



Circle-Keeping Process & Technique

Guidebook for SCVRJP Circle Session Keepers

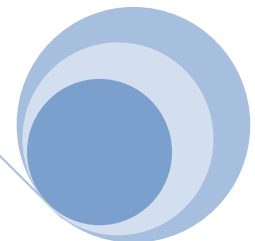
This document provides a reference for SCVRJP volunteer Circle keepers. Two day Keeper-training and attendance in a variety of SCVRJP Circles provides context and training necessary before Circle-keeping for SCVRJP services. This manual is a tool and guidebook to support volunteer keepers in providing consistent and best-practice services for SCVRJP.

Kris Miner, Executive Director

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3/18/2013

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Introduction

Thank you for your interest in St. Croix Valley Restorative Justice Program! SCVRJP volunteers are crucial to service delivery, the majority of SCVRJP services are delivered using Restorative Justice Peacemaking Circles.

This guidebook serves to advance your training and prepare you to comfortably and confidently volunteer as a Circle Keeper.

New keepers are encouraged to review and complete the New Keeper Checklist (Appendix). If you are reviewing this manual it is likely to have already completed training necessary for this level of volunteering.

Some of the pre-requisite items for keepers includes volunteer orientation training and two-day Circle-Keeper training. There are required and recommended readings suggested for volunteer Circle Keepers. The Executive Director's blog, www.circle-space.org, provides examples and suggestions for Circle Keepers.

SCVRJP offers volunteer in-service opportunities to enhance your understanding and skills with Restorative Justice. As Circle Keepers you are crucial to delivering the mission of SCVRJP. This is an important role for our agency and advanced training and support is necessary.

Becoming a Circle Keeper will be structured with 5 co-keeping Circles. With each Circle the new keeper will be matched with a mentor. Over time the new keeper takes on more responsibility for facilitation dialogue and Circle activity. Circle keeping begins with 20% of the responsibilities and changes over time to include 80% by the 5th training Circle. There are additional details in the Responsibilities section of this guidebook.

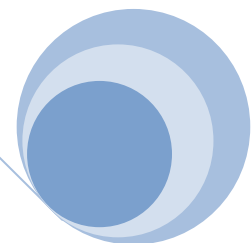
This guidebook is developing and Keepers will be provided additional information for each session. It is recommended that a 3 ring binder, to be used when keeping, is maintained with reference material.

Program Objectives

Please be very familiar with the SCVRJP Mission, Vision and Values. All SCVRJP sessions are to restore connections, promote empathy, and increase self-worth – for the Restorative Justice triad of victim-offender-community.

It is crucial and mandatory to provide a compassionate and supportive environment that fosters a new reality to crime.

Please review the evaluation forms for each session, this will provide you a background of measurement.



Materials and Logistics

SCVRJP staff, will have all the material ready for you. Registration will be covered by a volunteer, other volunteers will help with nametags, and pre-session surveys. Make sure the items you need are at your chair.

Orientation to location of items will be provided. A staff or intern will always be on site until the Circle begins.

Responsibilities

The key responsibilities of Circle-keepers:

Creating a safe-space – SCVRJP staff will have everything ready for the Circle. Please become familiar with the pre-session activities, other volunteers and engage participants before the session starts.

Guide the process – Keepers lead and guide the Circle process, this role is very important. It leaves a big impression on the participants. All effort should be made to emulate the values of Restorative Justice.

Guide and lead the volunteer and speaker debriefing, review the evaluation forms. Reframe any negative comments. Provide positive support for those that attended.

Communicate with agency – Please fill out the Keeper Summary at the end of Circle. Follow up with an email to the Director if anything was out of the ordinary. Some participants may have tragic stories and should be supported. A new volunteer may need redirection or guidance in sharing.

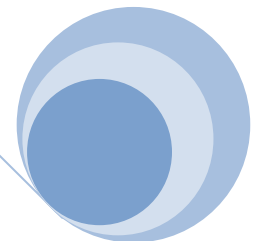
As Keeper please keep your eyes and ears open for information necessary and relevant to the overall program functioning. Do not assume that the Director already knows.

