

ORANGE COUNTY PARTNERSHIP TO END HOMELESSNESS

Support Circles Program Volunteer Handbook



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Part I: Introduction

HISTORY: WHO WE ARE AND HOW WE GOT HERE

Support Circles are teams of 6-8 volunteers from faith- and community-based groups who partner with individuals and families who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness and who are often transitioning into permanent housing. The Support Circle functions as a support network, providing clients (“partners”) with various kinds of assistance including:

- **Material support**, such as furniture and other household goods (often gathered from congregations and neighbors and supplied by The Furniture Project);
- **Practical support**, such as taking Partners grocery shopping, to job interviews, or doctors’ appointments, helping them write monthly budgets, tutoring them for GED classes, or helping them write a resume;
- **Relational support**: Most importantly, team members meet regularly with the individual or family they are partnered with to share information, build relationships, and function as a support system for their Partners.

Support Circle Partners are individuals or families living in shelters or transitional housing programs or who are receiving homelessness case management services from Orange County DSS or other homelessness service providers. Candidates apply to the Support Circles Program with assistance from their case manager. Selected applicants are matched with a team. After an initial meeting, the **Partner** and the Support Circle **Team** work together to develop and then sign a contract (**covenant**), laying out their mutual commitments and obligations to each other as they begin a partnership that will last for at least 12 months.

The Support Circles model has been in broad use across the United States and in North Carolina since 2005. Our program was styled after a similar one in Wake County, which has served families since 2006. Our Orange County Support Circle initiative came into being in 2012 from the combined energies of community members working together with the Orange County Partnership to End Homelessness. An advisory board developed the program and launched the first two circles in the Fall of 2012. Over the next two years, we saw the fruition of four more circles, and in 2014, we found a home within the Inter-Faith Council for Social Service, where the program matured under the inspired guidance of one of the IFC Coordinators. In Spring 2018, we moved out of the IFC, and work closely now with the Orange County Partnership to End Homelessness to support their mission to streamline services to create a one-stop-shop for clients. The Support Circle initiative is currently run by an advisory board and a cadre of dedicated volunteers. We are currently looking for a part-time volunteer coordinator. Until we build up our funding base, this will be an unpaid position. If you or anyone you know are interested, please let us know.

MISSION AND PHILOSOPHY: WHAT WE BELIEVE

The Mission of the Support Circle Program is to recruit teams of compassionate volunteers who provide empowering, collaborative, relational support to homeless or at-risk families as they transition to and maintain stable housing and self-sufficiency in the community. The Support Circles

Program is inspired by the belief in the basic civil right to have access to housing and the security and protection it offers. We recognize that there are many causes of homelessness, but we believe that there are few who choose this situation and none who deserve it. We believe that the experience of homelessness has adverse effects on job prospects, on family relationships, health and self-esteem, and we believe that the first-year transition into housing is a critical one in which to build a safety net and a set of best practices to sustain independence. Our mission is driven by our beliefs in the power of people in our community to provide support for one another in times of need. All Support Circle teams are committed to understanding the kind of support their Partners need and to providing it to the best of their abilities, making use of their knowledge, resources, and empathy, while remaining humble and respectful of their Partners' unique experiences and beliefs.

For many in the faith-based community, work with a Support Circle provides a meaningful way to live out their faith. While most of our Support Circles are supported by congregations in our area, they may also be formed by businesses or by groups of friends or neighbors. Underlying our mission is a shared belief in common values: regardless of faith or religious doctrine, we believe that all members of our community have the basic right to safe and stable housing, and the Support Circle Program is designed to help them claim and sustain it.

HOMELESSNESS IN NORTH CAROLINA: WHO WE HELP

Homelessness cannot be understood without an appreciation of the devastating effects of poverty in the United States in general and in North Carolina in particular. Over 4000 children in Orange County are “materially poor,” lacking basic resources necessary for health, education, and general well-being. On average in the US, 37% of people who are homeless are in families; 9 % are veterans; only a small percentage (15%) fit the definition of “chronically homeless.” There are many conditions that aggravate poverty and cause homelessness, including: lack of affordable housing, low wages, job loss or the sudden loss of family income; medical or mental health problems; domestic violence, and addiction. The experience of homelessness defies easy stereotypes and resists easy solutions. The Support Circles Program is only one effort among many to end and prevent homelessness locally through a relational model of support and the individualized attention it offers each person or family faced with such challenges.

VOLUNTEER ROLE: WHAT YOU DO FOR AND GET BACK FROM SUPPORT CIRCLES

The Support Circles Program would not exist were it not for its volunteer teams. These teams are formed by volunteers with diverse skill sets. Some work well with numbers, some with furniture, some with kids; some have great organizational skills; others are good communicators; some help the group navigate through health or legal dilemmas; others are great at organizing events or playing the role of “life coach.” We need you for your diverse sets of knowledge and experience but mostly we need you for your fellowship. While many Support Circles evolve from groups of congregants within a faith or humanist community, some represent the coming together of volunteers from two or more such communities or from the Orange County community in general; in such circumstances, team Members meet each other for the first time on the Support Circle. Learning from each other and from our Partners is one of the rich benefits to volunteers of this initiative.

Among many worthy volunteer opportunities in Orange County, the Support Circles program is unique in that it gives you the opportunity to offer support *directly* to an individual or family that is based upon relationships. Your relationship with your Partner is an ongoing one, and it is unmediated by bureaucratic elements. You are there to communicate directly with your Partner and to decide together which directions your new relationship will take, as you support your Partners while they work toward their goals. You will find in this manual advice on “best practices,” however there is much variety among the needs and approaches of our Teams: each Support Circle truly represents a unique experience in fellowship and support, and the knowledge each Support Circle gains from this experience will help inform our model for future generations of volunteers. Joining a Support Circle provides an opportunity to build connections and build community, as you lead to more sustainable outcomes for addressing homelessness locally.

Part II: Training and Getting Started

HOW WE PREPARE YOU: TRAINING AND SUPPORT FOR VOLUNTEERS

There are several components of training recommended for Support Circle volunteers. (By the time you read this handbook, you will have completed the first.)

I. Training: The initial six-hour program is scheduled once volunteers are committed to joining a Support Circle. During this training, volunteers learn about the organization and running of the Support Circle as well as many strategies that will help them understand their role and be effective in their work with their Partner. Through role-plays and scenarios, volunteers reflect upon issues such as poverty, cultural and ethnic/racial diversity, interpersonal conflict, communication skills, and boundaries. You will get to know other team members, and by the end of this training, you will have a fuller understanding of the *process* of serving for a year on a Support Circle.

II. Workshops: During the year, Support Circle members will have opportunities to learn about additional issues that are relevant to their Partner and team. These issues may include anti-racism education, addiction, mental health issues, poverty, and community resources. All volunteers are welcome to attend. Each Support Circle may consider designating a point person to attend who will then share the lessons learned to the other team members. It is a nice opportunity to share and compare experiences with members of other Support Circles as well.

*As a minimum, it is strongly advised that all volunteers (but at least one volunteer per Circle) attend the workshop on race mindfulness.

III. Communication with the Support Circle Advisory Committee. After you complete your training and launch your Support Circle, be aware that your learning process has just begun. There may be difficult issues that come up during your first year that were not fully addressed at your training. Never feel alone! You may always seek advice from members of the Advisory Committee, including the liaison assigned to your Support Circle. Some members of the Advisory Committee have been involved not only in the programming of this initiative, but also in multiple Support Circles. Each Support Circle can also reach out to “second tiers” of support - from members of the participating

congregation(s) and from others in our community - in order to answer questions or locate resources that the Team has difficulty locating on their own.

SUPPORT CIRCLE YEAR: AN OVERVIEW

I. Training: Volunteers gather to learn about the basic responsibilities of the Support Circle team. They are given the opportunity to talk about topics related to bias, communication skills, and active listening, and they are presented with sample scenarios from Support Circle experiences, that pose conflicts for which they must brainstorm solutions.

II. Circle Match: The Support Circle Advisory Committee matches each team with a Partner, who has been referred by one of several agencies in Orange County (see p. 20). Prospective Partners have filled out an application for the program and have had an interview with a member of the Support Circles Advisory Committee. There are selection criteria used to determine eligibility for the program (see Guidelines, p. 27). The Committee matches eligible Partners with available teams through consultations with applicants and their case workers. Once the match is made, the Partner is invited to write a letter or film a video in order to tell the team members more about themselves.

