning, and executive functioning that supports consequential and right and wrong thinking.¹⁸ Children with complex trauma may struggle with emotional regulation so staying calm under stress may be difficult.
- Complex trauma or adverse childhood experiences (ACE’s) are strongly associated with physical and mental health conditions in adulthood, as well.

PROGRAM STRENGTHS: The Council for Boys and Young Men® creates a trauma-informed, safe environment where boys/youth develop trusted relationships, can take off their “masks”, and address and challenge harmful masculinity norms while fostering pro-social, supported, and responsible behaviors and skills.

Through consistency, role plays, group games, humor and challenges, and listening to one another, they build skills to:

- manage and reduce the impacts of stress
- resolve problems and conflicts with relational skills and restorative practices
- identify and normalize a full range of emotions
- develop decision-making skills and accountability
- increase protective factors to reduce recidivism

Curricula:

- All activity guides in The Council for Boys and Young Men® model offer activities that examine masculinity definitions and the “boy code”, conflict management and decision making, and responsible nonviolent leadership tools.
- *Brothers as Allies* is a compilation guide to preventing and reducing victimization, violence, and intimate partner violence.
- *Sex in the Digital Age* – a Unity Circle model supplemental guide for all genders, provides thoughtful exploration and skill-building for safer relationships and behaviors in cyberspace.

Presenting an egalitarian approach to conflict resolution, the circle is grounded in an understanding of collectivity and interdependence and is sustained by the idea that if one person is out of balance, then the whole community is out of balance and that the community holds collective wisdom regarding how to restore balance (Boyes-Watson, 2005).

PROGRAM STRENGTHS: Girls Circles reach girls ages 9-18. Positive social connections with peers and adult female role models reduce isolation and increases girls' sense of support and resources. Role play and direct experiences promote healthy Interactions between girls and their caregivers.

Curricula:

- *Paths to the Future* includes a session focused on mother-daughter relationships, and *My Family, My Self* respectfully explores family strengths and challenges. Some activities in Girls Circle's *Mind Body Spirit for Latinas* guide support conversations between parents and daughters. Parent outreach and simultaneous parent programming can enhance outcomes. An eight-week Mother-Daughter curriculum additionally strengthens family relationships.

YOUTH RISK/NEED: REDUCE RECIDIVISM

PROGRAM STRENGTHS:

Girls Circle has demonstrated effectiveness in reducing delinquency. (Gies, et al, 2015.) Relationships built in Girls Circles and sense of social responsibility are the factors that motivate girls to achieve and reduce the risk for unhealthy behaviors.

An adolescent girl, in a Girls Circle in Sonoma County, CA, as a condition of her probation, told her circle peers and facilitator,

"I was so upset before I got here today, 'cuz I had a horrible day and my mom and I were fighting as usual, and I thought 'I'm just gonna get this over with and then go get high, I don't even care'... but you know what? I don't feel that way anymore. I've never been treated with respect before, from people at school or from adults, the way you all treat me here. I'm going home tonight, I'm gonna do my homework, and just be decent to my mom, and I'm not going out to get high. I don't feel like I need to do that anymore."

YOUTH RISK/NEED: FAMILY FUNCTIONING AND ACCEPTANCE

Boys and all youth are at greater risk of court involvement when family functioning is strained; for example, caregiver and youth mental health conditions lead to worse family functioning, which, in turn, increases rates of youth substance abuse and delinquency¹⁹, and benefit from approaches that address or recognize the needs and strengths of the whole family unit rather than the youth, themselves, as the risk factor.

Children in the child welfare system are more likely to transition to the justice system since child maltreatment increases their risk of involvement; the risk is a greater risk for boys in the child welfare system, for children from families in poverty, and for those who experience neglect.²⁰

Family rejection of gender-nonconforming, gender-expansive boys and LGBTQ+ youth has led to an over-representation of LGBTQ+ youth in the juvenile justice system.²¹ Family acceptance, along with strong parent-child attachment, has been found to be critical to LGBTQ+ youth's ability to "successfully navigate stigma, isolation, and bullying."²²

Family acceptance and support are significant factors that promote well-being and protection from risks for all youth, including LGBTQ+ youth.²³ The meaning of "family" varies by personal, cultural, and other factors and can include individuals who are not biologically or legally related to a youth (i.e., families of choice).

PROGRAM STRENGTHS: Positive relationships with peers and adult role models combined with the predictability of the seven-step format and emotional safety of the circle promote:

- belonging
- a sense of family, and
- a place to receive support for stressors that often stem from home and family
- relationship skills that are transferable to their homes, schools, and peer relationships

Boys discover they can talk about a family situation and receive understanding, they're not alone with their circumstance, and maybe guided to greater support and resources.

(Cont'd)

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.

In order to promote self-efficacy/confidence, social engagement, and psychological well-being among those in the justice system, it is often beneficial to work towards a goal and prove to yourself that you are capable of accomplishing something worth being proud of.

PROGRAM STRENGTHS: Girls gain a richer understanding of how they are perceived by others beyond their physical appearance, and can see themselves in a new light. Girls feel nurtured and respected. Activities reinforce girls' interests, talents, and strengths and resources.

A final question in each session, the "application question," asks youth to identify for themselves one action in one time frame (e.g., later today, between now and the next session) that they will take related to the topic. In this way, youth select for themselves meaningful, achievable goals that empower them and increase self-efficacy.

YOUTH RISK/NEED: FEMALE/GENDER-EXPANSIVE/GENDER-RESPONSIVE

When girls are away from the perceptions, attitudes, and pressures that they experience around boys, they are free to explore their own individual views and experiences along with those of other girls. Other gender-specific needs:

Gender intersects with race, culture, and class to impact girls in unique ways. Girls find commonalities and support where there had been assumptions, stereotypes, and, additionally for girls of color, systemic bias; girls overcome barriers to develop strengths in relationships and female identity.

Sexual abuse rates are higher for girls than boys, and a history of sexual abuse is a predictor of recidivism risk for girls, regardless of prior legal involvement or behavior problems.²⁴

PROGRAM STRENGTHS: Girls Circle equips girls with the safe environment and safe relationships to reduce isolation, find needed resources, and support healthy coping skills.

(Cont'd)

One program director in a New Jersey school district implemented The Council for Boys and Young Men for middle school boys as a leadership program for students at risk of suspensions and poor academics. He received calls from parents telling him that their sons' behavior at home had changed, they were more respectful and more on task with homework. This director involved parents in supporting the program with messages for their sons, and by inviting them to the boys' program completion ceremony.

All curricula may be facilitated by adults who can role model a consistent, caring, attentive presence with appropriate expectations and limits, and boundaries.

The curricula can also be adapted to involve parents together with their sons and gender-expansive teens.

YOUTH RISK/NEED: REDUCE RECIDIVISM

PROGRAM STRENGTHS: Avoiding and reducing delinquency requires early and ongoing investment in equity and science-based, effective approaches toward the healthy development of youth, families, and communities.

Prevention, Early Intervention, Diversion, Intervention Treatment, and After-care programs share the primary goal for adolescents to grow into healthy, responsible young adults free from involvement with the juvenile justice system.

While The Council for Boys and Young Men® has not yet been evaluated for recidivism, it offers validated positive youth development components: *promoting learning through experiential activities and providing needed belonging and healthy attachment.*²⁵

Diversion, for youth that do come into contact with the law, is far more effective to reduce recidivism than formal court processing and prevents the multiplying and severe impacts on young people's lives who are assigned to probation, supervision, and more serious sentencing.

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Girls enter the juvenile justice system for different reasons than boys, primarily for status offenses related to conflicts at home, but are held in secure settings more frequently and have more lengthy placements. Their needs differ, and the programs designed for youth in the justice system have typically not been designed for girls.

Differences exist in mental health needs of girls, including higher rates of PTSD, depression, and anxiety. Girls Circle offers peer support, emotional regulation and coping skills, protective factors to enhance strengths and resources and reduce risks.

YOUTH RISK/NEED: YOUTH OF COLOR, MINORITY & MARGINALIZED YOUTH

“For many Black girls and women, it is the experience of trauma that leads them to becoming involved in the pipeline, as their responses to such trauma become criminalized on a daily basis. Further, their experiences at schools within the context of zero-tolerance policies serve to exacerbate their levels of trauma, creating a unique web wherein school itself becomes a sight of trauma and terror for young Black girls (*Trajectory of Trauma: The Experiences of Black Girls in the School-to-Prison Pipeline* by Heather Nicholson-Bester).”

There is a need for trauma-informed educational policies, practices and programs to assure that Black, Brown, Indigenous and marginalized girls and gender expansive youth are given the space, support and opportunity to thrive in schools.

