

# *Restorative Justice & Treatment Courts*

*A model for engaging Circles process to  
promote healthy living.*

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*Details on Restorative Justice and Restorative Justice Circle process can be found by accessing the list of resources provided at the end of this document. The focus of this booklet is to provide details on a model for utilizing Restorative Justice Circles in Treatment Court.*

The St. Croix Valley Restorative Justice Program (SCVRJP) has been serving Pierce and St. Croix Counties since 2001. SCVRJP provides Restorative Justice sessions to address criminal behavior and conflicts in the community. Additionally, SCVRJP facilitates programs addressing underage drinking, controlled substance use and teen driving, all utilizing Restorative Justice Circle process. Nearly 1,000 Circles have been held in the past 5 years, providing insight into the power and potential of Restorative Justice Circles.

Restorative Justice Circle process brings community members, victims, and offenders together to process incidents of ‘wrong-doing’ or ‘harm’. Circles are used to restore broken connections, promote empathy and improve self-worth. These benefits are for everyone who is part of the Circle.

In Circle process everyone has equal worth. Every voice is respected. This climate promotes understanding, increased awareness and safety to explore your weaknesses while providing the hope needed to improve yourself.

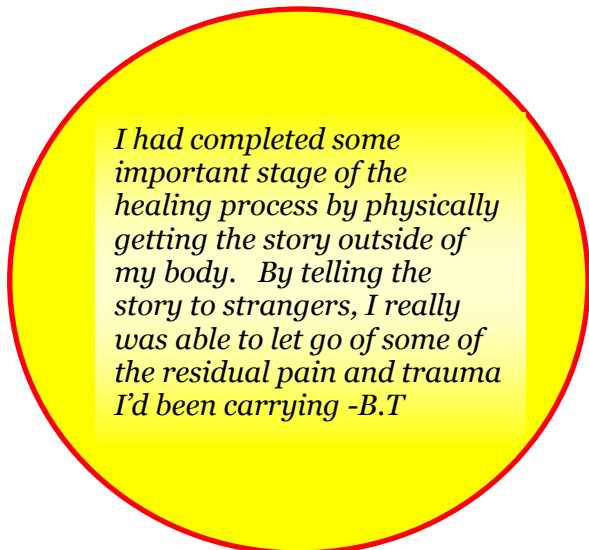
Bringing Restorative Justice Circle process to treatment courts promotes community involvement by engaging trained restorative justice volunteers as helpers. Community member/volunteers promote social norms-generally accepted standards of behavior<sup>1</sup>. Scientists have found that we are as healthy as our associates. By creating more social integration with healthy associates, individuals are healthier.



Community members would create a greater social pressure to stay healthy and offer their own experiences and stories as a road map to help others. The project would include and be followed by professionals, extending the capacity of both the professionals and community members.

Specifically the Circle project would<sup>2</sup>:

- Seek to reduce the risk of offense by supervising offenders with community support, providing a healthy relationship.
- Connect those disconnected from community by engaging them in structured communication.
- Offer an avenue for restoration and healing, by providing listeners and supporters for the common human experience.
- Increase public awareness about issues facing community members.
- Strengthen the engagement of the formal system (drug court) with non-profit/informal methods of support.
- Model cooperative relationships between offender, community, probation, police, social services, treatment professionals and employers.



*I had completed some important stage of the healing process by physically getting the story outside of my body. By telling the story to strangers, I really was able to let go of some of the residual pain and trauma I'd been carrying -B.T*

Desired Outcomes for the project would include:

- The creation of new and positive relationships, while strengthening existing relationships.
- Increase social skills and coping skills, offering alternatives to problem solving and conflict (alternatives to criminal behavior).

- Increase the community capacity to address problems. Giving people a way to help.
- Creating additional resources for victims and offenders, increasing safety nets and structured support.