III. Team Meetings: Once a team is assigned to a Partner, all team members will meet as a group prior to meeting the Partner. This initial meeting is dedicated to the following activities:

- (1) *getting to know each other:* see the ice-breaking activities proposed on p. 50;
- (2) *getting to know the Partner:* the Support Circle Advisory Committee will provide background on the Partner, including past challenges and current goals and needs for support;
- (3) *identifying roles within the Circle:* suggested roles include: Co-Coordinators, Support Circle Liaison, Scheduling Coordinator, Social Coordinator, Resource Coordinator, Note-taker, and Expense Coordinator (see full description in the Toolkit p. 11). It is recommended that you develop a contact list and a point-person calendar (p. 38) in order to ensure that all members of the team get to know the Partner in the weeks to come. The first month is critical for team building and establishing rapport and trust.
- (4) *review ground rules on meetings,* in the service of maximizing effective communication and building trust (see p. 48).

After the initial meeting, volunteers on the team will meet in small groups to get to know each other better. The Co-Coordinators will help guide the formation of these relational meetings.

IV. Team-Partner Meetings: The goal of these meetings is for the team members and Partner to get to know each other better. The Co-Coordinators will meet with the Partner first, and will then facilitate the formation of subsequent meetings between other team members and the Partner, remaining in small groups during this period, in order to keep things low-key and less intimidating for the Partner as they get to know the team.

V. Covenant Meeting: During this meeting, the Support Circle develops the *covenant* with the Partner. The covenant is an agreement which lays out the goals and responsibilities of both Partner and team. The Partner should take the lead in prioritizing goals as well as in identifying concrete areas of support for the team to provide over the course of the year. When the document is

finalized, it should be signed by the Partner(s) and by each member of the Support Circle team. The signing of the covenant symbolizes a commitment on the part of both Partner and team and represents the beginning of the year of their partnership. See the *Toolkit* section, p. 10 for a fuller discussion of how to develop a covenant.

VI. Partner Visits / Team Meetings: Over the course of the year, team Members will meet with their Partner one-on-one or in small groups, as they offer support in various areas. The program envisions regular meetings on the part of the whole team, with or without the presence of the Partner. Past circles have adopted a variety of approaches to such regular meetings. Some circles have had large-group events such as socials with the Partner, reserving the conference-style meetings for the volunteers alone. Others have combined the meetings into one (monthly) meeting with the Team reserving some time alone in advance of the Partners' arrival. Each Support Circle may decide upon the format that works best for their members; it is essential to have regular face-to-face communication among the members of the team, in addition to regular visits with the Partner. Read more in the toolkit, p. 12, regarding best practices for meetings.

*While teams may find it useful to meet on occasion without the Partner, they should limit themselves to discussing communications, challenges, and ways to organize role sharing within the group. It is important that they do not set goals or chart a course forward for the Partner.

VII. Reports: The Support Circle Liaison updates the Support Circle Advisory Committee on the activities with and assistance provided for the Partner. They may include the following information in these updates: (1) a list of meetings with the Partner and the areas of support offered; (2) goals achieved or progress made; (3) reference to any difficulties or sources of tension for the Support Circle (Partner and/or team); (4) a list of goals or suggestions for the coming month (both for Partner and team).

VIII. Conclusion of the Circle: At the end of the year, the Support Circle can decide to conclude their year of support to the Partner or to continue with the Partner for a designated time into the following year. This decision is based on many factors and is a very personal one. The Support Circle Advisory Committee is there to help teams decide which direction to take after the initial one-year period has ended.

GETTING STARTED: CHECKLIST FOR VOLUNTEERS

1. **Complete the training.**
2. **Form your Circle.**
3. **Learn as much about your Partner as you can** and let your Support Circle Liaison know if you have any concerns about your relationship with your Partner or with other team members that will get in the way of your ability to be fully participatory and effective.
4. **Consider what special expertise you have to offer the Partner and the Support Circle:** Are you good at budgets and balance sheets? Do you have a legal background? Are you familiar with the workings of the healthcare system? Do you have experience working with kids? Are you a good writer? Are you good at moving furniture? Are you good at resume-building, looking at job announcements or shopping for cars? Do you like planning social events? There is room for all skill sets in your Support Circle, so please reflect on what kinds of support you can offer and communicate this to your team at the beginning.
5. **Get to know your team members.** One of the most important ingredients for success is the team's ability to work and communicate well together. This is especially important if the team is composed of people who do not know each beforehand. Team-building activities are essential to fostering a sense of common cause. See the suggested activities in Appendix 2, p. 50.
6. **Be open about your availability** (weekends, evenings, mornings), **but also be honest about your limitations.** Ideally, each member will have a slightly different schedule, so collectively the team can offer good "coverage" for the Partner. It helps to know this information in the beginning, although it may change over the course of the year.
7. **Get to know as much as you can about the resources available in Orange County,** in order to help Partners find jobs, seek new training and education, and save money. The more familiar you are with these resources, the more support you will be to your Partner as they navigate a myriad of organizations which can be daunting or confusing. See p. 21-23 for a list of resources in Orange County.

VOLUNTEER RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Adapted from the Bloomington Volunteer Network <http://bloomington.in.us/volunteer>

As a volunteer, it is your right:

1. To be trusted with confidential information that will help you carry out your assignment.
2. To be kept informed regularly about developments in the initiative you are a part of.
3. To receive orientation training and supervision for the volunteer position you accept in this program.

4. To expect that your time will not be wasted by lack of planning, coordination or cooperation within your group.
5. To know whether your work is effective and how it can be improved: to have a chance to increase understanding of yourself, others and your community.
6. To be able to set boundaries and communicate the limitations of your time and abilities.

As a volunteer, it is your responsibility:

1. To respect confidences of your sponsoring organization and those of the recipients of your services.
2. To fulfill the commitments you make or to notify team members early enough that a substitute can be found.
3. To not let biases interfere with job performance; not proselytize or pressure recipient to accept your standards.
4. To use reasonable judgment in making decisions when there appears to be no policy or policy not communicated to you; then, as soon as possible, consult with the advisory committee for future guidance.
5. To provide feedback, suggestions and recommendations to coordinator and staff if these might increase effectiveness of program.
6. To be considerate, respect competencies and work as a member of a team with the coordinator and other volunteers.

Part III: Circle Toolkit

RECOMMENDED BEST PRACTICES WITH WHICH TO MAXIMIZE COMMUNICATION, PARTICIPATION AND SUCCESS IN YOUR SUPPORT CIRCLE

I. Support Circle Covenant

The Support Circle *covenant* is an agreement which lays out the goals and responsibilities of the Partner as well as the responsibilities of the team members over the course of the year. Although to some it may feel like a formality, the covenant is an important document whose creation deserves thought and care. For the Partner, the opportunity to establish a list of short- and long-term goals is a source of empowerment; for the team members, it is an important document for formalizing the relationships with each other and underscoring the commitment that they have to the Partner. It is also a roadmap which will guide the whole Support Circle as they plan their initiatives over the course of the year.

It is essential that the Partner dictate the terms of the covenant. Team members may serve as a sounding board for them, as they articulate their ideas. *It is not your job to set goals on behalf of your Partner.* If your Partner asks for advice in phrasing or in prioritizing, make sure that any suggestions you make “sound right” to them before finalizing the document.

Creating this document should not be a burden or a source of stress, and Team members should make sure that the Partner understands that their goals may evolve or change over the course of the year. While some of the goals may be phrased in ways that seem “long-term,” “idealized,” or “abstract,” the Partner should be encouraged to articulate at least a few goals that are realistic and realizable in the short-term.

The best covenants will do the following:

- ◀ focus on strengths: building upon the Partner’s existing talents and skill sets;
- ◀ include financial goals;
- ◀ include job skill-building if the Partner is unemployed or under-employed;
- ◀ be completed within eight weeks;

After the covenant is completed, it will be signed by both Partner(s) and team members. Over the course of the year, it will be periodically reviewed and evaluated. Team members should encourage the Partner to refer to this document during the year, in order to assess their progress and to set new goals.