African American girls, Latinas, and tribal youth have higher rates of school suspensions and are over-represented in the justice system. Disparities in school-to-prison pipeline punishments and zero tolerance policies have impacted girls of color negatively with effects on education, mental health, court involvement, and economic domains.

PROGRAM STRENGTHS: Girls Circle has been effectively implemented with girls across diversities of ethnicity, race, and socio-economics. The strengths-based and restorative program honors cultural differences and traditions and builds healthy relationships preventing and reducing risks, diverting girls away from the school to prison pipeline, eliciting strengths and assets to address and overcome barriers and increase student engagement and educational aspirations.

‘Low-risk’-assessed youth that are diverted are 45% less likely to recidivate than similar youth who are formally legally processed.

Those youth with skills programs and restorative approaches are 10% less likely to recidivate compared to only 1% of youth who are formally processed.²⁶

For youth of color, diversion is a strategic approach toward equity and justice in the legal system. Currently, youth of color are less likely to receive diversion than their white peers and for less serious offenses.

For youth assessed as higher risk, where violence and/or more serious threats to public safety have occurred, The Council for Boys and Young Men® offers an important component of the youth’s treatment goals toward rehabilitation, skill-building, accountability, responsibility, healing, and community re-integration through the structured, developmentally sequenced format, youth-relevant topics, and stress-reducing and skill-building activities with a lens toward

- male and gender role expectations;
- race and cultural identity;
- education;
- interpersonal, peer and family relationships;
- community leadership;
- health;
- career goals with skills development;
- and creativity.

YOUTH RISK/NEED: SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

- Social Skills
- Emotion Identification
- Emotion Regulation
- Problem-Solving
- Educational Goal-Setting
- Goal Achieving Skills
- Impulse Control
- Anger & Conflict Management Skills
- Nonviolent Leadership
- Respectful and Safe Interpersonal Skills
- Help-Seeking
- Allyship

These skills may have been undeveloped due to complex trauma, unmet attachment and belonging needs, and/or rigid male gender role expectations, race-ethnicity and cultural experiences and expectations, social or economic marginalization, mental health problems, and more.

(Cont’d)

YOUTH RISK/NEED: PROTECTIVE FACTORS

PROGRAM STRENGTHS: Strengths-Based focused. Assets identification and building. Four elements that promote resiliency – high expectations, caring relationships, meaningful participation, positive cultural identity – are integral to the principles, structure, content and practices of Girls Circle.

Girls Circle promotes development of individual and group strengths with skills such as voicing ideas, fostering empathy, humor, self-pacing, self-monitoring, participation, activism and social concern, shared time for quieter participants, creative and dramatic arts/ activities, fun and playful learning, verbal and nonverbal activities, critical thinking skills, assertiveness, use of pros and cons, safe behaviors, self-care, positive body image, healthy activities, planning, perspective taking, inclusion, open minds, nonjudgment, body awareness, awareness of thoughts, emotions, and behaviors.

“The best part of Girls Circle was the girls in the group supporting each other – not just during the circle, but during the school day too.”

– Participant of a Girls Circle, Salk Middle school student, Spokane, WA

YOUTH RISK/NEED: TRAUMA-INFORMED

Most children experience at least one adverse childhood experience (ACE's), and many youths who benefit from support programs have experienced three, four or more ACE's, but marginalized and intersectional youth have increased rates of interpersonal trauma including threats of physical harm, sexual assault, neglect, violence, and other traumas, 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 learned brain and body response to trauma-associated stimuli for the child or adolescent.

(Cont'd)

PROGRAM STRENGTHS: The pilot study showed improvement in the intended direction of

- educational goals
- use of conflict skills

Curriculum guides offer a wide array of skill-building in emotion identification, communication, listening, teamwork, conflict skills, and relationship, safety skills, and goal setting.

Examples:

- *Living a Legacy* explores cultural messages regarding the Boy Code and promotes conflict resolution skills and cooperative team skills.
- *Men of Honor* – the two-guide set supports young men to explore emotions, engage in education, and allyship, and develop responsible and respectful, non-violent leadership.
- *Journey of the Great Warrior* guides youth through an experience to acknowledge earlier losses or hardships in the family and/or nature; a recognition of survival and coping strategies that impede development; and discovery of internal resources and collective strengths that provide protection, security, and belonging.

YOUTH RISK/NEED: MALE & YOUTH GENDER RESPONSIVE

Rigid masculinity beliefs harm boys and young men, and their communities.

TrueChild.org reports that “boys who buy into narrow ideals of manhood like strength, aggression, dominance, and emotional toughness are more likely to be expelled from school, under-achieve economically, become depressed and engage in violence; more likely to prioritize behaviors like public risk-taking, confrontation, defying adult authorities, and suffering punishment silently which—taken together—are practically a checklist for increased friction with school disciplinary and law enforcement systems.

Such boys are more likely to rigidly police masculinity among their peers. If they have been traumatized, they are likely to avoid care-seeking because they believe showing feelings or emotional vulnerability is unmanly, weak, or feminine.²⁷⁹

(Cont'd)

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 brain and body regulation and building engagement, learning, and resiliency.

PROGRAM STRENGTHS: Integrates strategies based on neuroscience, attachment, empathy – especially caring, supportive, listening and avoiding re-traumatization; recognizes PTSD influences on emotional management development, decision making, and social-emotional development; recognizes differences in experiences of trauma for girls, young women, and female-identified youth – gender-relevant trauma esp. sexual abuse and assault, sexual harassment, domestic violence, neglect, intimate partner violence. Applies client-centered principles, choices, shared decision making/control, empowerment; promotes resiliencies; nonhierarchical.

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 and intersectional identities (racial, ethnic, gender, gender 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 quality services that prioritize healthy development; and working together toward establishing social, racial and health equity across communities²⁸.

(Cont'd)

Boys and young men need a way to examine beliefs about manhood that is responsive to their developing sense of self, gender, and role in society.

Male responsive programming means providing a space that acknowledges the culture of masculinity that surrounds boys and young men; meeting them where they are at and honoring the pressure this culture exerts.

Simultaneously, it means supporting and encouraging boys in developing unique personal identities which contribute to the evolution of the culture of masculinity.

PROGRAM STRENGTHS: The Council for Boys and Young Men provides a protective forum to examine gender norms, roles and beliefs while expressing core values based on respect, equality and inclusion.

The program:

- Inclusive and expansive of boys' diverse sexual identities, personalities, appearances and interests.
- Allows for appreciation as well as a critique of masculine beliefs and ideals.
- Questions the rigid beliefs about masculinity that reject and even hold contempt for non-heterosexuality as well as a wider range of emotional expression.
- Acknowledges the needs of every boy, young man and youth to belong and be accepted within their community.
- The targeted approach also de-constructs harmful stereotypes/myths about girls, women, and LGBTQ+ people, to reduce harm.

Research has shown:

- Incarcerated youth in Ohio who participated in The Council for Boys and Young Men® program decreased the rate of adherence to rigid/ harmful masculinity beliefs.

Curricula:

- All guides include a range of activities and discussions that invite youth to explore and examine masculinity beliefs as they build their own identities.

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PROGRAM STRENGTHS: Girls Circle curricula and format are inclusive, reflective of cross cultural and indigenous practices, and culturally adaptive to the communities where offered.

The model allows for traditional cultural practices and traditions as relevant to participants. Invites, 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, and styles, and traditions. Youth can benefit even more when facilitators share similar cultural life experiences.

Studies indicate significant increases in girls’ health across ethnicities²⁹. *Honoring Our Diversity, Expressing My Individuality, and Relationships with Peers* Activity Guides have explicit content on diversity strengths, and *La Mariposa* and *Mind, Body, Spirit for Latinas* are culturally-specific guides.

YOUTH RISK/NEED: RESTORATIVE JUSTICE APPROACH

The U.S. Office of Justice defines the Restorative Justice approach as “a process whereby parties with a stake in a specific offense resolve collectively how to deal with the aftermath of the offense and its implications for the future.” Restorative principles aim to repair harm and promote healing for the person(s) who were harmed, reduce risks of more harm, promote genuine accountability and responsibility in the wrongdoing person(s), and to empower communities to actively support repair, healing, and accountability for those involved. At its core, restorative practices prioritize the power of relationships to help heal and seek to strengthen and restore communities with a responsibility to provide the social connections that support a healthy and safe environment for youth.

PROGRAM STRENGTHS: Girls Circle aligns with the core principles of Restorative Justice – valuing relationships, respect for all voices and experiences, accountability to self, other and community, and healing.

