



Circles® Overview

Circles® is managed by Think Tank Inc., and provides communities new tools for building long-term relationships across economic lines to support families and make systemic changes. Circles® is a supportive, intentional, reciprocal, befriending relationship comprised of a Circle® Leader, and two to four community Allies, who are financially self-sufficient that are willing to befriend the person/family and support their way out of poverty. Circles® is a high-impact, 18-month long strategy designed to:

- Provide emotional and practical support
- Assist with complex issues
- Build the “social capital” of people living in low income situations
- Show the community the very real barriers holding people in poverty
- Walk with people in poverty and support positive changes in their lives.

Circles® has been used in dozens of communities in the United States and Canada. It is a proven and credible initiative that makes real and on-going change for individuals and our community. A “circle” consists of three types of people: Leader, Ally and Coach. A Circle® Leader is an individual or family of low-income who is interested in becoming self-sufficient. The Circle® Leader:

- Leads, receives and gives support within the Circle
- Works with Allies to build his or her plan
- Uses their lived knowledge and skills as problem solving tools to work on poverty issues in the community.

Allies are financially self-sufficient individuals who engage in intentional, caring relationships with an individual or family working to become self-sufficient. Allies:

- Are community members trained in Bridges Out of Poverty and support Circle Leaders in their journey
- Work with their Circle Leader to accomplish his or her plan for self-sufficiency
- Understand issues around poverty and know how to be helpful while not being intrusive.

The Coach supports Circle Leaders and Allies in fine-tuning personalized action plans. The Circles Coach is a paid position that has received specialized training to support and manage the Circles® program. The Coach:

- Help Circle Leaders in navigating the social services system
- Supports Allies with their personal goals
- Mediates difficult situations
- Shares their knowledge and skills.