II. Assigning Roles within the Support Circle

The Support Circle is most valuable and fulfilling when all members of the team take initiative or show leadership in some area. At the beginning of the year, it is helpful to come up with a list of roles for different members of the Support Circle. Recommended roles include:

- ◀ **Co-Coordinator:** These Team members are the first to meet with the Partner and over the course of the year they are responsible for convening and helping to facilitate the team meetings.
- ◀ **Support Circle Liaison:** This Team member remains in close contact with the Support Circles Advisory Committee. They summarize activities of the Support Circle for the Advisory Committee during meetings and are the “go-to” person for issues and dilemmas that the Support Circle needs extra help in resolving.
- ◀ **Social Coordinator:** This team member coordinates social gatherings for the team and Partner(s). Get to know your Partner to better understand the types of gatherings that would be enjoyable and comfortable *for them*. It is highly recommended that the team meet regularly, i.e. no less frequently than once a month. For rotating events, doodle polls can be an efficient means of setting a date. *Do not wait for 100% attendance.* Get events on the calendar and count on your team members to show up for as many gatherings as they can.
- ◀ **Scheduling Coordinator:** This team member plans the meetings of the team, which should also occur at least once a month.
- ◀ **Note-taker:** This team member takes notes during the meetings and types up the minutes to share with the team (and the Liaison) prior to the next meeting.
- ◀ **Resource Coordinator:** This team member gets to know the agencies and resources available from the Orange County Partnership to End Homelessness Resource Guide (p. 21-23), as well as other resources and programs that might be relevant to the Partner’s situation.

◀ **Point Person:** We recommend that this role be rotated among most or all team members from one week to the next. The Point Person is responsible for making contact with the Partner in whatever way is most effective (phone calls; texting or email). See below for further details.

III. Getting to Know Your Partner and your Role on the Team

As you get to know your Partner, it is important to be patient and to understand where they are coming from, so that you can be effective in helping them reach their goals, working always from a position of support, rather than judgment. Many Partners experience feelings of anxiety, stigma, self-doubt and helplessness relating back to their experience of homelessness, which can be very traumatic. Moving beyond such feelings takes a long time, and recovery time varies from person to person. One of the crucial types of support offered by the Support Circle is the *moral* support that comes from believing in your Partners and helping them believe in themselves again. You are a mentor, a role model, a guide, a facilitator, encourager, coach, and listener. Resist any type of interaction that distracts you from one of those roles.

IV. Point-Person Calendar

The point-person calendar (see a sample on p. 38) rotates the Partner's "first responder" from one week to the next and is a valuable means of ensuring that they get to know everyone on the team. The Point Person makes contact with the Partner(s) 1-2 times a week to find out how they are doing and in which areas they need support. They are then responsible for reaching out to other team members to coordinate responses to requests for special types of assistance.

The point-person calendar should include contact information of all team members and the Partner, and the Partner should also receive a copy of it.

V. Keeping Records

The Support Circle Liaison reports back to the Support Circle Advisory Committee with an update on the activities with and services provided for the Partner. Keeping a record of activities and services is valuable for the Support Circle for several reasons: (1) it reminds team members of issues and activities that might be relevant to follow-up activities later in the year; (2) such records can give both team and Partner a sense of incremental (but important) progress towards meeting larger goals; (3) the reports make it easier for the Support Circle Liaison to update the Advisory Committee on the activities and progress of their Circle, and as such they (4) provide an overview of the workings of each individual Support Circle. This last point is particularly important as the Support Circles program in Orange County expands. All records taken together provide valuable tools with which to understand performance and measure outcomes of the program as a whole. Although the particular information shared at these meetings is confidential, collectively it will help the Advisory Committee make general assessments about which approaches and processes have worked well and which may require revision.

VI. Meetings and Assessment

Building fellowship and trust between Partner and team as well as among team members is essential to the success of the Support Circle. Regular meetings accomplish this goal. Regular meetings with the Partners are guided by the covenant and encourage reflection on how they are meeting their goals; regular meetings among team members help the group talk over strategies, problem solve, and engage in meaningful self-assessment; each Support Circle should also make time to have fun together, by planning events of a social or recreational nature (walks, meetings at parks, potlucks, etc.)

Regular interactions may include:

- a. monthly social events with everyone
- b. monthly meetings of Support Circle (w/ Partner) followed by brief meetings of Support Circle alone w/out Partner
- c. monthly meetings of team (w/out Partner)
- d. regular small get-togethers between the Partner and two or three team members

Be flexible and know your Partner's needs and preferences, as you decide which schedule to adopt for your own Support Circle. Some Partners are very social and enjoy catching up with everyone all together, while others feel more comfortable meeting one-on-one or in small groups. It is important to show sensitivity toward your Partner's personality and needs when putting together a calendar of social events and meetings.

During meetings, it is important for one team member ("Note-taker") to keep meeting minutes that they will later email to the group, using Flocknote or another communications system.

*While teams may find it useful to meet on occasion without the Partner, they should limit themselves to discussing communications, challenges, and ways to organize role sharing within the group. It is important that they do not set goals or chart a course forward for the Partner.

In addition to the informal (and verbal) self-assessment carried out during team meetings, the Support Circle Advisory Committee recommends that both the Co-Coordinator and the Partner fill out an assessment form twice a year, in which they comment specifically on things they think are going well and on areas in which they would like to see improvement. (See Appendix 1, p. 40-45 for sample assessment/feedback forms.)

VII. Support from Outside the Support Circle

Keep in mind that as a member of a Support Circle you may need support yourself. The program was designed and has thrived under a model that envisions multiple tiers of support. The "first-responders" are you, the Support Circle team members, but when you find yourselves limited (in expertise, time, or resources), you can reach out to the Support Circle Advisory Committee, who can in turn reach out to others in the community to fill such gaps. Examples of such cases of "multi-tier" support include:

- ▶ When a Partner needed extra furniture for her new home, the Advisory Committee reached out to the Furniture Project – See Part IV Resources, p. 20)

- ▶ When a Support Circle for a Partner undergoing medical treatment demanded extra hands to cook and deliver meals, the Advisory Committee reached out to other Support Circles to add to her “care calendar.”
- ▶ When Partners need help with budgeting and developing long-term savings plans, team members accompany them to appointments with the Community Empowerment Fund (see Part IV Resources, p. 20)
- ▶ If team members become concerned about a Partner’s ability to meet their goals, the Support Circle Advisory Committee can talk to both team and Partners in order to assess the situation; they may offer valuable advice about how to best support the Partners while respecting their independence, even if they make decisions that seem to undermine their goals or run counter to the opinions of those on the team.

VIII. Maximizing Successful Communication

As you get to know your Partner and the other members of your team, take the time to reflect on the methods of listening and responding that will be most effective in building trust and empowering everyone involved in communication. Below are some tips to keep in mind.

- ◆ Be transparent and be sincere. Be honest about how your own experiences have taught you the lessons behind the advice that you give. Acknowledge the limits of your experience with humility and humor.
- ◆ Be aware of non-verbal cues. We are told that 83% of adults learn visually and 93% of communication is nonverbal. 7% of communication is what you say (words), 38% is how you say it, and 55% is facial expressions. Pay attention to your body language and your facial expressions as you listen and as you talk to your Partner.
- ◆ Be patient and be consistent. Studies have shown that sometimes people need to hear something 3 times before remembering it.
- ◆ Be respectful. Be open to adapting your communication style to fit your Partner. Be aware that touch is the most direct form of communication, and some Partners may perceive it as a threat.
- ◆ Be an active listener. Do not assume advice is being sought. Researchers tell us that less than 2 percent of people have had any formal education on how to listen. You can be an active listener by: (1) using open-ended questions like “What do you think about...?” (2) engaging in reflective listening by paraphrasing back the information your speaker is providing. See a complete list of these “active listening guidelines” on p. 49.

IX. Dealing with Interpersonal Conflict

A Support Circle is just like any other set of human relationships. Misunderstandings, tensions, disappointments, and resentments may arise. As you enter this new set of relationships, be aware of the potential for these feelings. Do not take their occurrence or the events that produce them as evidence of personal failure or failure on the part of the Partner or the Support Circle. Rather try to engage in thoughtful reflection and open communication at all times. In particular:

DO NOT expect to always agree with the decisions your Partner makes. If you feel frustrated by decisions you believe get in the way of the goals your Partner has set, talk to your team about the most constructive context and manner of giving advice to your Partner.

DO learn as much about your Partner as you can, in order to be sensitive to and to better understand their situation and the ways in which they respond to stressors in their lives. This will allow you to postpone judgment and to be more understanding of decisions they make.

