The heart of Minnesota Communities Caring For Children is a network of parent, primary caregiver, and children’s support groups called Circle of Parents®.

We Build Resiliency

Through mutual-self help parents support and encourage each other to meet their goals and vision for life.

By introducing Protective Factors as a strength based approach to develop self and family.

By providing tools for parents/families to become self aware of their own strengths and needs.
Creating a Culture of Support and Well-Being

The culture of group gets created from the moment parents walk in the door.

- Physical environment
- Emotional environment
- Opening ceremonies

Opening Circle Tradition

- Opening and closing your circle with a reading, poem or a simple word builds tradition and culture in the group.
- Opening gives members a chance to pause to quiet themselves when they first come in after a hectic day.
- Closing gives them time to reflect on what they are taking home from the group.
Talking Piece

• The use of a talking piece ensures equal contribution and a reflective pace it’s impact is multifaceted and profound.

• To those who are quiet, shy, or struggling to find their voice in a group space, the talking piece offers an opportunity to share what’s on their minds and hearts.

• Can be used to bring the group back when conflict occurs.

Agreements

• Agree on traditions in the group opening and closing use of talking piece
• How respect is given to each other
• Confidentiality
• How to deal with conflict
• Safety of Children
• Mandated Reporter
• Ask the group for others
Confidentially & Mandated Reporting

- Parent Agreement
- Mandated Reporting

Active Listening
Supporting and Strengthening Families

Adverse Childhood Experiences

Personal and Parental Reflections Regarding the ACE Study

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jUJHvbPrL0I
Building Upon the Strengths of Families: *Protective Factors*

- Parental Resilience
- Social Connections
- Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development
- Concrete Supports in Times of Need
- Children’s Social and Emotional Competence
- Nurturing and Attachment

**Parental Resilience**

**Being Strong & Flexible**

Psychological health; parents feel supported and able to solve problems; can develop trusting relationships with others and reach out for help.
Social Connections: Parents need friends

- Relationships with extended family, friends, co-workers, other parents with children similar ages
- Community norms are developed through social connections
- Mutual assistance networks such as child care, *Circle of Parents*, emotional support, and other concrete help

Knowledge of parenting and child development

- Basic information about how children develop
- Basic techniques of developmentally appropriate discipline
- Alternatives to parenting behaviors experienced as a child
- Help with challenging behaviors

- Parenting is part natural and part learned!
Concrete supports: We ALL need help sometimes

- Response to a crisis such as food, clothing, shelter
- Assistance with daily needs such as health care, job opportunities, transportation, education
- Services for parents in crisis: mental health, domestic violence, substance abuse
- Specialized services for children

Social and Emotional Learning

- Normal development (like using language to express needs and feelings) creates more positive parent-child interactions
- Challenging behaviors, traumatic experiences or development that is not on track require extra adult attention
Nurturing and Attachment

- Develops positive, secure, and loving bonds with their children
- Stimulates healthy brain development
- Provides children with the love, acceptance, positive guidance, and protection to thrive

Protective Factors On-line Training

- The National Alliance of Children’s Trust and Prevention Funds (Alliance) is pleased to make available a series of online training courses to support implementation of the Strengthening Families™ Protective Factors Framework in multiple settings.

http://www.ctfalliance.org/onlinetraining.htm
Developing Circle of Parents

**Agency Partners**
- Many chapters are the result of collaboration between Circle of Parents and another organization. Through this partnership, an agency or organization already serving families agrees to support the Circle of Parents support group chapter as part of its ongoing operation.
- Support groups guided by the Circle of Parents quality assurance program
- A place for parents and children to meet
- Volunteers or release-time staff to facilitate the parent group and lead the children’s program
- Snacks and materials for the children’s program
- A key contact within the sponsoring agency to provide focus and leadership for the partnership and to interact with Circle of Parents staff

**Community Partners**
- In many Minnesota cities and towns, groups of involved citizens start grassroots community movements to prevent child abuse and neglect. They furnish the momentum needed to start parent support groups. These citizens form advisory teams to provide leadership, guidance, and community resources to ensure the health and longevity of their Circle of Parents chapters. Community advisory teams meet monthly to:
  - Maintain the Circle of Parents quality assurance program
  - Ensure that qualified group facilitators and children’s program volunteers are recruited, trained, and recognized for their volunteer activities
  - Establish a budget and fundraising plan so the group has the resources (materials, snacks, etc.) they need to be successful
  - Network in the community to create parent referral sources for the group
  - Plan for special events such as child abuse prevention month activities or providing materials to local resource fairs.

Training and Technical Assistance

**Community capacity building**
- Advisory committee training /chapter agreement/shared leadership
- Volunteer recruitment strategies and job descriptions
- Background checks
- Fiscal services, liability insurance, file 1099 forms
- Evaluation

**Volunteer training**
- Facilitator training
- Children’s program training
- Parent leadership training
- Others upon request
Circle of Parents Staff

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