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- *Living a Legacy: A Rite of Passage Activity Guide* includes fundamental activities to safely identify and explore themes around masculinity for boys, young men, and adults.
- “It is like okay to express your feelings, even though you’re a guy, just like don’t bottle them up. Cause I think guys who do that, they get in fights and stuff.” [Boys – Focus group 2³⁰]

YOUTH RISK/NEED: DISPARITIES IN THE LEGAL SYSTEM, YOUTH OF COLOR, MINORITY & MARGINALIZED YOUTH

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

In 2019, nearly 20,000 youth in California were placed on probation. The vast majority (87%) were youth of color.³¹

Nationally, 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 2019. 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. The Human Rights Commission (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 85% of those youth were of color.

Providing a wholistic skill-building program that is trauma-informed with evidence-based practices promotes appropriate conditions for healthy, safer, and legal youth development³².

PROGRAM STRENGTHS: The Council for Boys and Young Men emphasizes positive relationships, connection, and equity for all youth. This program is well received by boys of color, boys in gangs, rural youth as well as urban youth, youth in poverty, and more. When facilitators have life and cultural experiences in common with youth, the intended impacts can be even greater.

(Cont’d)

Girls Circle is a relational-cultural program that creates safety and builds and restores relationships by harnessing strengths, providing respect and a listening environment and promoting skills to identify, reflect and communicate experiences amongst participants. Respect and other relational intentions and behaviors evoke restorative and healing experiences motivated by relationships and community support– through use of honesty, perspective-taking, self-expression, listening.

Accountability is built into the structure of the circle, beginning with co-development of circle agreements by participants and through their application during sessions. Girls develop social problem-solving skills, especially by listening and sharing as well as through targeted skill building for communication and emotional expression. They develop optimism that relationships can heal and that, amongst girls, relationships can be a resource of genuine support, friendship, healing, and repair.

YOUTH RISK/NEED: DECREASE SUBSTANCE ABUSE

PROGRAM STRENGTHS: Examines trends, patterns, motivations, behaviors and effects of substances on girls and young women specifically. Motivational interviewing discussions and activities encourage girls to explore and resolve ambivalence about their risk behaviors.

Wise & Well, My Family, My Self, and Paths to the Future address substance abuse and provide exploration and decision-making processes.

YOUTH RISK/NEED: CONTINUUM OF CARE

PROGRAM STRENGTHS: Girls Circle is successfully implemented across all levels of services in the community, child services, and the justice system, including – prevention/diversion; detention; supervision, residential, secure, and aftercare. Providing safe, consistent Girls Circle programs across services assures greater relational and restorative outcomes for individual youth and their larger community.

In the Pilot study, the curricula and approach fostered transformative relationships between the youth of differing gangs, and found:

- Positive ethnic identity increased in the intended directions in the pilot study of The Council for Boys and Young Men³³.

“What I learned was [indistinct] we could all come together even though we don’t really like each other, we can learn about each other and all come back in together and be friends, it helped.” [Boy – group 2³⁴]

Curricula Examples:

- *Standing Together* – Sessions Two and Nine break down barriers with a Similar and Different activity and a look at power and status in peer groups.
- *Living a Legacy* – Session Three, Strength Through Diversity provide a cultural identification exercise and examine discrimination and support respect and shared humanity.
- *Men of Honor* – Sessions Four and Five challenge homophobia, build empathy and celebrate diversity.
- *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.
- *PRIDE* Activity Guide – provides a safe and supportive program for LGBTQ+ youth and allies to address, support, and develop skills and resources to grow and navigate through adolescence.

YOUTH RISK/NEED: SPANISH SPEAKERS

PROGRAM STRENGTHS: One 12 session Girls Circle Activity Guide – *Mind Body Spirit for Latinas (Mente Cuerpo y Espiritu para Latinas)* – is available in Spanish and English and culturally adapted for Latinas.

NOTE TO GRANT WRITERS: If your organization serves native Spanish speakers, consider the capacity and expertise in delivering Spanish language services to assure to include Spanish speaking youth, and/or communicate with their Spanish speaking families. Bilingual facilitators in Spanish and English, and who can relate to Latinx/Hispanic cultural experiences, can greatly increase responsiveness to Spanish-speaking youth populations.

YOUTH RISK/NEED: OVERCOMING TRANSPORTATION AND GEOGRAPHIC OBSTACLES

NOTE TO GRANT WRITERS: Transportation is a significant barrier for many youth. Will your circle be held within a local school or neighborhood setting? Is there a safe transportation system or process to assist with attendance? Consider how to maximize attendance by reducing transportation and geographic barriers or consider a budget for transportation to eliminate any barriers. Online circles may reduce barriers to accessing circles as an alternative environment.

YOUTH RISK/NEED: TRAUMA-INFORMED

Complex trauma and victimization are adverse childhood experiences (ACE's) that impact the healthy development of children and youth in key areas such as learning, brain development, emotional regulation, attention, impulse control, attachment needs, hormonal and immune system function, and, in adulthood, physical health.

The greater the number of ACE's, the more likely youth will be involved with the justice system³⁶.

(Cont'd)

YOUTH RISK/NEED: PROTECTIVE FACTORS AND RESILIENCY

Resiliency, the capacity to spring back or recover after adversity, is an outcome of secure, growth-fostering relationships. For children and adolescents, these connections promote safety, caring and support, healing, and healthy development.

The protective factors of family, peers, school, and community are central developmental contexts where growth-fostering relationships may occur and which can reduce the risks that boys endure from challenges within any of these contexts. For example, a young adolescent with a learning disability may struggle in academics and yet if supported by caring adults may remain engaged in school; a foster youth with early neglect may suffer with depression but avoid substance abuse if his foster family or another consistent caring adult stays involved with his treatment goals and supports his interests and participation in a peer program.

PROGRAM STRENGTHS: Four elements that promote resiliency – high expectations, caring relationships, meaningful participation, and positive cultural identity – are integral to the principles, structure, content and practices of The Council for Boys and Young Men model.

- Strengths-Based
- Builds assets individually and collectively
- Emphasizes relationships as a building block to resiliency
- Acknowledges and celebrates each person's unique cultural experience
- Inspires personally meaningful leadership

"I was thinking that...our group...can go to elementary school and talk to them about it...cause I want to talk to the kids about stuff." [Boys- Focus group 1³⁵]

Most children experience at least one ACE, 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, gender strain, and their intersections.

Understanding trauma-informed care is essential knowledge for all youth service providers. Trauma-informed care means understanding:

- how trauma affects child and adolescent development - the brain and nervous system, social-emotional development, cognitive development and learning, relationships and behavior
- that difficult or challenging behavior may be a coping mechanism and learned response to trauma-associated stimuli for the child or adolescent.

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 focuses on building secure and safe relationships as the key toward building engagement, learning, and resiliency.

PROGRAM STRENGTHS: To address the needs of youth with complex trauma and victimization, The Council for Boys and Young Men® integrates strategies and best practices based on:

- neuroscience
- attachment
- empathy – especially caring, support, listening, and avoiding re-traumatization
- recognizes PTSD influences on emotional regulation development, decision making, and social-emotional development
- avoiding shaming boys for emotional expression or vulnerability; inviting and accepting genuine emotion and sharing of pain
- recognizing experiences of trauma – gender-relevant trauma especially sexual abuse and assault, sexual harassment, domestic violence, neglect, intimate partner violence
- applying client-centered principles
- relationship-based approaches including listening skills, providing choices, shared decision-making, empowerment; promotes resilience.

Additionally, the program recognizes “Gender Role Strain” and addresses the pressures on male youth to act tough and avoid showing vulnerability. Challenges masculinity myths that harm developing youth.

YOUTH RISK/NEED: CULTURAL HUMILITY, CULTURAL RESPONSIVENESS

The fields of juvenile justice, 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 more³⁷.

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).

PROGRAM STRENGTHS:

- The Council format is familiar and responsive cross-culturally and with indigenous populations.

(Cont'd)

- Equity for all persons in the council; each person has voice, time to share, opportunity.
- Curricula invites and acknowledges cultural, racial, ethnic, gender, age group identification and experiences with respect, interest, exchange.
- Builds relationships between youth of different backgrounds; breaks down barriers and goes beyond stereotypes to foster relationships.

YOUTH RISK/NEED: RESTORATIVE JUSTICE APPROACH

Restorative approaches are designed to repair harm, promote dialogue, and restore relationships. They focus on the needs of the victims and the offenders, as well as the involved community, instead of simple punishment of the offender.

Boys and young men become disconnected to one another and their communities through adhering to masculinity beliefs and other discriminatory views that promote violence, violation of personal or property rights, interpersonal violence, bullying, or other harmful behaviors.

Restorative approaches provide opportunity for those who have harmed and/or have been harmed to mend relationships.

PROGRAM STRENGTHS: The Council for Boys and Young Men aligns with the principles of Restorative Justice- valuing relationships, offering respect to all, accountability to self, others, and community, and healing.

The program offers culturally appropriate practices that promote safety and prevent or reduce conflict or discrimination before it happens, or addresses it through application of restorative principles and practices, especially supported by the established council agreements.