DO NOT expect to achieve equity in the division of labor within the Support Circle. There will be some team members who will have more time to give and more flexibility in jumping in to meet needs as they arise; some members may feel comfortable taking initiative and showing leadership, while others prefer to work behind the scenes. It is also natural for the Partner to bond at different paces (or in different contexts) with different team members.

DO adopt strategies that balance the energies and commitment of team members as much as possible, such as designating roles within the Support Circle (Note-Taker, Resource Coordinator, etc.), rotating those roles if desired, and using a point-person calendar, to ensure that everyone gets a turn at having close contact with the Partner.

DO be honest about your limitations if you feel that you are assuming more responsibility (measured in time or energy) than you are able to bear. At the same time, do your best to uphold commitments that you have already made, knowing that there are others who are relying on your participation. If your plans change, be sure to line up someone to take your place.

DO NOT confuse your Partner's goals with your own. Give your Partner(s) many opportunities to assess and reassess their own goals and be prepared to support them in any way possible.

DO feel entitled (and obligated) to communicate to others immediately (your Partner, team, your Partner's Case Manager and the Support Circle Advisory Committee), if you feel that your Partner is in trouble or risking damage to their own or their children's health, both physical and mental.

DO NOT expect that you and other team members will always agree on the type of support to offer a Partner. Your meetings are forums for reflection, discussion and even debate. Your duty is to share your ideas openly and remain open to hearing and reflecting upon those of others.

DO speak out if you feel that a fellow team member is being overly judgmental or showing intolerance or prejudice that is interfering with the relationships in the Support Circle and the trust and progress with the Partner.

TIPS FOR RESOLVING CONFLICT:

- ◆ Deal with differences immediately; avoid the temptation to ignore them.
- ◆ Be open; differences offer opportunity for growth.
- ◆ Avoid making a conflict personal.
- ◆ Keep team issues within the team.
- ◆ Always respect the opinion of others.
- ◆ Practice identifying the premise underlying another's viewpoint—different values usually result in differences that can give rise to conflict.
- ◆ Avoid blame.
- ◆ Use “I” statements.
- ◆ Practice active listening.

X. Maintaining Boundaries

Your relationship with your Partner will likely evolve in wonderful ways, some of which will feel like those of a friendship. At the same time, your role in the Support Circle remains defined by your participation in a community-sponsored program, and your professional integrity requires a respect for boundaries which clarify appropriate and inappropriate behaviors to adopt with your Partner. Not only will respect for such boundaries help avoid uncertainty, discomfort, and embarrassment, a consistent approach across the team will avoid the perception of favoritism as well as other personal or legal problems.

► *Giving gifts:* On special occasions (birthdays, etc.), it may be appropriate to give gifts, but it is important to make these gifts modest. Receiving too big a gift may make your Partner uncomfortable (if they worry about their inability to reciprocate) or may raise their expectation of the kind of support they will receive in the future. For a holiday gift for the whole family, please limit the total monetary value of the gift to \$100. For birthdays or other occasions in which gifts go to individuals, please respect a limit of \$100 per adult and \$35 per child. These gifts should also be given on behalf of the whole Support Circle, rather than from an individual member. Keep in mind that the most meaningful gifts may be the least expensive (e.g. a framed collage of inspirational quotes or of things the Support Circle members value about the Partner.)

► *Lending:* Under no circumstances should you lend or give money to a Partner. This act, while motivated by a desire to help, could risk damaging the relationships of trust and confidence you

have established in your Support Circle. It would also undermine the professionalism of the whole initiative, key to the success of all current and future Support Circles.

► *Buying and selling:* You should not buy from or sell anything to Partners. Such exchanges could create expectations or disappointments and resentments that would also risk the trusting relationships between Partner and Support Circle members.

You may need to set additional boundaries with your Partner in areas related to:

- ◆ Meetings and visits
- ◆ Time and punctuality
- ◆ Children
- ◆ Language
- ◆ Smoking
- ◆ Transportation
- ◆ Phone calls
- ◆ Meals
- ◆ Scheduling and cancellations

XI. Knowledge and Sensitivity Regarding Issues Faced by Partners

It is important to enter your new relationship knowing that your Partner is likely to have had difficult and disruptive experiences in their lives beyond (or complicating) their experience of homelessness. Some may be survivors of domestic violence or partner abuse; some have suffered neglect as children or have lost someone close to them; they may have had ongoing challenges of alcoholism or drug addiction; there are those with histories of depression, anxiety or other mental-health issues; many will have encountered racism and other forms of bigotry and inequality (both in individual and institutionalized forms). Nearly all will feel or have felt at one time the stigmatizing effects of homelessness, joblessness, and poverty.

All the issues mentioned above may have an impact both on the patterns of behavior of your Partner, including their way of communicating with you, as well as on their perspectives on the world and on their own future. Knowledge of these issues – should they pertain to your Partner – will help the Support Circle understand where the Partner is coming from and will engender both tolerance and sensitivity during the interactions among them. An important second level of Support Circle training includes workshops on such issues, which will be organized around individual themes (addiction, racism, poverty, etc.), offered several times a year. These events are open to all Support Circle members, and it is recommended that at least one member of each Support Circle attend each one that is relevant, in order to share the knowledge gained there with everyone else.

XII. Confidentiality Guidelines

Confidential information is that which is regarded as ‘personal’. It is information which is told to an individual, or a group of people, and is not meant for public or general knowledge. It is the duty of volunteers not to reveal to any other person, outside the specifically expressed person(s) within the organization, any matter which becomes known to the individual via their involvement with the organization. This includes information which may be traced back to the individual by identifying them or anyone else involved with them.

Personal Information is that which is defined by the individual, but should always include status, program involvement, name, address, sexual orientation, personal lifestyle, relationship and financial situation. It should be accepted that it may be necessary to override the confidentiality policy in the event of legal proceedings, child abuse or where a third party may be at risk of serious and immediate harm.

Friends: Often volunteers may feel that a close friend can be trusted and may be a form of support. It is a habit to be discouraged and volunteers should rather seek support from each other, the Support Circle Liaison, or the Support Circle Advisory Committee. Remember that no matter how close or concerned, friends do not have the right to confidential information about the Support Circle organization or about individual Partners.

Relaxing in a social environment and drinking can lead to disclosure of information. Volunteers should be aware that they do not know who may be within earshot.

If the organization needs to call you at work or at home, please ensure that no mention of names is made within the earshot of colleagues, family or others, and information written down is not in view. Volunteers should not leave notes containing information about a Partner in view of any other person nor mention such information on the phone within earshot of another.

If you meet a Partner in public, you may inadvertently break their confidence just by acknowledging them. Let that person make the decision to recognize you or not.

Volunteers should never become involved in conversations with one Partner about another Partner. Any information revealed to a volunteer about another Partner should be reported to the appropriate person within the organization.

XIII. Guidelines on Working with Partners with Children

Clear rules and boundaries are always essential when working with Partners who have children. If this situation applies to your Support Circle, read the following guidelines carefully, and talk to the Support Circle Coordinator if you have any questions or concerns about your ability to follow them.

- ◆ Always have a parent present when interacting with their kids or – if special circumstances require that you spend time alone with the kids – make sure that you have clear parental consent beforehand.
- ◆ Have a six-month relationship established with the family before planning any outings with the kids in which the guardian is not present (although more than one adult should be present).
- ◆ Never establish patterns of communication (email/texting/social media) with a young child.
- ◆ Be especially aware of the need for boundaries in the physical contact you may have with a child. Use non-intrusive gestures to comfort a child, e.g. putting a hand on their upper arm or upper back. Never presume physical contact (hugs, horseplay) is acceptable to a child.
- ◆ Never discipline a Partner's child.
- ◆ Use verbal directions, never physically direct a child.

- ◆ Respect the physical boundaries (like bedrooms) in the Partner's home.
- ◆ Avoid extravagant gifts for family or children.
- ◆ Report any suspected child abuse or neglect.
- ◆ Report to the Support Circle Advisory Committee any inappropriate advances of a sexual nature by Partner or child toward any team member or vice versa.
- ◆ Report any threatening actions or gestures made by Partner, child or team members.

Part V: Resources

Support Circles works in close collaboration with the **Orange County Partnership to End Homelessness**. The Partnership brings together local services and housing providers, members of local governments, as well as other members of the community to collaborate in order to prevent and end homelessness in Orange County.