Two models:

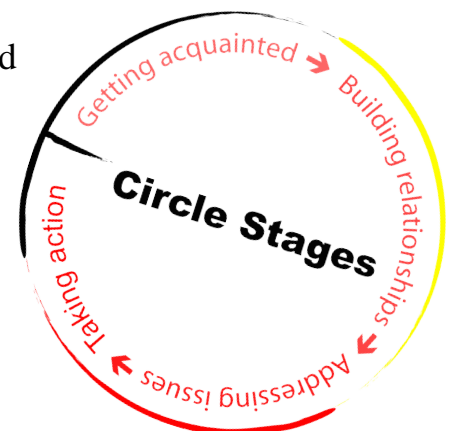
<b>Circle of Support</b>	<b>Circles of Understanding</b>
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Differences:

One core circle member, 4-7 addition circle members. Circle members are family/volunteers/professionals – as determined by the core circle member and the circlekeeper.	11 members- 3 volunteers, 3 people in tx court, 3 family members of tx court participants, 2 circle-keepers. The family members and the tx court participant are not related. ( <i>Greater understanding can be gained from somebody else’s Mom.</i> )
The circle identifies their goals and tasks. Meets as needed to complete these goals and tasks.	The Circle meets for 8 weeks. The tx court participant and the family members will each have a Circle session to share their story.
The Circle will meet for as long as needed. Commitment is 6-18 months.	The participants will have an opportunity to determine what is next at the conclusion of the session.

Commonalities:

- Volunteers/Community members – will be trained and screened by SCVRJP. This will include:
  - Supplemental application material
  - 2 day Circle Training
  - Orientation to Circles of Support/Circles of Understanding
  - Attendance at a treatment court session
  - On-going supervision and support by SCVRJP staff.
- The project will include pre and post evaluation material, periodic evaluations by professionals and community members.
- Treatment court participants will be screened and interviewed to access motivation and clarify the process.



## **Example Scenario Circle of Support**

*Jane is a client in drug court. She could be at the beginning, getting started, mid-way and struggling or near the end, ready to transition out of treatment court. Jane would fill-out an application, or be referred by a member of Treatment court. After a screening, and acceptance to the Circle of Support program, Jane would develop her core Circle group. The circle would include someone from the drug court team, family members or friends of Jane, and identified community members/SCVRJP volunteers.*

*The Circle of Support would meet as needed to get to know Jane, to understand where she needs support and develop a plan to support her. The Circle may decide that they meet monthly, or that a smaller circle will be held to help support Jane. The smaller core group might not include the probation officer, or drug court team member. The Circle would work to help Jane be successful in meeting her drug court requirements.*

*Circle members would all take a small piece of supporting Jane. Some examples of support might include assisting with transportation or child care. A Circle member might teach Jane how to set up an email account, and apply for jobs. Circle members could use their networks to help Jane with community service sites. Circle members might just call her and offer a listening ear. The Circle will decide when to start and when to stop meeting. The Circle of support may go from 6 – 18 months.*

## **Example Scenario Circle of Understanding**

*A Circle of Understanding will be 8 weeks long. The same 11 people will meet every week, once a week for the 8 week session. The people in the Circle will include 3 primary members, 3 support people and 3 community members and 2 co-facilitators. The primary members will be people that are in treatment court. The 3 support people will be family members or relatives who have had a loved one in treatment court or with significant drug addiction issues. The 3 community members will be SCVRJP volunteers. Primary and support members will not be from the same family. Jane will better be able to learn how she impacted her Mother, by hearing from someone else's Mom. This will lend to empathy and understanding in her about the impact of her drug use. Since relationships are bilateral, as Jane shares her story, the Mother (and others) present will better be able understand the experiences of drug addiction and recovery.*

*The first session will include setting up the guidelines of the Circle process, and having members get acquainted. The following weeks will be storytelling opportunities for supports and primary members, alternating weekly. The final Circle will be a time for reflection, understanding and identifying changes as a result of the Circle of Understanding. Member in Circles of understanding will be asked to commit to the 8 weeks, and be provided storytelling resources, so the stories are healing for those sharing and transformative for those listening.*