Ten Elements of Circle-Keeping

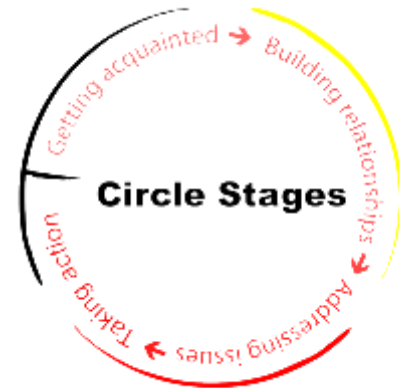
The following 10 elements are key to facilitating SCVRJP Restorative Justice Circles. Becoming familiar with the dialogue and intentions of each element is important. Specific sessions have specific content, and new keepers should become familiar with session content.

These 10 elements will be used to build the skills and resources for Circle Keepers. Each element below includes the Circle Stage.

1. Introduction of Circle Process – *Getting Acquainted*
2. Values & guidelines activity– *Getting Acquainted*
3. Building Relationship Questions – *Building relationships*
4. Phase 1 of Session Content – *Building relationships/Addressing issues*



5. Phase 2 of Session Content– *Addressing issues*
6. Introduction of Speaker/Storyteller
7. Reflection round – *Addressing Issues*
8. Phase 3 of Session Content – *Addressing Issues*
9. Counter-Measures/Public Commitment - *Taking Action*
10. Circle Summary, Closing reading, Evaluation forms- *Taking Action*



Your Circle-keeping manual (from the two-day training) will provide you details regarding each of the four stages of Circle Process. You are encouraged to be authentic and creative with Circle questions, as long as you are consistent with the model designed and utilized by SCVRJP.

Each of the 10 elements will now be reviewed in depth to provide you both discussion points and further understanding of each.

Introduction of Circle Process

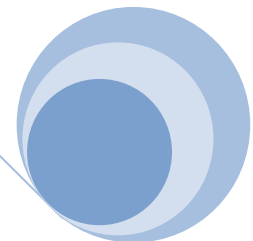
- Explain Restorative Justice.
- Highlight something about SCVRJP.
- Explain how the Circle will work – Center, Talking Piece, rounds, open & close.
- Share the elements on the nametags.
- Mention the four phases of Circle, highlight the feedback from participants.
- Put participants at ease, set the tone for the session.

Values & Guidelines

- Explain the activity, frame the question well, seek positive character values. Try to avoid examples of animals or objects.
- Handout plates, be clear with the question and activity goals. Then handout markers.
- During activity add comments to reinforce Circle values.
- Keep the guidelines and role model Circle values, share first demonstrating. Repeat the question before handing off the talking piece.

Building Relationship Questions

- Explain the intention and purpose of this stage.
- Use a simple or easy to answer question to start. Food, birthdays, names, common and relatable topics. Simple. Start with sentence completion.
- Add another question or two depending on emotional climate.
- Move to content when Circle ready, use Simple Plan video, if in UCP.



Phase 1 of Session Content

There will be a few passes of the talking piece, to promote discussion. Each session varies on the specific content. This is a brief overview.

UCP-CHOICES booklet	TDC-Worksheets	CSI- Booklet	VES
Review booklet and cover the first few pages.	Review the fact sheet and pre-session worksheets and discuss.	Cover the first few pages in the booklet	Review the view of Crime and conflict in Restorative Justice.

Phase 2 of Session Content

There will be a few passes of the talking piece, to promote discussion.

Cover booklet pages.	Time to talk with police officer.	Cover information from the booklet	Explain the handout and how to answer questions on the worksheet.
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Speaker/Storyteller

- Ask participants to put things away and prepare for compassionate listening.
- Explain the power of a **story**, without overinflating or intimidating the speaker.
- Foreshadow for participants they will be asked to offer a reflection, how the story relates to them.
- Place the talking piece with the Storyteller.
* For VES – everyone is a Storyteller.

Reflection Round

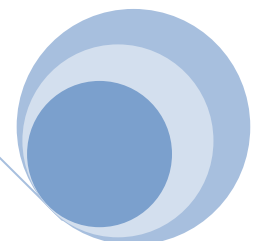
- Take a talking piece, be intentional with silence and calm.
- Explain again what a reflection is, what you would like in the reflection round.
- Role model giving the story reflection.

Phase 3 of Session Content

- Return to the program booklet or content material.
- Be sure to highlight the methods to reduce risk & harm.
- Focus on ‘counter-measures’ defined by each session.