The Support Circles Program was formally housed in the **Inter-Faith Council**, an organization committed to alleviating poverty and homelessness. Its services include residential services, food programs, emergency financial assistance for rent or utilities, and transitional support for people who are in the process of obtaining housing. The Community Kitchen serves hot meals every day and is open to everyone in the community, while the pantry offers groceries to households once per month. Although the Support Circles initiative is no longer part of the IFC, limited financial assistance is still available for Partners once every 18 months for past due rent/utilities or for deposits.

REFERRING AGENCIES

- 1. UNC Horizons**- a substance abuse treatment program for pregnant and/or parenting women and their children. Residential & outpatient services include counseling, case management, early intervention services for children, parenting education, trauma recovery support, and possibly transitional housing. Horizons is part of the Dept of Obstetrics and Gynecology; 919-966-9803
- 2. Orange County Department of Social Services** – this Department administers the Rapid Re-Housing Program, which assists people who are currently homeless and helps them to obtain housing.
- 3. HomeStart**- transitional housing for single women and women with children in Orange County. A program of the Inter-Faith Council for Social Service, HomeStart supports women in their efforts to obtain their own housing and allows those who receive income to save for the upfront costs needed to move.
- 4. IFC @ SECU Community House**- transitional housing for men that is a part of the Inter-Faith Council for Social Service. Medical and mental health treatment, job search support and case management services are made available.
- 5. Rapid Re-Housing Program**- administered by the Department of Social Services, the program provides support and financial assistance in order to make housing available for people who are staying in shelters or living on the streets.
- 6. Freedom House** – 24/7 recovery center in Chapel Hill for people facing mental-health and substance-abuse challenges; Freedom House has a mobile crisis unit, a detox program, a ninety-day residential treatment program, and an outpatient program; 919-967-8844
- 7. Community Empowerment Fund**- a student-run, non-profit organization that offers financial education, savings opportunities, assistance with finding employment, as well as other forms of support. CEF believes in a relationship-based approach and therefore offers one-on-one support in addition to regular Opportunity Classes; 108 W. Rosemary St., Chapel Hill, 919-200-0233

OTHER PARTNERING ORGANIZATIONS

The Furniture Project is a community-wide charitable outreach project that collects gently used furniture from the community to deliver to families in need. It offers critical support to the Support Circles Program when the Partners move into their own housing.

ORANGE COUNTY RESOURCES GUIDE

Find and update info online at OC Connect: occonnect.info (List of services and resource in Orange County)

HOUSING

Oxford House: clean & sober housing option for men & women in recovery from substance abuse; locations online: www.oxfordhouse.org/, state Oxford House: 919-395-8192; 800-689-9640.

Cardinal Innovations Healthcare Solutions: permanent supportive housing for people with disabilities; 201 Sage Rd, Chapel Hill, 919-913-4139.

CASA: supportive housing for persons with disabilities; 624 W Jones St, Raleigh, 919-754-9960.

Chapel Hill Housing Department: public housing apartments; 317 Caldwell St. Extension, Chapel Hill, 919-968-2850.

Orange County Housing Authority: Section 8 rental assistance, housing discrimination help; 300 W Tryon St, Hillsborough, 919-247-2510.

EmPOWERment, Inc: affordable homeownership and rental housing; 109 N Graham St, Suite 200, Chapel Hill, 919-967-8779.

Orange County Department of Social Services: Rapid Re-Housing program for the homeless, emergency assistance, Low-Income Energy Assistance Program (one-time for heating bills, apply in November); 2501 Homestead Rd, Chapel Hill, 919-968-2000; 113 Mayo St, Hillsborough, 919-247-2800.

Residential Services, Inc.: group homes adults & children w/DD; 111 Providence Rd, CH, 919-942-7391.

Alliance of AIDS Services: services for people with HIV/AIDS; 1810 East Main St., Durham, 919-596-9898.

NC Housing Search: www.nchousingsearch.com: on-line search tool to locate affordable apartments in NC—searchable by location, size, price, etc.

Durham VA: housing resources and supportive resources to homeless veterans 919-286-0411 x7065

Volunteers of America: Supportive & rehousing services for veterans and families; 919-530-1100

Centre for Homeownership: foreclosure prevention counseling; Hillsborough; 919-245-4718

Community Home Trust: affordable home ownership; 109 Conner Drive, Ste 1000, Chapel Hill, 919-967-1545

Habitat for Humanity: Affordable homeownership; 88 Vilcom Center Dr., Chapel Hill, 919-932-7077

Weaver Community Housing Assoc.: affordable housing in cooperative communities; 919-969-7410

HEALTH AND DENTAL CARE

Orange County Health Department: health, dental and mental health services; 300 W Tryon St, Hillsborough; 2501 Homestead Rd, Chapel Hill; main phone number: 919-247-2400.

Carrboro Community Health Center (Piedmont Health Services): health, dental and pharmacy services (sliding fee scale according to family income); 301 Lloyd St, Carrboro, 919-942-8741.

Chapel Hill Community Health Center (PHS): medical services (sliding scale fee based on income); 1828 MLK Jr. Blvd, CH; 919-951-7600

Carolina Health Net: enrolls uninsured residents of Orange, Alamance, Caswell, Chatham and Lee counties in Piedmont Health Services as their primary care provider; 919-547-3460.

UNC Student Health Action Coalition (SHAC): free health and dental clinics on Wednesday nights at 5:30pm (appointments recommended, can also drop in); 919-843-6841, Carrboro Community Health Center, 301 Lloyd St, Carrboro.

UNC Health Care Community Care Discount Program/Charity Care: discounts/relief of patients' financial obligations; Admitting Office, Memorial Hospital, 101 Manning Dr, Chapel Hill, 919-966-3425.

UNC Outpatient Pharmacy: Pharmacy assistance program available to UNC patients without income or insurance, UNC Cancer Center, 101 Manning Dr, Chapel Hill, 919-966-7690.

UNC Hospital Emergency Room: 101 Manning Dr, Chapel Hill, 919-966-4921, 919-966-4131.

UNC School of Dentistry: low-cost dental care; Manning Dr & Columbia, Chapel Hill; 919-537-3737.

Durham VA Medical Center: provides veterans general and specialty medical, surgical, psychiatric inpatient and ambulatory services; 919-286-0411 or 1-888-878-6890, 508 Fulton St, Durham, NC. 27705.

APARTMENT COMPLEXES

Elliott Woods Apartments: Interchurch Council Housing office: 106 Elliott Dr, Chapel Hill, 919-942-2197.

Chase Park Apartments: Interchurch Council Housing office; 106 Elliott Dr, Chapel Hill, 919-942-2197.

Dobbins Hill Apts: 1751 Dobbins Dr, CH, 932-3100

Carolina Spring Apartments: age 55+; 600 West Poplar Ave, Carrboro, 919-942-9559.

Adelaide Walters Apts: age 62+ or physically disabled; 603 Martin Luther King Jr Blvd, CH, 919-968-8018.

Covenant Place Retirement Apartments: age 62+; 103 Culbreth Rd, Carrboro, 919-929-0061.

First Baptist Church-Manley Estates: age 62+; 805 S Merritt Mill Rd, Chapel Hill, 919-968-9778.

Gateway Village: 400 Lakeside Dr., Hillsborough, 919-732-6701.

Coachwood Apts: 200 Cheshire Dr., Hillsborough, 919-732-9846.

Eno Haven Apartments: age 55+; 811 Highway 70a East, Hillsborough, 919-247-0700.

Hampton Pointe: 350 Hampton Pointe Blvd, Hillsborough, 919-296-9003.

Elmwood Apts: 616 E Oakwood St, Mebane, 919-563-2977.

Cedar Hill Apts: 275 S Eleventh St, Mebane, 919-563-3539.

