



THE GUIDING COALITION

The Circles Guiding Coalition is a volunteer advisory board that includes people from various economic classes and sectors who are committed to helping the Circles Guelph Wellington program run successfully. The Guiding Coalition meets monthly. The Guiding Coalition:

- assists in making sure the local Circles program reflects the strength of its community
- supports the implementation of Circles through hands on support and general awareness building
- supports the work of paid staff and volunteers who make the circles program work

THE BIG VIEW

Leaders, Allies, Coaches and the Guiding Coalition come together for a scheduled meeting called "The Big View." These meetings, which can include over 50 people, provide an opportunity to examine barriers that hold people in poverty.

ABOUT CIRCLES GUELPH WELLINGTON

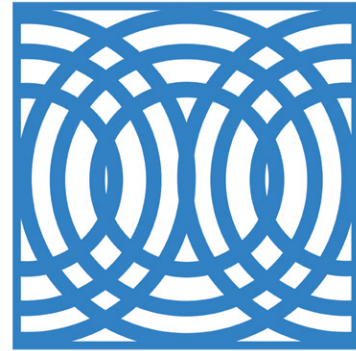
Circles Guelph Wellington is a community based partnership that is committed to specific and positive actions to reduce the number of families dealing with poverty in our community.

HOW TO GET INVOLVED

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Circles® GUELPH
WELLINGTON



.....
A new way out of poverty,
by matching low-income people with
middle- or upper-income allies
.....



Changing

how we think and act about poverty

The Circles Guelph Wellington initiative is changing how our community thinks and acts about poverty. In addition to the personal stress it causes, we know that poverty has an impact on our health, social and policing services. If we lower the number of families living in poverty in our community we will improve lives, and spend less on these public services.

Research and best practices from across North America tell us the best way to end poverty is to build a strong and supportive community. Circles Guelph Wellington, Bridges out of Poverty and Getting Ahead are three connected initiatives that focus on ending poverty in Guelph-Wellington.

CIRCLES: A WAY OUT OF POVERTY

Circles Guelph Wellington is a community-based initiative that creates relationships across economic boundaries. It matches people of low-income who have attended the Getting Ahead program with people of middle- and upper-income who have attended Bridges training.

Circles is a high-impact, 18-month-long voluntary 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

The Circles program has been used in dozens of communities in the US and Canada. It is a proven and credible program that makes real and on-going change for individuals and our community. A “circle” consists of three types of people —

Circle Leader 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 Two or three volunteers for each Leader who engage in an intentional, caring relationship 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 figure out how to accomplish his or her plan for self sufficiency
- understand issues around poverty and know how to be helpful while not being intrusive



(Allies often face the instinct of wanting to “rescue” the Circle Leader. The Ally’s role is not to fix problems, but to walk alongside the Leader and link them to resources and supports.)

The Coach The Circles Coach supports Circle Leader 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:

- helps Circle Leaders in navigating the social services system
- mediates difficult situations
- supports Allies with their personal goals
- shares their knowledge and skills