Counter-Measures/Public Commitment

- Frame rounds that summarize the session lessons.
- Explain a public commitment; ask for those in a specific round.
- Have participants reflect on the experience, what they thought before and what they think now.
- Anything they need to leave in peace.



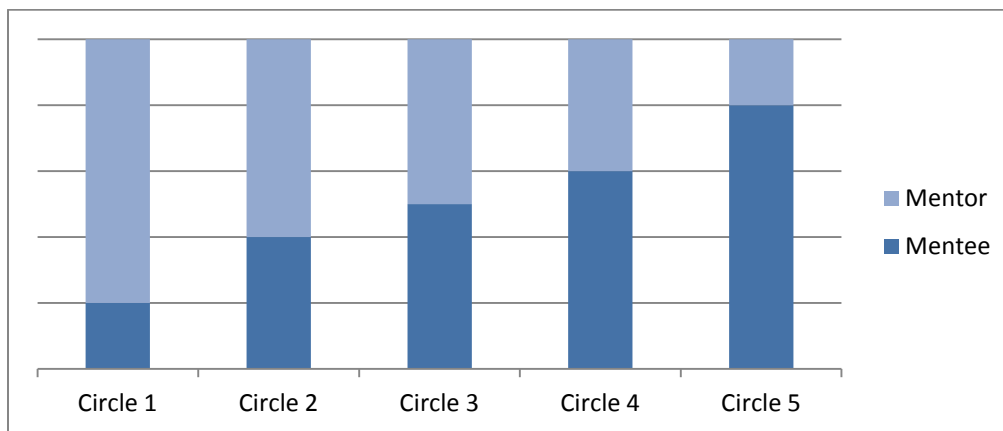
Circle Closing & Evaluation forms

- Explain the Circle is ready to be finished, after the reading the evaluation forms will be circulated, with pens.
- Take the forms, pens, and clipboard back to the hallway, a volunteer will be there.
- Ask participants to give a handshake before leaving. Thank them.
- Read the closing poem or story.

Co-keeper to Keeper

SCVRJP will support new keepers by providing a structured program for co-keeping. This includes co-keeping with a Circle Keeper Mentor. Mentees are encouraged to start by selecting 2 of the 10 items indicated as elements of Circle keeping, listed in the Responsibilities section of this guidebook. Each time keeping the mentee takes on more responsibilities in the Circle.

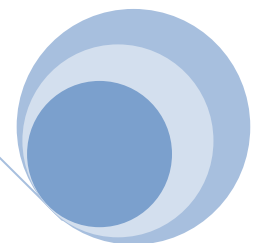
1. 80% Mentor/20% Mentee
2. 60% Mentor/40% Mentee
3. 50% Mentor/50% Mentee
4. 40% Mentor/60% Mentee
5. 20% Mentor/80% Mentee



Techniques

Tips for Girls Circles at the Juvenile Service Center:

- Before the Circle, know what your **topic or theme** is, and your questions for each **stage**.
- Check the backpack for your items needed.
- Remember to structure questions sensitively, based on the context of the young girls in Circle (recognizing poverty, internalized/real racism, trauma)
- Share the storytelling question with Circle mentors before the Circle begins.



- Remind new mentors to sit with an open chair, so mentor-juvenile-staff seating order.
- Take a moment to renew, refresh, prepare to have compassion, caring and patience ready.
- Enter and exit JSC as a group.
- Be sure to welcome each girl. As soon as they enter you are building a relationship.
- The relationship you have will be mirrored in Circle.
- Be a very attentive listener when keeping Circle (remain silent and do not judge).
- Check in briefly with staff, thank them, and build relationships of support.
- If you feel the Circle participants are not settled, speak slower and relax your own breathing.
- Explain the power in Circle when we take time to listen and to speak one at a time.
- Practice a conversational tone – eliminate sounding like a teacher or someone giving instructions or rules.
- Check your language – use terms that are welcoming and non-judgmental.
- Speak to and emphasize equality, equal dignity and worth; values based.
- Use simple activities to reduce any cross talk.
 - Passing the talking piece in silence, until feeling your silence is heard. Good to use a reflection question after.
 - A question related to listening, for example “a time you were really heard AND listened to”
 - Use “thank you for listening”, “thank you for sharing” and brief narrow question.
 - Use a question that frames the desired behavior; for example: how does, taking turns to listen impact the Circle? How can you listen and stay committed to the values?
- If you feel you need further support in keeping
 - Attend Circle Keeper Training at SCVRJP (no charge to volunteers)
 - Read Peacemaking Circles by Kay Pranis (available from SCVRJP)
 - Read the Little Book of Restorative Justice Circles (available from SCVRJP)
 - Review blog posts by Kris www.circle-space.org

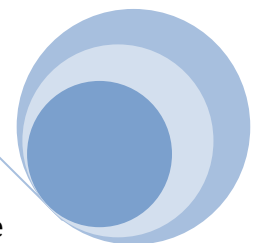
From a training handout for teachers:

Circlekeeper options for dealing with ‘Uncirclelike’ behavior.