MENTAL HEALTH & SUBSTANCE ABUSE RESOURCES

Cardinal Innovations Healthcare—screening and referral services for mental illness, intellectual/dev. disabilities or substance use; 201 Sage Rd, Chapel Hill, crisis line: 800-939-5911

UNC Ctr. Excellence in Com. Mental Health—treatment and support services for people with severe mental illness, substance use disorders and intellectual or dev. disabilities; Carr Mill Mall, Carrboro, 919-962-4919

Lutheran Services Carolinas—ACT Team for people with severe & persistent mental illness; 891 Willow Drive, Suite 2, Chapel Hill, 919-968-2552

RHA—mental health treatment & support services for children & adults; 209 Millstone Dr, Hillsborough, 919-245-5400; intensive in-home care: 245-1056

Carolina Outreach—services for people with severe mental illness; 2670 Durham-Chapel Hill Blvd., Durham, 919-251-9001

KidsCope—mental health services and parent education for young children 0-5 and families; 500 N. Nash St., Hillsborough, 919-644-6590 x 4821

El Futuro—mental health/SA treatment & services for Latinos; Chapel Hill St., Durham; 919-688-7101 **Arc of Orange**—services for those w/developmental disabilities; 208 N. Columbia St., CH, 919-942-5119

Alcohol Drug Council of NC—vacancy list for residential treatment programs for pregnant women & mothers & their children; 919-493-0003,

Durham TROSA—residential program for recovering drug and alcohol abusers; Durham, 919-419-1059

Alcoholics Anonymous—District 33 (Alamance/ Orange/Chatham) 866-640-0180; Chapel Hill: 919-933-3877, Hillsborough: 919-732-8214

Narcotics Anonymous Helpline—919-831-5321; Chapel Hill: 919-956-5900 **Al-Anon/Alateen Family Groups**—Chapel Hill: 919- 929-0155, 800-243-4035 **ADATC (Alcohol and Drug Treatment Center)** - Acute detox, long-term substance abuse rehab; 919- 757-7000

EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION, JOB READINESS

Orange County Career Center—GED preparation, education and training information and resources, job search assistance, resume preparation, employment, career and business services, computer access; 503 W. Franklin St., Chapel Hill, 919-969-3032

Durham Technical Community College, Orange Campus—adult education, job skills, GED, adult HS diploma, associates and 4-year degree programs; 525 College Park Rd, Hillsborough, 919-536-7238

Caramore Community—support program for adults with mental illness, residential and employment programs, mental health treatment; 550 Smith Level Rd, Carrboro, 919-967-3402

Orange Literacy —basic adult reading, writing, technical, math skills, English language instruction; 200 N. Greensboro St., Carrboro, 919-636-4457/933-2151

Vocational Rehabilitation—employment services for people with disabilities; 548 Smith Level Rd., Carrboro, 919-969-7350

Educational Opportunity Center—career counseling, help with admission and financial aid applications; 503 W. Franklin St., Chapel Hill, 800-682-1159
Disability Awareness Council—disability advocacy/ education to eliminate barriers to employment and services; 503 W. Franklin St., Chapel Hill, 919-969-3032
Joint Orange Chatham Community Action (JOCCA) —job placement & training, weatherization assistance, Chapel Hill: 919-969-3032, Pittsboro: 919-542-4781
Orange Enterprises—vocational evaluations, job training, skills development for people w/disabilities; 348 Elizabeth Brady Rd, Hillsborough, 919-732-8124
Good Work—business skill training for small business & entrepreneurs; 115 Market St., Durham, 919-682-8473
Consumer Credit Counseling Services— 315 E Chapel Hill St, Durham, 919-688-3381
Josh's Hope— employment & independent living skills for young adults age 18-26 with serious, persistent mental illness; 200 Cardinal Dr, Suite B, Hillsborough, (919) 245-0072

FOOD, ASSISTANCE, & OTHER SERVICES

Inter-Faith Council for Social Service—financial assistance, IDs, groceries, clothing vouchers, 110 W. Main St., Carrboro, 919-929-6380
IFC Community Kitchen—free lunch every day and dinner M-F for anyone; 100 W. Rosemary St., Chapel Hill, 919-967-0643
Orange County Department of Social Services— emergency assistance, Medicaid, nutrition and food services, Work First, childcare subsidies; 113 Mayo St, Hillsborough, 2501 Homestead Rd, Chapel Hill; 919-245-2800
St. Joseph's Food Ministry—Heavenly Groceries; M-F, 4pm; 510 W. Rosemary St., CH, 919-960-1670
Neighbor House—free dinner Monday through Thursday, Fairview Baptist Church, 600 Cornelius St., Hillsborough; 919-563-4224
Orange Congregations in Mission—food pantry, emergency assistance (by DSS referral), Meals on Wheels; 300 Millstone Dr, Hillsborough, 919-732-6194
Meals on Wheels—for seniors and disabled; 1712 Willow Rd., Chapel Hill, 919-942-2948
Compass Center for Women & Families—services for victims of domestic abuse, financial & career advising, legal services; 210 Henderson St, Chapel Hill, 919-968-4610; 24-hr hotline: 919-929-7122
Rape Crisis Center—services to survivors of sexual violence, 24-hr hotline: 919-967-7273, 866-935-4783
Family Violence & Rape Crisis Services (Pittsboro) —24-hr crisis intervention, shelter; 919-545-0224
El Centro Hispano—range of services; 201 W. Weaver St., Carrboro, 919-945-0132
Child Care Services Association—resources and referrals for childcare for children birth to age 12; 1829 E. Franklin St., Chapel Hill, 919-967-3272
Legal Aid of NC—assistance in civil matters; 959 East Street, Suite A&B, Pittsboro, 919-542-0475
Social Security Administration—SSI/SSDI benefits; 888-759-3908, 3004 Tower Blvd, Durham
Romanowski Law-Disability Advocates—represent claimants at all levels of the Social Security disability process; Durham; 919-286-9983
Seymour Senior Center—2551 Homestead Rd, Chapel Hill, 919-968-2070
Central Orange Senior Center—103 Meadowland Dr, Hillsborough, 919-245-2015
Chapel Hill Transit (free bus service): 919-969-4900; EZ-Rider: 969-5544
Orange Public Transportation—919-245-2008
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Part VI: Appendices

Appendix 1: Forms



ORANGE COUNTY PARTNERSHIP TO END HOMELESSNESS - SUPPORT CIRCLES PROGRAM

Guidelines

Support Circle Partners' Eligibility Requirements

- Program serves individuals and families who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.
- Applicants must be currently living in a local shelter or transitional housing facility or participating in a homelessness- prevention or rapid re-housing program.
- Applicants must be referred by case managers/staff from local community service agencies.
- Referring agencies must arrange permanent housing placements for clients and determine that they will be able to live independently upon leaving their program.
- If partners are living in shelters or transitional housing facilities, they should start working with their Support Circle Teams approximately one month before moving into permanent housing.
- Applicants must have a minimum 3- month relationship with at least one local service agency.
- Partners must be willing to work with a Support Circle for at least 12 months.
- Applicants must be employed or have enough income to live independently.
- Applicants with criminal histories will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Support Circle Teams

- Participants will be called “team members.”
- Team composition: 6-8 people from one or more congregations or groups of friends.
- Team-member roles:
 - (a) Co-coordinators (two co-coordinators recommended)
 - (i) Should be in contact with case manager and Advisory Committee.
 - (b) Support Circle Liaison
 - (c) Resources Coordinator
 - (d) Social Coordinator
 - (e) Scheduling Coordinator
 - (f) Note-taker
 - (g) Point Person
- Monetary Contribution
 - (a) Each team will contribute \$100 for program administration.
 - (b) Teams will not give any money directly to Partners.
- Team Commitment:
 - (a) Term of commitment: minimum 12 months (can then be renewed or ended)
 - (b) Meetings:
 - Introductory meeting(s): Partner, case manager, and 1-2 team members
 - Covenant meeting: Partner, case manager, and all team members

- The Partner should meet at least once per month with at least one team member: recommend weekly meetings for the first 3 months
- (c) Each team member should commit to meeting with the partner a total of at least 4 times over the 12-month period (including Covenant meeting and social gatherings) but can be much more frequently depending on the needs and interests of the partner and the team.
- (d) Recommend having a social gathering of partner and Support Circle team approximately every 3 months.
- (e) Monthly group meetings between all Support Circle teams and team Liaison
- Relationship with Partner
 - (a) The nature of the relationships is flexible, based on the goals and needs of the partners as they move toward self-sufficiency
 - (b) Teams are matched with Partners based on their respective needs and interests
 - (c) Types of Support
 - Material Support: teams gather donations from their congregations & friends of furniture and other household goods to help set their partners up in their new homes
 - Practical support: throughout the year, team members help meet the practical needs of their partners by taking them grocery shopping or to appointments, helping them work out budgets, tutoring them for GED classes, or providing other assistance their partners may need.
 1. Depending on the needs of their partner, teams may want to help them with skills such as:
 - a. Life skills
 - b. Budgeting & finances
 - c. Time management
 - d. Setting goals
 - e. Stress management
 - f. Active listening
 - g. Nutrition & fitness
 - h. Parenting
 2. They may also want to be knowledgeable about local resources in areas including:
 - a. Employment
 - b. Education & job training
 - c. Child Care
 - d. Health & Dental services
 - e. Legal services
 - f. Social services
 - Relational Support: most importantly, team members meet regularly with the individual or family they are partnered with to share information, build relationships, and function as a support system for their Partners as they settle into permanent housing

Support Circle Program Administration

- We are currently recruiting a volunteer Support Circle Program Coordinator who will oversee the program.
- The Support Circle Advisory Committee will meet regularly and work closely with the coordinator.