Accountability is promoted through group norms, relationships, and decision-making activities. Even opposing gang members overcome false assumptions while finding commonalities with one another.

“Cause like I said, they the [Boys’ Council facilitator] helped me a lot with my attitude and that’s why I think and my ways with other people. That’s why I’m saying that they should get people that hate each other and bring them in Boys group and see if they help each other and be friends afterwards and that’s what I think well I think that’s a good chance for Boys group to do it.” [Boy – Focus group 1]

YOUTH RISK/NEED: DECREASE SUBSTANCE ABUSE

In the U.S., between 2016 - 2020, alcohol was the most frequently abused substance by adolescents and young adults with over 7 million 12 - 20 year olds reporting use during past month, with 60.2 % of these teens and young adults binge drinking in the past month.³⁸

Alcohol use by youth is linked to car accidents and fighting, interpersonal violence, memory problems, alcohol poisoning, potential long term brain effects, school and legal problems, increased risks of suicide and homicide, and adult problem drinking³⁹.

Rates of use by teens 12-17 years for all drug use vary among states between 5% – nearly 15% of youth in those states reporting:

- Over 35% of youth reporting marijuana use in the last year.
- Opioid use, including synthetic opioids like fentanyl, is a national emergency. Opioid deaths have increased over 500% over past 23 years for the teen and young adult age group.
- Stimulants, prescription pills, hallucinogens, cocaine, tranquilizers, heroin, and inhalants are among the commonly abused substances.

(Cont’d)

PROGRAM STRENGTHS:

- Motivational interviewing discussions and strengths-based experiential activities encourage youth to explore and resolve ambivalence about their risk behaviors.
- Promotes decision-making skills, weighing the good and the not-so-good of behaviors, and stimulates self-motivation of boys and young men.
- Examination of rigid masculinity norms and harmful beliefs associated with substance use, such as “holding your liquor makes you more of a man.”

Curricula:

- *Men of Honor* – Set 2, Sessions 8 and 9 – Digging into Substance Use
- *Journey of the Great Warrior* – Sessions 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 provide an exploration of available and common initiation experiences including substance use that cause young men to become “trapped in the dungeon” and through experiential activities recognize their power to break free from harmful and disempowering behaviors and find individual purpose.

“And like my mom, like you know how you are allowed to drink like if you just want to drink a beer, if your parents give it to you, I don’t even do that anymore.” [Boy – Focus group 1⁴⁰]

YOUTH RISK/NEED: CONTINUUM OF CARE

Across the legal and child welfare systems, a supportive, youth-centered framework incorporating the principles of racial equity, inclusion and community belonging, and positive youth development for each individual youth has been identified.⁴¹

Key to the continuum of care principles, services and plans should address the developmental needs of the individual youth while promoting belonging and a family or family-like community of care that is trauma-informed and based on child and adolescent development. This includes considering:

- The “boy code” – be tough, don’t show fear, don’t cry – is further intensified within the legal system.
- Early adolescence is an age of perceived norms intensification: rigid masculinity norms intensify.

Youth across all segments of the juvenile justice system, including those in foster system, need:

- family-like safe spaces to receive belonging, acceptance, caring, supportive and secure relationships, foundational for all aspects of healthy development
- predictability and consistency
- a place to be seen and accepted for their full range of human emotions

While most dependent children supervised by a child welfare agency are placed in families (relatives or foster homes), in contrast almost 70 percent of probation youth in foster care are placed in group homes, with some placed in other states⁴².

For these youth, the need for a familiar, predictable and family-like program cannot be overemphasized.

PROGRAM STRENGTHS: The Council for Boys and Young Men has been successfully implemented across all levels of services:

- Prevention; diversion; detention; probation/supervision, residential, secure, and aftercare.
- Wholistically designed, it provides a consistent structure and supportive environment wherever implemented.

(Cont’d)

- The 7-step format, strengths-based approach, and relational and trauma-informed environment provide safety, and a family-like sense of belonging and acceptance
- Adaptable to and flexible for a range of settings from school days to probation, from high transition settings to group homes.

Curricula:

- All curricula integrates the principles for trauma-informed, inclusive, positive youth development informed continuum of care best practices
- Consistency of format across settings
- Flexibility with topics and activities to fit the interests, needs, strengths, goals, concerns and developmental ages of the youth
- Training and materials provide tools for adaptation to settings

"It is like okay to express your feelings, even though you're a guy, just like don't bottle them up. Cause I think guys who do that, they get in fights and stuff." [Boys – Focus group 2⁴³]

YOUTH RISK/NEED: SPANISH SPEAKERS

If your organization serves native Spanish speakers, consider the capacity and expertise in delivering Spanish language services to assure to include Spanish speaking youth, and/or communicate with their Spanish speaking families. Facilitators with expertise in both monolingual Spanish and English, and who can relate to Latino/Latinx/Hispanic cultural experiences, can greatly increase responsiveness to Spanish-speaking youth populations.

PROGRAM STRENGTHS: *Brothers as Allies Activity Guide (Hermanos como aliados Guía de actividades)*

Activity guides are implemented successfully, engaging culturally and ethnically diverse youth. Spanish speaking and culturally responsive facilitators provide greater impact for native Spanish speaking youth.

YOUTH RISK/NEED: OVERCOMING OBSTACLES TO ATTENDING OR PARTICIPATING – TRANSPORTATION OR TECHNOLOGY ACCESS; FOOD, SHELTER, HEALTH CARE

Many barriers may prevent youth from consistently attending the program, whether in-person or online.

- Transportation is a significant barrier for many youth. Will your circle be held within a local school or neighborhood setting? Is there a safe transportation system or process to assist with attendance? Consider how to maximize attendance by reducing transportation and geographic barriers or consider a budget for transportation to eliminate any barriers.
- Technology access is poor or unavailable for many youth due to insufficient financial resources, inadequate neighborhood infrastructure, or lack of appropriate spaces within residences where youth can attend with confidentiality. For lack of access, contact the district or department to identify strategies to link youth to resources via the community. See our Virtual Solutions page of our website for extensive guidance on technology: www.onecirclefoundation.org/virtual-solutions
- Whenever possible, incorporate budgets for snacks for in-person programming. Many youth are under-nourished while the social experience of snacking together supports connection.

PROGRAM STRENGTHS:

- Youth find trusted people and resources.
- Youth are more likely to let someone they trust know if they need help with housing, transportation, family matters, learning, or health or mental health.
- Facilitators or other youth may notice and express a concern and a follow up about another participant

Schools: Program Strengths & Components

GIRLS CIRCLE

YOUTH RISK/NEED: SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT

PROGRAM STRENGTHS: Girls Circle connects peers and adults with positive relationships, motivating girls to attend school and identify academic and social goals.

Studies consistently demonstrate significant increases in attachment to school.

Curricula:

- *Expressing My Individuality, Who I Am, My Family My Self, and Paths to the Future* Activity Guides include specific sessions on hopes and dreams and setting goals.

GIRLS CIRCLE

YOUTH RISK/NEED: MENTAL HEALTH AT SCHOOL

*Educators and Health Care Providers Need to recognize signs of mental health needs and direct students to appropriate services.*⁴⁵

“Wellbeing has weak stability and mental ill-health has moderate stability between ages 11 and 14 and large sex differences emerge in all the mental health outcomes investigated, with girls experiencing lower wellbeing and greater symptoms of mental illness at age 14.” This low stability highlights the importance of this transition period, providing a window to intervene in order to prevent adverse effects down the line.⁴⁶

When self-reported stressor loads, worry, anxiety, and depressive symptoms were assessed in Swedish 7th graders, school was found to be the most common source of stress, with girls reporting “considerably more stress than boys.” The knowledge that worry is an important target in stress prevention allows educators and health providers to better recognize early signs of mental health needs and helps them identify the proper services that could alleviate these struggles.⁴⁷

Even without clear/identifiable indicators of mental health degradation among girls in school (signs of worry, stress, etc.), studies show that depressive symptoms have been increasing in recent years. Among girls, depressive symptoms decreased from 1991 to 2011, then reversed course, peaking in 2018; Depressive symptoms are increasing among teens, especially among girls, consistent with increases in depression and suicide.⁴⁸

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BOYS COUNCIL

YOUTH RISK/NEED: DISRUPTING THE SCHOOL-TO-PRISON PIPELINE AND MARGINALIZED YOUTH

The school-to-prison pipeline is the term for the recognized link between K-12 school discipline policies such as suspensions and expulsions, especially impacting minority boys and young men and incarceration of those youth later in life. *The Advocate* in 2017 stated:

- Black students are nearly four times as likely to face suspensions as their white peers
- Suspensions of black high school students have increased eleven times more quickly than white peers since the 1970s
- Students suspended during their freshman year are two times as likely to end up dropping out of high school
- Nearly 68 percent of all men in federal prison never earned a high school diploma.⁴⁴

Black youth have been misunderstood; their learning styles or behaviors have often been viewed in the classroom as problematic though their communication patterns, such as arguing or shouting, may be stylistically consistent with home life; further, youth with disadvantaged home lives or greater adversities often need more movement and activity than sitting still in classrooms.

