

# GIRLS TO WOMEN MENTORING HAWAII

## presents

GIRLS CIRCLE® from One Circle Foundation

### Girls Circle® Vision

Girls and young women 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.

### Brief Program Description

Girls Circle® is a structured support group for pre-teen and adolescent girls and young women, and LGBTQ youth who identify with female adolescent development – 9-18 years, regardless of risk level. Girl's circle 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.

### Structure

- 1 or more sessions per week, depending on setting
- 60- 90 minutes
- 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 3 adult female facilitators, typically
- Physically, culturally, and emotionally safe; protected, confidential
- Co-created group guidelines and expectations based in 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

## Service Sectors & Settings

The girls circle program is suitable for use in all youth-serving settings, especially vulnerable populations in:

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

## Theoretical Foundation & Research-Based Components

Girls circle is grounded in Relational-Cultural Theory • & 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

## Girls Circle is an Evidence-Based Program

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

Gies, S., Cohen, M., Edberg, M., Bobnis, A., Spinney, E., & Berger, E. (2015). The Girls Circle: An evaluation of a structured support group program for girls. Final report. Prepared for the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice Programs. Bethesda, MD: Development Services Group See: <http://www.onecirclefoundation.org/docs/Research-GC-DSG-2015.pdf>

## Evidence-Based Practices

- Strengths-Based Approach \*
- Motivational Interviewing<sup>8</sup>
- Gender-Transformative

\*Galassi, J. (2008). Strengths-Based School Counseling and the ASCA National Model. *Professional School Counseling*, 12(2), 176-181. Retrieved from EBSCOhost.

\*Saleebey, D. (ed.) (2002). *The Strengths Perspective in Social Work Practice*. 3rd Edition. NY: Longman

## Additional Outcomes from Pre-Post Evaluations

### 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

## Curricula

A manual and 13 fully developed activity guides provide step-by-step sessions for implementation.

Thirteen 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.

## Quality Assurance Tool

Yes.

## Measurement Tools

### **Girls Circle® Evaluation Tool Kit**

Includes Consent Form, Instructions for Administering and Scoring.

## **SPECIFIC YOUTH RISKS AND NEEDS ADDRESSED BY THE PROGRAM**

### **YOUTH RISK/NEED: Female/Gender-Responsive**

#### **PROGRAM STRENGTHS:**

- 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.<sup>12</sup> Girls Circle equips girls with the safe environment and safe relationships to reduce isolation, find needed resources, and support healthy coping skills.
- 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: Protective Factors**

#### **PROGRAM STRENGTHS:**

Strengths-Based focused. Assets identification and building.

These four elements that promote resiliency -

- high expectations,
- caring relationships,
- meaningful participation,
- positive cultural identity –

are integral to the principles, structure, content and practices of the model.

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

### **YOUTH RISK/NEED: Depression, Mood Disorders, Anxiety, ADHD, PTSD, Substance Abuse**

#### **PROGRAM STRENGTHS:**

Relationships are fundamental to health and mental health. Circle reduces isolation.

- 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 varied populations.
- Totality of program 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.

### **YOUTH RISK/NEED: Trauma-Informed**

#### **PROGRAM STRENGTHS:**

Yes.

- 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 and young women – gender-relevant trauma esp. sexual abuse and assault, sexual harassment, domestic violence, neglect, intimate partner violence;
- Applies client-centered principles, choice, shared decision making/ control, empowerment; promotes resiliencies; nonhierarchical.

### **YOUTH RISK/NEED: Achieve Self-efficacy**

#### **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.

### **YOUTH RISK/NEED: Cultural Humility, Cultural Responsiveness**

#### **PROGRAM STRENGTHS:**

- Girls Circle curricula and format are inclusive, reflective of cross cultural and indigenous practices, and culturally adaptive to the communities where offered.
- Model allows for cultural traditional practices and traditions as relevant to participants. Invites, welcomes all populations including marginalized and minority youth.
- Girls Circle is designed to be adapted to each unique social and cultural location 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, traditions. When facilitators share the cultural life experiences of youth, benefits increase all the more.
- Studies indicate significant increases in girls' health across ethnicities.

Steese, Dollette, et al (Adolescence, 2006); and Irvine, et al, [www.onecirclefoundation.org/research-GC.aspx](http://www.onecirclefoundation.org/research-GC.aspx)

### **YOUTH RISK/NEED: Youth of Color, Minority & Marginalized Youth**

#### **PROGRAM STRENGTHS:**

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. Girls Circle has been effectively implemented with girls across diversities of ethnicity, race, and socio- economics. T

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.

Morris, M., 2016, *Pushout: The Criminalization of Black Girls in Schools*

### **YOUTH RISK/NEED: Overcome a Sense of Victimization**

#### **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: 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.

**YOUTH RISK/NEED: Overcome Family Fragmentation****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.

**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.

**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..

**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. 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)

**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.

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

### **YOUTH RISK/NEED: Restorative Practices, Conflict resolution**

#### **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 romantic interests.
- Girls share experiences, listen, clarify misperceptions or gain understandings and restore relationships.
- 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.



## **YOUTH RISK/NEED: Safe Environment and Positive School Climate**

### **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.

- Changes cultures inside circles 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.
- 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 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.
- Gets at roots of significant percentage of bullying – adherence to rigid definitions about female, male and/or non-conforming youth in appearance, style, behavior.
- Girls gain strength of voice, skills and knowledge to address social concerns effectively and authentically. Power is acquired through leadership in peer activities and social-emotional strengths, removing motivation for power through exclusion.
- 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.

## **YOUTH RISK/NEED: Social Emotional Learning (SEL)**

### **PROGRAM STRENGTHS:**

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

## **YOUTH RISK/NEED: Positive Behavioral Intervention & Supports**

### **PROGRAM STRENGTHS:**

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

**YOUTH RISK/NEED: Educators and Health Care Providers need to recognize signs of mental health needs and direct students to appropriate services.**

**PROGRAM STRENGTHS:**

Regular opportunity for brief one on one check ins where capacity exists, and identification of possible concerns and can direct students to services and provide referrals 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 for observation and increased student-staff connection.

© Gray, Braun, Mankowski, et al, 2009, [www.onecirclefoundation.org/research-TC.aspx](http://www.onecirclefoundation.org/research-TC.aspx)

**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.

**YOUTH RISK/NEED: Continuum of Care**

**PROGRAM STRENGTHS:**

Girls Circle is successfully implemented across all levels of services – prevention/ diversion; detention; supervision, residential, secure, and aftercare. Safe, consistent Girls Circle program across services assures greater relational and restorative outcomes.

**YOUTH RISK/NEED: Decrease Substance Abuse**

**PROGRAM STRENGTHS:**

Girls Circle is successfully implemented across all levels of services – prevention/ diversion; detention; supervision, residential, secure, and aftercare. Safe, consistent Girls Circle program across services assures greater relational and restorative outcome

**YOUTH RISK/NEED: Restorative Justice Approach**

**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.

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 development of group agreements by participants and by their application during sessions. Girls develop social problem solving skills, especially by listening and sharing as well as through targeted skill building for communication, emotional expression, and develop optimism that relationships can heal and that, amongst girls, relationships can be a resource of genuine support, friendship, healing, and repair.