Procedures

- Support Circle teams are trained.
- Teams are matched with a partner: they meet and develop a covenant agreement to guide their mutual commitment based on the partner's needs and goals.
- The team gathers donations of furniture and household goods (from congregations, friends, families, etc.) to help their partner set up their home.
- The team helps their partner set up their new home.
- The team members start getting to know their partner and helping with practical needs like transportation to the grocery store or to appointments.
- Team members and Partner meet at least weekly for the first 3 months and at least monthly thereafter.
- Reporting: one of the team members is appointed as a Liaison to the Advisory Committee; this person reports regularly on the progress of the Circle and on any areas that require extra support.

Support Circles Training

- Provided at intervals during the year by members of the Advisory Committee
- Support Circle relationship guidelines:
 - Do not proselytize: Support Circles are an opportunity to live out your faith rather than share it with your partner. If your partner initiates conversation about faith, feel free to proceed, but don't initiate it yourself. Just like with anyone in your life, there will be times when you want to share a spiritual experience that you had, and you are free to do so, but please do so respectfully and without imposing your beliefs on your partner.
 - Do not give money directly to your Partner.
 - Do not use drugs or consume alcohol with your partner as s/he may have a history of substance abuse.
 - Do not share your Partner's name or personal information/situation with others. For example, if you're out for coffee together and run into a friend, introduce your Partner as a friend, not as someone who was formerly homeless.

SUPPORT CIRCLE PROGRAM VOLUNTEER INFORMATION SHEET

Personal Contact Information

Name:		
Address:		
City:	State	ZIP
Phone (W)	(H)	(C)
E-Mail		

Support Circle Team Contact Information

Church/Synagogue/Mosque/Organization/Neighborhood		
Pastor/ Priest/Leader		
Address:		
City:	State	ZIP
Phone (W)	(H)	(C)
E-Mail:		

What is your time availability? (i.e.; evenings, weekends, weekdays)

What days are totally out?

Can you provide some transportation to your assigned family? Yes _____ No _____

Tell us about your gifts/talents – how can you best be of support to a family in need (i.e. provide transportation, housing resources, medical resources, childcare resources, budgeting, etc.)

Are you employed? Retired? What do/did you do? _____

What are some of your hobbies & interests? _____

What do you think your greatest challenges on the team will be? _____

What, if any, is your previous experience with homelessness and homeless service? _____

What other information would you like us to know? _____

ORANGE COUNTY

**SUPPORT CIRCLE PROGRAM
AUTHORIZATION TO CONDUCT A CRIMINAL BACKGROUND INVESTIGATION**

As part of my participation in the Support Circles Program, I understand that I am authorizing the Program to conduct a criminal background check, and I completely release any party or person from any responsibility or liability for damages which may occur as a result of the disclosure of this information. I agree to release the information below.

Date: _____

Applicant's Printed Name: _____
First Middle Last

Applicant's Signature: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Driver's License No. _____ State of Issuance: _____

Applicant's Social Security Number: _____

List all other full names you have used, gone by, or are known by, including maiden name, if applicable:

AKA #1 _____
First Middle Last

AKA #2 _____
First Middle Last

AKA #3 _____
First Middle Last

List the addresses of your residences over the past five years (Use additional pages if necessary):

Street address City County State Zip Years

Street address City County State Zip Years

Street address City County State Zip Years

Street address City County State Zip Years

VOLUNTEER CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

As a volunteer of this organization, I understand that I may have access to confidential information, both verbal and written, relating to individuals or families receiving services from The Support Circles Program of Orange County.

I understand, and agree, that all such information coming into my knowledge or possession is to be treated confidentially and discussed only within the boundaries of my volunteer position at this organization.

I also agree not to discuss these same matters after I have left my volunteer position at this organization. I further understand that breach of this agreement shall constitute grounds for and may result in termination of my volunteer status with this organization, and I further acknowledge that I may be subject to other disciplinary actions and/or prosecution as set forth in the privacy regulations and the laws of the State of North Carolina.

Volunteer Signature: _____

Date: _____

SAMPLE SUPPORT CIRCLE COVENANT

Household Members:

- I/we agree to be served by the _____ Support Circle team for a period of up to 12 months.
- I/we agree to an open and honest relationship with the Support Circle over the 12-month period.
- I/ we will be primarily responsible for my/our monthly living expenses and the Support Circle will serve me/us as described below.
- I/we will participate in quarterly goal review sessions with members of the Support Circle.
- I/we agree actively work on my recovery, if applicable, throughout the duration of this Covenant.
- I/we understand that the Support Circle has agreed to help me meet my physical, spiritual and emotional needs for up to 12 months, to the best of their ability. The services provided may include:
 1. Locating and moving into an apartment;
 2. Finding furniture and household items and clothes
 3. Employment and/or educational objectives;
 4. Financial, insurance and tax issues;
 5. Researching the appropriate resources to meet my children’s educational needs (e.g., school options, tutoring, special programs;
 6. Finding transportation as needed (e.g., for medical appointments, job interviews, etc.).
- With the assistance of my Support Circle I have developed and will work toward achieving the following goals: **(To be determined in consultation with the family)**
 1. Housing Goals:
 2. Employment Goals:
 3. Financial Management Goals:
 4. Education Goals (parents and/or children):
 5. Life Skills Goals (parenting, anger management, communication, etc.)
 6. Health Goals (parents and/or children—include pediatric medical and dental, mental health, recreation/exercise, etc.)
- If I/we don’t like some part of the hospitality being offered, I/we have the right to sever the relationship with the Support Circle.
- I/we agree to participate in this program at my/our own risk and hereby release any members of the Support Circle Program assisting me from any liability.

Signature of head of household _____ **Date** _____

Support Circle Team Members:

- I/we agree to be part of the _____ Support Circle team for a period of up to 12 months.
- I/we agree to an open and honest relationship with the Support Circle over the 12-month period.
- I/we agree to serve the Partner(s) in meeting his/her/their physical, spiritual and emotional needs for up to 12 months, to the best of my ability, as I provide support in the ways outlined above.
- I/we agree to participate in this program at my/our own risk and hereby release any members of the Support Circle Program assisting me from any liability.

Signature of SC Team Member _____ **Date** _____

Signature of SC Team Member _____ **Date** _____

Signature of SC Team Member _____ **Date** _____

Signature of SC Team Member _____ **Date** _____

❖ HOUSE-WARMING WISH LIST ❖

Client (initials only):

Gender:

Children (ages/gender):

Anticipated Move-in Date:

Item Wanted?	Item	Notes (recipient preferences, donor team logistics, etc.)	Person Responsible	Collected?
Cleaning Supplies (all new):				
	Mop			
	Broom			
	Bucket			
	Sponges, incl abrasive			
	Toilet brush			
	All-purpose cleaner			
	Mold/mildew remover			
	Toilet cleaner			
	Other:			
	Other:			
	Other:			
Linens, etc.				
	Door/welcome mat			
	Towels (bath, hand, washcloths, bathmat)			
	Sheets (fitted, flat, pillowcases; specify # and sizes)			
	Blankets (specify # and sizes)			
	Pillows (new)			
	Mattress pads (specify # and sizes)			
	Shower curtain & rings (shower or tub?)			
	Other:			
	Other:			
	Other:			
Utensils/tools				
	Dishes (service for 4)			
	Flatware (for 4)			
	Glasses/cups (for 4)			
	Pots/pans			
	Can opener			
	Cooking utensils			

	Food storage containers			
	Hammer			
	Screw drivers			
	Trash can for kitchen			
	Waste basket for bathroom			
	Other:			
	Other:			
Appliances, etc. (these are all optional depending on what donors are able to provide; gently used is generally fine)				
	Vacuum cleaner			
	Microwave			
	Toaster/toaster oven (specify)			
	Coffee maker			
	Other:			
	Other:			
	Other:			
Furnishings (these items are also optional depending on what donors are able to provide; gently used – but cleaned! - is generally fine)				
	Air mattress (specify # and size)			
	Bed(s) (only new mattresses)			
	Dining table & chairs			
	Sofa			
	Armchair			
	Living room table/end tables(s)			
	Lamps/lighting			
	Baby gates/safety items			
	Other:			
	Other:			
	Other:			

See the following page for a Sample flyer soliciting household donations

St. Thomas More's First Support Circle Family is Arriving! - Household Items Needed -



St. Thomas More is receiving its first Orange County Support Circle client family (Partner) who is coming out of homelessness in June. This family (a mother and 2-year-old daughter) will be supported by a Team of parishioners (8 from STM) for 1 year, providing emotional and material support, along with budgeting courses, improving educational needs, family role modeling, etc. They have been trained to empower this family with all they will need to never return to homelessness. This is a county wide effort thru the Partnership to End Homelessness and St. Thomas More is proud to be the first Support Circle team launched. Wake County has done this for 9 years with a 93% success rate!!