PROGRAM STRENGTHS: The Council for Boys and Young Men program is:

- Responsive to the needs and strengths of youth of all backgrounds
- Provides security of a community of belonging and support
- Active and experiential components
- Meets emotional and developmental needs
- Allows youth to address concerns that may otherwise spill over into their academic settings
- Reduces stress and increases skills to manage home, peer, and school life

Masculinity beliefs about manhood challenged and reconsidered, such as “not cool to be smart/succeed in academics/ school” myth.

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During the COVID-19 pandemic, these symptoms were only exacerbated. Results from a community sample of adolescents that looked at completed questionnaires from before and during the pandemic, showed significant increases in depressive symptoms followed pandemic onset for boys and girls. “However, this increase was earlier and more pronounced among girls than boys, whose depression only increased significantly during the persistent period and to a lesser degree. Trajectories of depression were influenced by loneliness and social connections.”⁴⁹

PROGRAM STRENGTHS: With regular contact, facilitators have opportunity to observe youth in circles as well as provide brief one on one check-ins where capacity exists, to identify possible concerns, mental health symptoms or stressors. They can direct students to needed services and provide referrals more efficiently. Students are more likely to indicate needs to a trusted facilitator and/or circle members once relationships have been established. Small group settings provide opportunity for observation and increased student-staff connection.

YOUTH RISK/NEED: POSITIVE BEHAVIORAL INTERVENTION & SUPPORTS

PROGRAM STRENGTHS: Positive behavior is motivated by positive peer and adult- student relationships where youth feel belonging. Girls Circle promotes healthy bonding and emotional well-being, which leads to reduced stress and improved decision making and behaviors. When girls’ emotional stress is lowered, and self-awareness and sense of connection increased, behaviors improve.

YOUTH RISK/NEED: SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING (SEL)

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”.

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Research has shown significant increases in:

- School Engagement
- Self-efficacy related to Educational Goals and Avoiding Fights

Ethnic Pride and Conflict Skills were moving in the expected direction after 10 weeks.⁵⁰

Curricula:

- All curricula provide a wide variety of youth relevant topics and activities to address needs and build upon assets.
- *Men of Honor, Set 1*, Session 8 and 9 – Engaging in Education, Parts 1 and 2

“That kinda helped me in like in real life too like in public with everything. Like not to judge people so much, like right I have been not like mad all the time. I’ve been more happier and just hanging out, just being myself. In class, I didn’t get in trouble, lately, at least, in Mr. [teachers name] because that’s usually like where I get into trouble.” [Boys – Focus group 1]

YOUTH RISK/NEED: MENTAL HEALTH AT SCHOOL

Educators and Health Care Providers Need to recognize signs of mental health needs and direct students to appropriate services.

Lack of available psychological or emotional counseling.

Not only is there a lack of available psychological or emotional counseling for youth, the large stigma surrounding mental illness for boys in particular results in boys seeking counseling less in the first place.

“Even as the need for mental health care among youth is rising, mental illness stigma can significantly impede access to that care. Our research with middle-school aged students shows that the intersections of race, ethnicity, and gender affect how young adolescents perceive mental illness in others. By identifying differences in mental illness stigma, including mental health literacy and desired separation from persons with mental illness, in diverse student populations, we can better understand the mechanisms of stigma within each of those groups and better inform future antistigma interventions that address disparities in mental illness stigma.”⁵¹

(Cont’d)

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.

The SEL approach aims to strengthen teacher-student relationships, student-student relationships, and teaching of social and emotional competencies.⁵²

- A study (n=25,896) looked at the associations of student's perceptions of cognitive-behavioral and emotional engagement in schools with the 3 aims of the SEL approach (listed above).
- Results: "Results indicated that at the student level all three factors were associated significantly with cognitive-behavioral engagement, but at the school level only the teaching of social and emotional competencies was associated significantly with cognitive-behavioral engagement. All three factors were also associated significantly with emotional engagement at both the student and school levels, with teacher-student relationships having the strongest association."
- Specificity to girls: "Some studies reported that girls are more engaged than boys, regardless of type of engagement (Johnson, Crosnoe, & Elder, 2001; Marks, 2000) and others reported that girls' higher levels were found in behavioral and emotional engagement but not cognitive engagement (Wang, Willett, & Eccles, 2011)."

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

Mental disorders among children are described as serious changes in the way children typically learn, behave, or handle their emotions, causing distress and problems getting through the day.¹ Among the more common mental disorders that can be diagnosed in childhood are attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), anxiety, and behavior disorders.

Indicators of positive mental health are present in most children. Parents reported in 2016-2019 that their child mostly or always showed:

- Curiosity (93.0%), persistence (84.2%), and self-control (73.8%) among children ages 6-11 years⁵³
- Curiosity (86.5 %), persistence (84.7%), and self-control (79.8%) among children ages 12-17 years⁵⁴

However, rates of "persistent feelings of sadness and hopelessness" have soared among American high school students. Between 2009 and 2021, the percentage of students reporting these feelings rose from 26% to 44%⁵⁵.

Prevalence of mental disorders change with age

- Diagnoses of ADHD, anxiety, and depression become more common with increased age.⁵⁶
- Behavior problems are more common among children aged 6-11 years than younger or older children.⁵⁷

Warning Signs of mental illness in boys⁵⁸ or youth may include:

- Persistent sadness that lasts two weeks or more
- Withdrawing from or avoiding social interactions
- Hurting oneself or talking about hurting oneself
- Talking about death or suicide
- Outbursts or extreme irritability
- Out-of-control behavior that can be harmful
- Drastic changes in mood, behavior or personality
- Changes in eating habits
- Loss of weight
- Difficulty sleeping
- Frequent headaches or stomachaches
- Difficulty concentrating
- Changes in academic performance
- Avoiding or missing school

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YOUTH RISK/NEED: SAFE ENVIRONMENT AND POSITIVE SCHOOL CLIMATE

A nurturing/positive school climate: An environment “characterized by supportive and engaged relationships with teachers and peers, a sense of belonging, and active participation”

A study (n=5,539) that examined the role of school climate on adolescent health (depressive systems, bullying, violence, etc.)⁵⁹

- Results found that a nurturing school climate “predicted lower rates of depressive symptoms, experiences of bullying, and perpetration of violence. Noteworthy, it was the quality of these relationships, rather than the commitment to learning, which was most predictive of outcomes.”
- Conclusion: Educational policies should consider bolstering the school’s social environment to directly impact adolescent health and well-being.⁶⁰

PROGRAM STRENGTHS: Girls Circle prioritizes physical, emotional, relational/ social safety. Its core objectives are to create safe environments where girls can grow in all facets of development, with safe relationships as the operative, motivating agent. Girls Circle changes cultures inside circle communities and beyond the circles into classrooms and school environments.

Helps resolve bullying and relational aggression, as prevention and intervention. Gets at roots of significant percentage of bullying – adherence to rigid definitions about female, male and/or non-conforming youth in appearance, style, behavior, or social status.

Format, facilitator approach, and content of curricula address, promote and reinforce healthy peer interactions. Serves as an excellent routine component to anti-bullying comprehensive planning. Supports peer leadership and key 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.

(Cont’d)

PROGRAM STRENGTHS: The Council for Boys and Young Men is a male-responsive youth support group that meets youth where they are at and provides belonging, acceptance, listening, support and resources, and allows youth to step outside of the restrictions of the “man box” to express themselves fully.

Verbal and experiential activities provide self expression and promote community through recognition that participants are not alone and have problems in common, as well as a community that generates resilience.

Regular sessions, typically once or twice weekly, offer a greater opportunity for risks, needs, or warning signs to be observed and for youth to not slip through the cracks.

Facilitators may provide brief one on one check-ins, identify possible concerns and direct students to services and referrals for mental health care more efficiently. Students are more likely to indicate needs to a trusted facilitator and/or group once a relationship has been established. Small group settings provide opportunity.

The program, while not originally designed specifically as a targeted mental health treatment, has been provided to youth on and off school sites as a mental health intervention for boys and young men at high risk of drop out, behavioral problems and court involved youth. When offered at school, it may additionally benefit youth with improved quality of attention, mood, engagement and relationships to promote learning throughout the school day due to the stress relief, community support, opportunity to share concerns, and skill-building.