By Kris Miner January 21, 2009

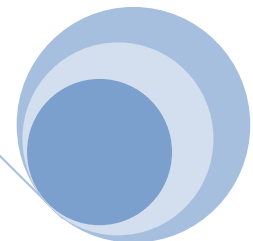
Sometimes the Circle may need extra effort by the Keeper in order to keep this working well for everyone. Using different methods helps. Remember that calling someone out on a behavior shifts your status. Here are some ideas and be creative developing your own.

- Remember to keep balanced in the stages of the Circle. Spend time



developing the beginning.

- Focus on the Values, the Commitment to honor the values.
- Describe and have everyone in the Circle take a turn describing what 'respect' looks like, sounds like, acts like and feels like.
- Give clear time frames about how long the Circle will last. Make sure students know how long you are asking for respect.
- Talk about listening from the heart. Listening without judgment, right or wrong. Have students think clearly about the commitment.
- 'Practice' the skills you want to see in Circle. Practice staying 'centered' during silence. Ring a Chime 3 times with everyone 'listening without interruption'.
- Make honoring the talking piece to be an invitation. Focus on self-governance for each person, to put WE before ME. (See 12/14/08 blog post Really using consensus)
- Monitor the emotional climate of your Circle, move between stages as needed. Returning to a less threatening question if needed.
- Make sure you have diversity in your Circle member. (Victim/offender/community member) see 1/8/09 blog post what Kris Miner considers a Circle.
- Bring the topic back to the Values, check in with the Circle if students are feeling the values are being honored. Ask the Circle how it feels when you get to speak uninterrupted.
- Explain the Circle paradox –how the structure of Circle, allows freedom of expression.
- Remind students that the best Circles have high levels of respect, people speaking one at a time.
- Reinforce positive behaviors; discuss how you have been trying to keep the values that you have focused on listening.
- Return to reading a poem, or activity that requires the Circle to Center.
- Have students reflect on how they did individually and collectively at the end of a Circle. Use a number and explanation, using I statements and speaking from the heart. (no blaming for your own experience)
- Remind students that each round is a new opportunity for everyone to be heard.
- It's okay to start with questions in the margin, and you must establish the group before a problem solving question.
- Trust the Circle process, allow the Circle, don't focus on your outcomes, allow the process to develop.
- Model the best Circle-like behavior yourself.
- Always work from your heart, using equality and respect.
- Be real, state what you are experiencing, ask or check in with the Circle. Use solution focused language.
- Prepare so much your Circle keeping looks effortless. Set your own intentions, practice self care.



UCP

Use CHOICES Booklet. Review the Simple Plan video. If there is time, use the community scenarios.

TDC

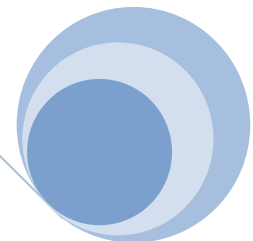
A River Falls Police Officer is usually present. **PRE-CIRCLE this person**, explain the role, the expectations. Do not accept the unwillingness to participate completely.

CSI

- Try to build relationships as early as possible, from the moment guests enter the Center.
- If you have the “Banker” role at the front desk, please remember to smile and try to engage participants as they come in! Maybe ask if they found our office okay, how they’re doing, etc.
- Suggest the “Room Monitor” try to be helpful: suggesting the pre-survey is “a tool, your own self-evaluation”; the “survey allows honest reflection, no name needed”, this puts participants at ease, and beginning to build relationships.
- Offer participants water, remind them – no break, please visit restroom before starting.
- Keep in mind the 3 R’s of Restorative Justice – Relationship, Responsibility, Respect.
- Drinking does not have the stigma that drug use does. People who drink outside the law are treated differently than those that use drugs, so this is a bit of a tougher crowd to connect with. Not impossible, just a little different. You might not mind grandma knowing you had a beer, chances are you don’t want her knowing you did a bong.
- Please remember to strive for non-judgmental, neutral language during the session.
- Here are example questions and how they impact each stage.