## *Additional SCVRJP resources*

All SCVRJP sessions would be accessible to volunteers and participants in the *Circles of Support & Circles of Understanding*. Currently those include:

- Victim Impact Panels
- Underage Consumption Panels
- Controlled Substance Intervention – CSI Circles
- Victim Empathy Seminars (Adults & Juveniles)
- Training & Workshop sessions (Telling your story, RJ philosophy, Circle facilitation)

Attending these sessions can be beneficial in maintaining a healthy, sober lifestyle. Participating in restorative sessions allows for people who have made mistakes in the past, have something ‘good’ emerge. This creates an additional network of fellow volunteers, working together to address issues in the community.

The Circle of Support may refer or utilize other SCVRJP programming in the plan to support the core circle member.

### A snapshot of '09 outcomes for SCVRJP:

- **97%** of our **community volunteers** would recommend our programs.
- **98%** rate our programs as Excellent or Good.
- When volunteers were asked if the program seemed effective, **100%** ranked it very effective (75%) or effective (25%).
- **96%** of **underage consumption** participants indicated the session will change behavior.
- **96%** of the **underage** participants indicated that the session will reduce their risk.
- **98%** of **victim impact panel** participants indicated the session convinced them drinking & driving places the community at risk.
- **99%** of **victim impact panel** attendees heard the message to arrange alternative transportation.
- **96%** of teen drivers report the **Safe Teen Driving Circle** made a great deal of impact.
- **98%** of teen drivers made a *public commitment* to be a safer driver.

# How do I get involved?

*Core Circle Members – Community Members - Participants*

*Please consider yourself invited!*

Treatment courts may require your participation, or you can request to be considered for these services. We are hoping to fill our first sessions by ‘word of mouth’. If you know someone who experienced hardships over family member or loved one being addicted, please extend an invitation.

A special invitation is being extended to professionals to consider being ‘community members’ in our first Circle sessions.

If you would like to participate in a Circle of Support or Circle of Understanding, please contact the Restorative Justice Center, phone 715-425-1100 or email: [scvrjpinfo@gmail.com](mailto:scvrjpinfo@gmail.com). Our staff can provide you the additional application materials, and further details on your role in Circle process.



## References and Further Resources:

1.) **Consequential Strangers: The power of people who don't seem to matter . . . but really do.** Melinda Blau & Karen Fingerman, PhD

2.) Adapted from the Booklet: Starting a Restorative Justice Volunteer Program “Pouring the Foundation”. Modeled after the Mennonite Central Committee’s Community Restoration Projects in Toronto, Canada.

Peacemaking Circles: From Crime to Community by Kay Pranis, Barry Stuart, Mark Wedge

Return to the teachings: Exploring aboriginal justice by Rupert Ross

Restorative Justice Transforming Communities – Inclusion Press

The Little Book of Restorative Justice by Howard Zehr

The Little Book of Circle Process by Kay Pranis

Changing Lenses by Howard Zehr

Writings of Chuck Robertson, Ojibwa/Dakota Elder and Circle Consultant

### ***Websites & helpful links:***

Prison Fellowship International: <http://www.pfi.org/cjr/restorative-justice>

Center for Peacemaking & Conflict Studies (10 years of COSA) <http://peace.fresno.edu/cosa/>

Center for Restorative Justice & Peacemaking – U of MN <http://www.cehd.umn.edu/ssw/rjp/>

MN Circles of Support and Accountability: <http://www.corr.state.mn.us/volunteer/mncosa.htm>

Washington County, MN Community Circles: <http://www.peacemakingcircles.org/>

SCVRJP website and Circlespace blog: [www.scvrjp.org](http://www.scvrjp.org)

Living Justice Press <http://www.livingjusticepress.org>

Minnesota Restorative Services Coalition <http://www.mnmrsc.org>

Courageous Communities: Circles of Support and Accountability with Individuals Who Have Committed Sexual Offenses <http://www.realjustice.org/library/cosa.html>