YOUTH RISK/NEED: POSITIVE BEHAVIORAL INTERVENTION & SUPPORTS

Youth need educational strategies that consider their individual needs. Whether dealing with learning disabilities, complex trauma, mental health needs, isolation, neglect or abuse, reading delays, language barriers, cultural barriers, insecure housing or food, and for many other reasons, their abilities to focus on learning may be impacted.

Behavior that appears distracted, argumentative, disruptive or disengaged may indicate the need for trauma-informed positive behavioral interventions and supports.

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When girls' relationship needs are being met in healthy ways sanctioned and valued by peers, relational aggression loses steam and has no particular group value. Likewise, girls' mental health is enhanced when social support, acceptance, inclusion, and non-judgment are experienced within a peer group.

Curricula:

- *Friendship and Relationship with Peers* guides promote sisterhood and skills to address gendered conflicts that can shift into bullying and relational aggression. *Empowerment and Identity on Social Media* and *Wise & Well* guides address cyber-safety, becoming allies, and the positive use of social media.

YOUTH RISK/NEED: ALTERNATIVE TO EXCLUSIONARY PUNISHMENT

PROGRAM STRENGTHS: Girls Circle is a constructive, safe, pro-social and strengths-based program to develop life skills necessary for overall school success.

The program can be offered as a genuine disciplinary (not punitive) approach – that is, one where student *learning* and growth is anticipated. Provides educational/experiential opportunity for skills-based learning and healthy relationship building and engages students in positive experience on school site.

Especially important for youth of color and marginalized youth that experience higher rates of exclusionary discipline and school push-out. Constructive, pro-social program to address root problems, needs or challenges that are interfering with school.

BIPOC students of color, LGBTQ+ students, and those with disabilities 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: Meets youth where they are at.

Provides a relational, equity-focused and trauma-informed atmosphere that encourages youth to engage, identify concerns and interact with others in the council program.

Boys and young men are motivated by respectful interactions with adults, genuine interest, relevant topics, consistency, and diverse and experiential activities to learn to self-monitor and self-correct behavior. Pro-social skills and behaviors are fostered as social-emotional needs are met.

The structure and format help youth and facilitators to identify and reduce barriers, address needs, build on strengths and promote emotional and brain-based security in order to allow for positive engagement and learning.

YOUTH RISK/NEED: SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING (SEL)

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”.

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YOUTH RISK/NEED: RESTORATIVE PRACTICES AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN SCHOOLS

PROGRAM STRENGTHS: Restorative principles and practices provide girls opportunity to address conflicts at their roots – frequently but not always involving perceived betrayals over boys or people who are romantic interests.

Girls show increases in peer selection and satisfaction. Relationship building, skills, and repairs are central to curricula across all sessions.

All curricula promote healthy conflict skills via circle approach and circle guidelines; additionally, *Friendship, Relationship with Peers*, and *Paths to the Future* offer specific skill building tools. A conflict resolution tool is provided in the Girls Circle Facilitator Manual resource section as well. The power of Girls Circle is that participants have a safe, caring and respectful place to listen to one another. In this environment, conflict within and beyond the circle is prevented, reduced and resolved in most instances.

See also: Restorative Justice Approaches, page 15

YOUTH RISK/NEED: MENTORSHIP, ROLE MODELS, LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

PROGRAM STRENGTHS: Facilitators provide mentorship and role modeling at a group level. Positive relationships between caring adults and youth. Peers become experienced social-emotional supports with one another.

Girls Circle studies have shown increases in attachment to adults (Irvine, Roa, 2007, 2010).

Once youth have experienced the program, they want to continue. Some programs keep youth connected by inviting experienced youth participants to participate as peer mentors alongside adult facilitators to provide ongoing connection and leadership development.

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.

A 2018 study found that social support of parents, teachers, classmates and close friends was a protective factor for adolescents with depression and suicidal ideation.⁶¹

Because of rigid and restrictive masculinity norms and greater stigma about mental health, boys have less experience processing emotions in a productive way.

PROGRAM STRENGTHS: Youth learn specific skills in self-awareness, emotion identification, listening, empathy, self-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.

Each Activity Guide begins with setting the agreements for a safe, respectful and successful community environment, and then reinforced in subsequent sessions throughout the program. Session One focuses on:

- Creating a Safe Space
- Defining the Council and its Purpose
- Co-Developing Council Agreements
- Develop connections,

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 and develop healthy, nonviolent leadership.

YOUTH RISK/NEED: CLASSROOM, PULL OUT, OR AFTER SCHOOL

PROGRAM STRENGTHS: Site-specific application based on stakeholders' program goals and capacities. School "saturation" has been successfully piloted in one large U.S. semi-urban middle school district.⁶²

YOUTH RISK/NEED: STEPPING UP STUDENTS
– preparing for next level of school; Special populations, i.e. SED, Hearing Impaired, Autistic, Foster Youth, Transitional Age Youth (TAY), Children of Incarcerated Parents, Pregnant and Parenting Teens, Youth in Transition, Crisis and Grief counseling, etc.

PROGRAM STRENGTHS: Girls Circles are held in small group environments and can also be utilized as a format for high transition, one time transitioning, or short-term programs.

The program is beneficial with special populations because of its particular focus on supportive relationships. Circle format provides consistent structure and opportunity for shared experiences, support, leadership, skills building, resource development, reductions of isolation, sisterhood, esteem building.

Qualitative information has been very positive across various populations. Girls have reported feeling increased understanding and esteem through listening, bonding, sharing, and having their experiences better understood, their concerns effectively addressed, or strategies effectively developed.⁶³

YOUTH RISK/NEED: SAFE ENVIRONMENT AND POSITIVE SCHOOL CLIMATE

School communities throughout the U.S. have been profoundly impacted by multiple overlapping traumas in recent months and years – covid-19 pandemic, racial injustices, school violence, the climate crisis, political tensions, severe economic disparities, and more.

Not only students but staff, administrators, volunteers, and nonprofit partners on school sites are encountering teacher resignations, remote learning inequities and inconsistencies, high turnover, sharp attendance drop-offs, and learning loss.

Worldwide, at the peak of the pandemic, learning loss affected over 1 billion students.

The social-emotional climate for learning is vulnerable and strained.

While school settings offer opportunities for social connection and learning, the atmosphere must provide safe and positive climates for these to be attained.

PROGRAM STRENGTHS: Prioritizes physical, emotional, relational/social safety. Aims to improve social-emotional climate amongst the group and to develop skills and strategies to address social climate generally.

Male identity and definitions examined to increase positive social interactions, challenge dominance and control over others in relationship, while incorporating healthy team and individual competition and intensity.

Format, approach, and content address healthy peer interactions. Peer group experiences build upon acceptance and reject exclusion, humiliation, and making assumptions/stereotyping.

Helps resolve bullying and relational aggression. Gets at roots of significant percentage of bullying – the pressure to adhere to rigid definitions about female or male appearance and behaviors, and/or the discrimination of youth who are perceived as non-conforming youth in appearance, style, behavior.

Acts as component and reinforcement of anti-bullying comprehensive planning. Supports key 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.

YOUTH RISK/NEED: LGBTQ+ YOUTH RESPONSIVE

PROGRAM STRENGTHS: Girls Circle is inclusive and accepting of diverse sexual orientations and identities, and honors the dignity of all members. Youth who identify with female adolescent development are welcome. Studies show significant positive experiences for LGBTQ+ youth. LGBTQ+ youth are known to have increased risks for mental health and substance abuse and benefit from safe spaces and safe relationships.⁶⁴

PRIDE – A 10-Session guide for LGBTQ+ youth of all gender identities, sexual orientations and allies. The purpose is to support, empower, and equip youth with expansive orientations and identities with a respectful and affirming environment for healthy development.

The S.O.G.I.E. Handbook – (Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and Expression). A resource for facilitators and organizations to expand understanding and knowledge of concepts, terminology, definitions, and actionable affirming practices and approaches to create safety for all youth along the SOGIE spectra. Also available in Spanish.

YOUTH RISK/NEED: ALTERNATIVE TO EXCLUSIONARY PUNISHMENT

PROGRAM STRENGTHS: Masculinity beliefs about manhood challenged and reconsidered, such as “not cool to be smart/succeed in academics/school” myth.

- School engagement increased in pilot study.
- In qualitative component of Pilot Study, participants told stories of realizing that someone they had previously rejected, excluded, judged, or mocked, was okay and subsequently bullying or taunting subsided in and out of group.
- Boys and young men rate the group with high satisfaction.

Case stories describe participants taking steps outside of The Council for Boys and Young Men to reduce other bullying in their environments.

Growing Healthy, Going Strong and Standing Together (for 9-14 years) and *Men of Honor* 13-18 years) address bullying and root causes and promote empathy, respect and understanding while building allies and leadership.