Getting Acquainted

- *What would you be doing if you weren't here tonight?*
- *What is the best and the worse part about having to come to the Circle?*
- *(make sure connections have been made) – use a funny one, if you need to connect the group.*
- *-what is your favorite fall smell.*
- *-like best about winter*
- *-what was your high school mascot, if you could have had any what would you have preferred.*
- These allow the participants a place to “vent” or be heard about their feelings.
- This allows participants to see volunteers have given something up as well.
- Please remember to role model through your answers throughout the Circle to ensure a tone that is balanced.



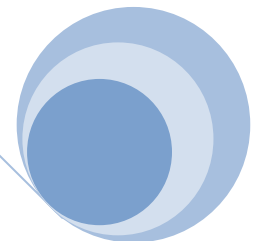
- Keeper mention – this class is by far the most helpful we offer, a 2nd possession offense is an automatic felony.

Building Relationships

- *Something unexpected that happened recently*
- *A time you didn't want to do something, had to do it and it turned out okay anyway.*
- *Fact and Myth - Sometimes what we think is true in the morning we have found untrue or a myth by the end of the day. Santa Claus – what is something you thought was true and it turned out to be a myth.*
- This stage helps open up the group by drawing out similarities and creating a comfortable emotional climate.
- Setting the stage for alternative, unexpected - - it seems CSI participants come in more defensive and need this to build the connections.

Using the booklet/**Addressing Issues** stage:

- Reframe the language to be as neutral as possible.
- Highs/Lows - to Risk & Benefit (model after the UCP desirable/undesirable)
- Speak about safety and choice, like we do in Underage Consumption Panels.
- Highlight that the State of WI – there are no legal aspects, acknowledge the legal debates with marijuana and that this class is not about that.
- This class is about examining choices, understanding risks, reducing harm to individuals and community.
- Emphasize an open mind and open heart, to consider new information before rejecting it.
- Ask the question, *“If anyone has seen or known anyone who has suffered the worst of the worse for substance use?”*
- Storyteller – Tell the story (intro/incident/impact/reflection). During the reflections stage share why the story is being shared and what is hoped to be gained by sharing; however let participants draw their own conclusions.
- Keeper – Be sure to set up quiet and active listening for the story. Remind Circle members before the story that after will include a reflection round.
- Role model an appropriate reflection, go first after the story (thank the storyteller, offer a personal reflection).
- For community impact – explain how the community can be impacted by substance use - - a record prevents employment, housing, financial aid/FAFSA app asked, “have you ever been convicted” – those that might otherwise be able to do both are prevented based on current law. **Some** family relationships can be impacted, by relationships to those with legal issues, or from those that don't approve of the use. (SOME – to avoid the listener rejecting, example of non-judgment language).
- What would be a do over for you, when it comes to substance use?
Imagine you could talk to you – 5 years ago – what would you offer to



yourself about substance use? Really role model the answer, honestly – and explain how that advice would have an impact on your life today.

Taking Action

- Stage questions and answers to be positive:
- Something new or interesting from tonight’s Circle?
- Which of any of the values in the center did you see and hear in the Circle?
- What did you think the session would be like, and how did it turn out to be.

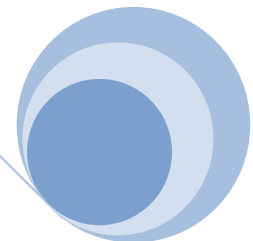
VES

This session can be more challenging. Parents of Juvenile offenders will be present. You will have a range of accountability and subject matter. This is a good session to do lots of mentoring and work with Kris.

From a memo in 2012, to VES community mentors:

This memo is to provide you more information and tips on participating as a community representative in a victim empathy seminar.