“I think you should [have the group] like three days a week instead of two, cause two, it felt like it was way too short and I felt like I didn’t get to spend enough quality time with all these people.” [Boys – Focus group 2]

YOUTH RISK/NEED: RESTORATIVE PRACTICES, CONFLICT RESOLUTION

PROGRAM STRENGTHS: Restorative principles and practices provide boys opportunity to address conflicts or incidents at their roots – often related to perceived disrespect, false assumptions, end harm, accountability, and relationship repair.

Structured format offers listening, empathy, understanding of others’ experiences, and for those youth not directly involved, they benefit as witnesses of individual and community healing.

- Evaluation demonstrated that Avoiding Fights, Ethnic Pride and Conflict Skills improved in intended direction

The Council for Boys and Young Men is designed to promote healthy relationships, and all curriculum guides promote use of conflict skills; additionally, *Living a Legacy* and *Men of Honor* offer specific skill building tools.

YOUTH RISK/NEED: MENTORSHIP, ROLE MODELS, LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

PROGRAM STRENGTHS: Facilitators provide mentorship and role modeling at a group level. Positive relationships between caring adults and youth. Peers become experienced social-emotional supports with one another.

Once youth have experienced the program, they want to continue. Some programs keep youth connected by inviting experienced youth participants to participate as peer mentors alongside adult facilitators to provide ongoing connection and leadership development.

Boys and young men often have few male role models within the education system. The Council for Boys and Young Men promotes bonds and mentoring at a group level. Seeing men/facilitators like them in positions of leadership is inspiring and motivating, as youth experience support, and witness and learn respectful manhood.

Throughout the curricula, activities invite youth through activities, reflection and discussions to demonstrate respectful manhood, caring, being allies. In the Living a Legacy guide, one session addresses role models specifically, and in a culminating session boys are invited to write a letter to a younger boy, eliciting guidance and wisdom from the boy/young man.

YOUTH RISK/NEED: CLASSROOM, PULL OUT, OR AFTER SCHOOL

PROGRAM STRENGTHS: Site-specific application based on stakeholders' program goals and capacities. School "saturation" has been successfully piloted in one large U.S. semi-urban middle school district.⁶⁵

Consistency as format and approach stays intact.

Flexibility with time allotted; may vary from 40 mins during school hours to 90 mins or more after school.

Flexibility for time frames, topics, activities. Follow activity guides or follow structure and approach and insert topics with activities most relevant to the population and current needs .

YOUTH RISK/NEED: STEPPING UP STUDENTS – preparing for next level of school; Special populations, i.e. SED, Hearing Impaired, Autistic, Foster Youth, Transitional Age Youth (TAY), Children of Incarcerated Parents, Pregnant and Parenting Teens, Youth in Transition, Crisis and Grief counseling, etc.

PROGRAM STRENGTHS: Qualitative information reveals positive experiences thus far. In one facility in which boys and young men attended school, Council groups, and other programming while in custody of a state department of youth services, facilitators stated that those young men who participated found the program to be more interesting as the topics addressed issues of concern not previously provided and which prepared them for next steps.

The degree to which the young men know and trust the facilitator has been as important as the structure and content of the material of the groups. Whether foster youth, youth in work programs, special developmental needs or transitional youth, the model is flexible and adaptive to youth needs.

YOUTH RISK/NEED: LGBTQ+ YOUTH RESPONSIVE

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 peers. 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.⁶⁶

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: The Council for Boys and Young Men is inclusive and accepting of diverse sexual orientations and identities of participants. Youth who identify with male adolescent development are welcome. Masculinity beliefs when rigid and unchallenged lead to harm to boys, young men, and their communities.

By examining cultural norms and beliefs, boys and find and develop acceptance for diversity in male sexual orientation and expansive gender identities.

- Pilot studies show increased acceptance of diversity.

Men of Honor – Two-set activity guide includes content to promote acceptance, question homophobic attitudes, and examine rigid masculinity norms that harm youth, their families, and communities and promote empathy and understanding for their LGBTQ brothers and become respectful allies.

S.O.G.I.E. Handbook: (Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and Expression) – guide for facilitators. Expands understanding and knowledge of concepts, terminology, definitions and actionable affirming practices and approaches to create safety for all youth along the SOGIE spectra and to be used in tandem with all One Circle programs. Free. In English and Spanish. Downloadable.⁶⁷

GIRLS CIRCLE

YOUTH RISK/NEED: PREGNANCY AND HIV/STI PREVENTION

PROGRAM STRENGTHS: Mind Body Spirit and Paths to the Future Activity Guides provide opportunity to increase awareness and decision making skills. *Sex in the Digital Age* is supplemental curriculum that also promotes awareness, tools, support and resources for navigating intimate sexual decision making, behaviors and safety. Circle format compliments other specific curricula targeting pregnancy prevention as integrated approach.

- *Girls in Girls Circle increased use of condoms.* (Gies, et al, 2015)
- *Girls in Girls Circle had fewer sex partners* (Gies, et al, 2015)

GIRLS CIRCLE

YOUTH RISK/NEED: DATING VIOLENCE, INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

PROGRAM STRENGTHS: Girls explore healthy boundaries, discuss gender norms and gender expectations, consider personal boundaries and preferences, and develop communication skills, especially assertiveness to express themselves. Girls also explore power dynamics, patterns of healthy and problematic relationships, safety. Specific sessions address healthy relationships, partner safety, rights, and setting boundaries in relationships in *Relationships with Peers*, *My Family, My Self* and *Paths to the Future*, and *Sex in the Digital Age* (a supplemental guide).

GIRLS CIRCLE

YOUTH RISK/NEED: VIOLENCE – PHYSICAL

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

For Activity Guides with particular focus on girls' healthy conflict resolution, see: *Friendship* [peers], *Relationship With Peers* [peers; partners], *Paths to the Future* [family, partners, authority figures], *Mother-Daughter Circle* [female caregivers and daughters].

BOYS COUNCIL

YOUTH RISK/NEED: PREGNANCY AND HIV/STI PREVENTION

Statistics from the 2019 Youth Risk Behavior Survey⁶⁸ reveal:

Gender differences:

- For high school youth reporting sexual activity with a person of an “opposite” or another sex, males reported higher rates of condoms use in last sexual activity than females reported rates of use of condoms by males in last sexual activity.
- Youth that had consumed alcohol before last sexual activity reported lower rates of condom use than youth that did not use alcohol before last sexual activity.

Racial and ethnic disparities persist for STI-HIV prevention practices and pregnancy prevention.

- Black and Hispanic youth were less likely to use condoms and other contraception and STI-HIV prevention.
- Birth rates were almost two times as high for Black and Hispanic youth than for their white peers.

The CDC recommends strategies to reduce racial disparities as well as to improve sexual health risk prevention, including through programs to provide community and school-based accurate and developmentally-gear education about STI-HIV prevention and pregnancy prevention for empowerment and to reduce unintended consequences.

PROGRAM STRENGTHS: When youth receive information that is both accurate, relevant, and empowering, in a safe and supportive atmosphere, they are more equipped to apply the information to their own lives.

International research on men's public health programs that incorporate gender-transformative components (address gender equity and examine rigid masculinity beliefs) have demonstrated men's increased use of protection to prevent pregnancy and the spread of sexually transmitted infections.

(Cont'd)

The Council for Boys and Young Men provides a safe place and community within which to address questions, consider and challenge unsafe or unhealthy norms and myths, and discuss intimate partner behaviors as they pertain to individual and partner interests and impacts.

Respectful and relational values are integral and expressed in the program.

Men of Honor, Part 2, two sessions specifically address healthy and safer sex decisions and behaviors.

Sex in the Digital Age Activity Guide supports youth and equips them with perspectives, tools, empathy, prompts and scenarios to develop respectful, safer, responsible decision making.

YOUTH RISK/NEED: DATING VIOLENCE, INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

High school youth of all genders report experiencing dating violence – sexual and/or physical.

In the 2019 Youth Risk Behavior Survey of high school students⁶⁹,

- 7 % of male youth, 9.3% female youth, 13.1% of gay, lesbian, or bisexual youth, and 16.9% of youth who chose “unsure” for their sexual identity* reported physical dating violence.
- 3.8% of male youth, 12.6% of female youth, 16.4% of gay, lesbian, bisexual youth, and 15% of youth who chose “unsure” for their sexual identity reported sexual dating violence.

**Terms shown here are those used in the survey. It is unclear if the meaning of the phrase “unsure” for their sexual identity” refers to sexual orientation or gender identity, both, or other.*

PROGRAM STRENGTHS: All curricula promote respectful manhood, challenges and re-thinks rigid “man box” definitions (i.e., dominance, control) that harm boys and all those in their relationships. Engage boys in empathy, responsibility, and respectful interactions.

Curricula:

- *Growing Healthy, Going Strong* – two sessions address male and female roles and expectations; *Living a Legacy* addresses healthy relationships in one session specifically.
- *Men of Honor* – two sessions specifically address relationships and partner safety with women and girls.
- *Brothers as Allies** Activity Guide is a compilation of sessions focused on preventing and reducing violence. Content and program provides male-identifying youth with social support, promotes pro-social behaviors, builds empathy, encourages resistance against bullying. Addresses gender roles and expectations, self-expression, healthy masculinity, respect for differences, positive ethnic identity, communication, empathy, and becoming allies. Available now in English.. Spanish version to be released in 2022.
- *Sex in the Digital Age: A Guide to Talking with Teens about Pornography and Sexting* is a **supplemental curriculum for all genders** with essential tools and resources to promote healthy development for youth 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.

**Brothers as Allies was implemented in school and after-school sites for nearly four years through a grant awarded from the CDC to researchers at Cornell University to study the effects of The Council for Boy and Young Men program in partnership with the NY State Department of Health to prevent and reduce sexual violence. The four year study was to conclude in 2020. The covid-19 pandemic disrupted the data collection and analyses. However, qualitative feedback suggested that the boys and young men and facilitators had strong satisfaction with the program. One young man asked to continue and to support younger boys as a peer leader.*

YOUTH RISK/NEED: VIOLENCE – PHYSICAL

(For a description of needs and conditions, see *Juvenile Justice Sector: Violence and Victimization*, above.)

PROGRAM STRENGTHS: All guides examine risks, motivation, definitions/beliefs of manhood, and experiences of power, status, respect, conflict avoidance and conflict resolution, and alternatives to violence.

Guides offer discussions and activities that promote safe, respectful skills for healthy competition, conflict resolution, managing difficult emotions, and to examine and reconsider beliefs. Expression of strengths encouraged through leadership, dialogue, or teamwork vs. physical dominance and harm.

Brothers as Allies is a violence and sexual violence prevention program.

Men of Honor: Nonviolent respectful leadership is a central aim as well as throughout the whole Boys Council program.

Mental Health & Behavioral Health

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

PROGRAM STRENGTHS: Relationships are fundamental to health and mental health. Circle programs reduce isolation. Studies have shown:

- Decreases in self harm
- Decreases in substance abuse, specifically, less drinking in girls of color

Circle format and approach offer stress reducing elements: predictability, choices, and structure to promote security and empowerment applicable to youth populations.

Depression: Adolescent depression increased during the COVID-19 pandemic, possibly related to dramatic social changes according to a study in the *Journal of Pediatric Psychology*.

- “Individual-level factors that contribute to social functioning, such as temperament and neural reactivity to social feedback, may confer risk for or resilience against depressive symptoms during the pandemic.”

(Cont'd)

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

Rates of depression⁷⁰ increased by 52 percent in teens between 2005 and 2017, and in 2019, 70 percent of teens reported anxiety and depression as major problems⁷¹.

- For boys, even before the pandemic, there was an alarming rise in suicides⁷² among older teens (15 and older) and they have died by suicide at three to four times the rate of girls⁷³.
- Boys are socialized to keep worries and problems to themselves and to not ask for help. The “Boy Code” requires boys to be tough, be strong, be stoic, don’t show fear or any emotions other than anger.

Multiple causes including increasing pressures to succeed in school and a growing reliance on social media and technology⁷⁴ that can leave kids feeling isolated and vulnerable – a situation exacerbated by Covid-19⁷⁵.

A study published in 2020 of middle school youth examined the levels of stigma around mental illness according to gender, race and ethnicity and intersections.

- Differences in levels of awareness and knowledge, as well as less positive attitudes, were seen in boys, especially non-Latino Black boys, compared to girls of any race and ethnicity.

(Cont'd)

- The study concludes, “Girls high in shy/fearful temperament with reduced neural activation to social reward may be less likely to engage socially, which could be detrimental during the pandemic when social interactions are limited. In contrast, girls lower in shy/fearful temperament with heightened neural reactivity to social reward may be highly motivated to engage socially, which could also be detrimental with limited social opportunities. In both cases, improving social connection during the pandemic may attenuate or prevent depressive symptoms.” Study methods and specific numbers are highlighted in the study⁷⁶.

Anxiety: It is common that other girls and peers play a large role in the development of anxiety in adolescent girls. Examples may include peer attachment, peer acceptance, friendship quality, peer support, as well as victimization.

- Results: “The study findings showed that while low peer acceptance was significantly associated with increased social anxiety for boys and girls, limited close friendships, negative friendship experiences and relational victimization were highlighted as risk factors specific to girls.”⁷⁷

Substance Abuse: This study looked at factors involved in girls’ use of substances across races and ethnicities and classes. While some distinctions exist in types of behaviors and drugs of choice, girls are vulnerable to use alcohol and drugs for experimentation, to feel a part of their peer group, to alleviate stress, and other social-cultural influences that affect how and when girls are inclined to begin using drugs.

The Girls Circle program in its totality offers support, healing, connection, reductions in stress.

Body Image promotes healthy self-image (associated with better mental health). *Mind, Body, Spirit* promotes awareness of connection between body, thoughts, emotions, behaviors and self-care. *Wise & Well* offers one session specifically on girls and mental health and busting the stigma. *My Family, My Self* invites exploration of substance use in the family. *Mother-Daughter Circle* strengthens protective bonds of parent/child relationship.

(Cont’d)

- Boys were more likely to think of youth with mental health conditions as “bad”, more likely to believe that treatment wouldn’t help, and wanted more social distance from youth with mental health conditions.
- This study highlights the need for boys, and especially boys of color, to have more conversations and information about mental health conditions and, given the high incidents of youth with anxiety, depression, ADHD, and bipolar disorders, to be provided with non-threatening resources and interventions that create safety for youth to approach adults for help with their own or a peer’s needs⁷⁸.

A 2020 survey of more than 1,500 youth ages 13 to 19, for example, found that 81 percent of them reported mental health as a significant issue and 79 percent wished their school talked more about it.⁷⁹

In order to destigmatize mental health, boys need places and programs to talk about experiences and to identify and normalize feelings.

PROGRAM STRENGTHS: The Council for Boys and Young Men reduces isolation. Not alone, not weird. Supportive. Kind.

Stress reducing elements: Circle format and approach offer predictability, choices, and structure to promote security and empowerment applicable to varied populations.

Resources are made available.

Reflective activities and learning in the council includes application questions at 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 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.

(Cont’d)

Self-care is promoted through self-identification of personal actions that lead toward safer, healthier, and more confident relationships to self and others. Several activities have been adapted for online that address mental health, stress reduction and resiliency and are found on our Virtual Activities webpage: www.onecirclefoundation.org/virtual-activities

The program as a whole invites boys 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 himself, which promotes intrinsic self worth, leadership, motivation.

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

One study from the Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry Journal, titled “Gaining the courage to see and accept oneself: Group-based compassion-focused therapy as experienced by adolescent girls,” highlights the power of this type of therapy.

- “CFT can provide a promising method for empowering young people with mental health problems, helping them feel connected with others, and fostering in them the strength to show their true personalities.” Specific to Group Therapy: “The results showed that participating in group-based CFT means gaining the courage to see and accept oneself through meeting with peers who are experiencing similar difficulties.”⁸⁰
- “Despite resounding evidence of the deleterious effects of poverty on the psychological well-being of children and families, there is a vast unmet need for mental health services in this population.” **Among children experiencing poverty who are in need of mental health care, <15% receive services, and even fewer complete treatment.** “Although there is no significant difference in the prevalence of mental health problems among children residing in poverty by race or ethnicity or geographic residence, after demographic and family variables are controlled for, there are statistically significant disparities in mental health service utilization across racial and ethnic groups and between children residing in urban and rural areas.”⁸¹

PROGRAM STRENGTHS: While Girls Circle is typically provided as a supportive program, it has also been provided as a mental health group program, in which objectives are identified and met through social-emotional peer and adult supports and skill-building. The program can be more cost-effective and particularly useful when there are a lack of professionals in an area, and in some instances may provide the social support that helps youth normalize recent experiences and reduce stress and isolation.

Endnotes

- 1 Girls Circle and The Council for Boys and Young Men are designed to be gender-responsivespecific models. For emotional safety, we recommend that the facilitator or co-facilitators will have identities and lived experiences in common with circle participants, and/or a depth of understanding of the life experiences of circle participants as much as possible.
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Tampa School District and community-based provider OPBI have implemented a “school saturation” program in which all sixth grade girls receive Girls Circle during first trimester “wheel” and optional continuing programming in Spring trimester. All sixth grade boys receive The Council for Boys and Young Men in same school saturation approach. Results have shown significant increases in school engagement, and other positive program goals. See OPBI website for contact information: www.opbi.org

See Case Studies, i.e. Trillium School

Irvine, et al, (see above)

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