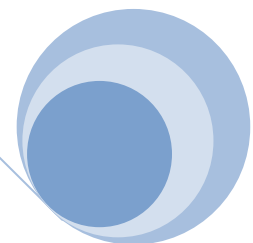
- As a community representative, and role model of the Circle process it is very important that you do not PASS, when it is your opportunity to share.
 - Passing demonstrates a social ladder, something very different than Circle.
 - Passing at this stage could be taken as judgmental.
 - Responding is different than reacting, your responses should not be based on what you “hear” from offenders.
 - Offenders and parents are expected to open up about what happen, by passing you role model it is acceptable.
 - By passing you miss the opportunity to share a story, a life lesson, a meaningful encounter to influence another for good.
- Circle puts the topic in the center, and allows all of us to respond.
 - Circle is based on respect, inclusiveness, equality – attempts to structure sharing (by passing) because of relationship to the offense (offender/parent/community) diminishes the opportunity to role model Circle values.
 - Circle keepers have been taught to provide you enough rounds to address the issue. The first “addressing issues” round, you may speak from the following perspectives:
 - The questions provided for you to speak to.
 - A time you made a mistake and had to make it right.
 - A time you didn’t make a good decision (disorderly conduct) and how that impacted someone else.
 - A time that you had to overcome or work through someone else behaving in a harmful manner.



- Why you think Restorative Justice is important when addressing issues of harm and wrong-doing.
- Relate your speaking to a value in the Center, and how we can always return to those.
- If you feel you need another round to speak, try to catch the attention of the keeper with a wave –JUST BEFORE – the keeper starts the NEXT round.
 - You might really want to consider where your “need” is coming from, and weigh it to the values in the Center.
- This requires to be mindful of a few Restorative key concepts, when working restoratively with others:
 - We should always take steps to promote relationship and trust.
 - We should be meeting people where they are at, listening deeply, and once they are heard, they can move to the next stage.
 - We view crime, as harm to relationships, we can speak to this without having to know the story of what happened.
 - Our role is not just offender accountability, the pillars of Restorative Justice are: Harms, Needs, Obligations, Engagement.
 - Our outcomes are intended to be to: restore connections, promote empathy, increase self-worth.
 - By relating your personal stories – of accessing strength & inner wisdom, you will help others access their strength & inner wisdom.

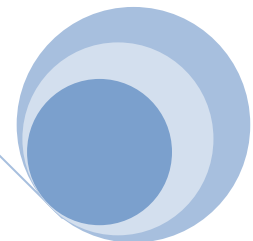
Our evaluations show that the thing liked **most** in Victim Empathy Seminars:

- *How people opened up*
- *I liked hearing other people's stories. Alcohol makes you do weird things and can get you into trouble.*
- *The initial welcoming and warm up circles really allowed me to let loose and enjoy my company.*
- *I liked hearing all of the stories.*
- *Being able to share and not worry about it getting around to other people. Also, able to listen and hear other people's stories.*
- *Everything*
- *The comfortable atmosphere*



New Keeper Checklist

Dates Completed	
Training Sessions	
	SCVRJP Volunteer Orientation 1:1
	SCVRJP Volunteer Orientation Circle
	Two-day Circle Keeper Training
	Community Mentor participation in 4 Circles
	Advanced Training Sessions
Required Reading	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peacemaking Circles from Crime to Community by Kay Pranis
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little Book of Circles, Kay Pranis
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little Book of Restorative Justice, Howard Zehr
Optional/recommended reading:	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Circle Gathering Guide
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wisdom Circles
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Millionth Circles website
Other Activities	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watch the DVD – On the Road Together: Safe Teen Driving
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watch the DVD – Advice for Circle keepers
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read the blog www.Circle-space.org for ideas and tips on keeping circles
Co-keeping Structure – Ten Elements of Circle-Keeping	
	Co-Keep 80% Mentor/20% Mentee (new Keeper)
	Co-Keep 60% Mentor/40% Mentee (new Keeper)
	Co-Keep 50% Mentor/50% Mentee (new Keeper)
	Co-Keep 40% Mentor/60% Mentee (new Keeper)
	Co-Keep 20% Mentor/80% Mentee (new Keeper)



Mentee/Mentor Plan

SCVRJP Circle Keeping

Session: _____ Date: _____

Mentee: _____ Mentor: _____

Mentee or Mentor	Responsibility
	Introduction of Circle Process
	Values & Guidelines
	Building Relationship Questions
	Phase 1 of Session Content
	Phase 2 of Session Content
	Speaker/Storyteller
	Reflection Round
	Phase 3 of Session Content
	Counter-Measures/Public Commitment
	Circle Closing & Evaluation forms