As you may know, these families leave the shelter with little or NOTHING. Therefore, we ask you, the parishioners, to be the 2nd tier of support by donating household items this family will need as they move into their permanent home. Below is the list of items.

Furniture (gently used or new)	Linen	Appliances	Kitchen and Cleaning Supplies
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lamps 2. Armchairs 3. Coffee table 4. Couch 5. End table 6. Nightstands 7. Toddler bed 8. Full or Queen mattress (excellent condition) 9. Dressers 10. Dining table & chairs 11. TV stand 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sheets for full bed 2. Bedding for toddler bed or twin bed 3. Towels, wash clothes, bathmat 4. Pillows (new or nearly new) 5. Blankets for full, queen or twin bed 6. Mattress pads 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Microwave 2. Coffee maker 3. Toaster 4. Vacuum cleaner 5. TV (newer) 6. Crock Pot 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Flatware 2. Dishes (min. set of 4) 3. Glassware 4. Pots and pans 5. Bake ware 6. Cooking Utensils 7. Trash can for kitchen 8. Hamper 9. Mop 10. Sponges 11. Broom and dustpan 12. Toilet brush 13. Duster

**Please call or email the following contacts with your
donations or questions:**

Jane Hathaway, Phone: 919-612-2759, Email:
jhathaway1@nc.rr.com

We wish to thank Morningstar Mini-Storage and Don Watkins for contributing storage for our furniture collections and John Bannan for contributing a washer and dryer to a mother of 4. Thank you all for your generosity and compassion.

SUPPORT CIRCLE PROGRAM

Health Outcomes for Families with Children

Please respond to the questions below as they relate to health services received by the children in the family for the month of this report.

Health Insurance coverage Yes_____ No_____

Type of Insurance: Medicaid _____ Health Choice _____ Other (please name)

Date of enrollment in health plan: _____

Where does the child(ren) receive primary medical care?	
Date of last well child visit?	
Date of last sick child visit?	
Where does the child(ren) receive dental care?	
Date of last dental care visit?	
Does the child(ren) receive mental health (counseling) services?	Yes _____ No _____
Where does the child(ren) receive mental health services?	
Date of last mental health visit?	
Where does the child(ren) receive other health services (i.e.: eye exam, speech, etc.)? Please include the name of the other service received.	
Date(s) of other health services received?	
Has the child(ren) received medical treatment in a hospital Emergency Department?	Yes _____ No _____
Date of last ED visit?	

Support Circle Point-Person Calendar¹

DECEMBER						
Monday	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
1 Team Member 1 (919- xxx-xxxx)	2	3	4	5	6	7
8 Team Member 2 (919- xxx-xxxx)	9	10	11	12	13	14
15 Team Member 3 (919- xxx-xxxx)	16	17	18	19	20	21
22 Team Member 4 (919-xxx-xxxx)	23	24	25	26	27	28
29 Team Member 5 (919-xxx-xxxx)	30	31				

JANUARY						
Monday	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
			1	2	3	4
5 Team Member 1 (919-xxx-xxxx)	6	7	8	9	10	11
12 Team Member 2 (919-xxx-xxxx)	13	14	15	16	17	18
19 Team Member 3 (919-xxx-xxxx)	20	21	22	23	24	25
26 Team Member 4 (919-xxx-xxxx)	27	28	29	30	31	

FEBRUARY						
Monday	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
						1
2 Team Member 5 (919-xxx-xxxx)	3	4	5	6	7	8
9 Team Member 6 (919-xxx-xxxx)	10	11	12	13	14	15
16 Team Member 7 (919-xxx-xxxx)	17	18	19	20	21	22
23 Team Member 8 (919-xxx-xxxx)	24	25	26	27	28	

MARCH						
Monday	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
						1
2 Team Member 1 (919-xxx-xxxx)	3	4	5	6	7	8
9 Team Member 2 (919-xxx-xxxx)	10	11	12	13	14	15
16 Team Member 3 (919-xxx-xxxx)	17	18	19	20	21	22
23 Team Member 4 (919-xxx-xxxx)	24	25	26	27	28	29
30 Team Member 5 (919-xxx-xxxx)	31					

APRIL						
Monday	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
		1	2	3	4	5
6 Team Member 6 (919-xxx-xxxx)	7	8	9	10	11	12
13 Team Member 7 (919-xxx-xxxx)	14	15	16	17	18	19
20 Team Member 8 (919-xxx-xxxx)	21	22	23	24	25	26

¹ The Point Person will check in with the Partner to see how they are doing and to find out what support they could use each week; they will then communicate these needs to the rest of the group. If the Partner has unexpected needs arise, they can call the point person first, who will then coordinate activities for extra support among the other team members.

SUPPORT CIRCLE PROGRAM MONTHLY REPORTING FORM

Month _____ Year _____

Partner Name: _____

Support Circle Team Name (if applicable): _____

Support Circle Liaison or Team member submitting form: _____

Total volunteer hours for the month: _____

Please note types of support offered:

Relational/social support includes listening, building rapport, encouragement, etc.

Practical support includes problem-solving, skill building, providing transportation, etc.

Material support includes donating furniture, household items, etc.

Utilization of Resources: includes any agencies/ community supports with which Partner has been connected

Relational/social: yes / no

Examples: _____

Practical: yes / no

Examples: _____

Material: yes / no

Examples: _____

Resources: yes / no

Examples: _____

Other types of support or activities: _____

Partners: End-of-Year Questionnaire

Orange County Support Circle Program

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. What have you most appreciated about having a Support Circle? *(check all that apply)*

Receiving guidance or help with problem solving

Having people who believe in you

Help finding/accessing resources

Help moving into a new home

Other: _____

2. Do you feel like the support you received was:

Adequate

Not enough

Too much

Comments: _____

3. How often did you communicate (by phone or in person) with members of your Support Circle?

Often multiple times per week

About once per week on average

Once or twice per month

4. Compared to the beginning of the program, do you feel: *(check all that apply)*

More supported

- More empowered
- More independent
- Less isolated
- More confident
- More connected to resources
- More connected to the community
- More involved in your child(ren)'s schooling (if applicable)
- That you have more stability with housing
- That you have more life skills
- That you have more work skills
- That you have more relationship skills
- That your mental health has improved
- That your physical health has improved
- That you are more secure in your recovery (if applicable)

5. Do you feel more able to sustain your independence compared to the beginning of the year?

- Yes
- No

Why or why not? _____

6. How would you describe the overall well-being of your child(ren) compared to the beginning of the program?

- Similar
- Better

Worse

Comments: _____

7. How does your current monthly income compare to the beginning of the year?

Increased

Decreased

Remained the same

If it changed, which type(s) of income did you lose or gain? Which types increased or decreased? Please specify.

Type of income: _____ Gained? Lost? _____ Monthly amount _____

Type of income: _____ Gained? Lost? _____ Monthly amount _____

Type of income: _____ Gained? Lost? _____ Monthly amount _____

8. Please describe your current housing situation:

I have my own apartment/house

I live with a friend or family

I live in transitional housing

Other: _____

9. Is your current housing: *(Check all that apply)*

Safe

Stable

Affordable for you

10. What was most challenging about being part of a Support Circle?

11. How do you think the program could be improved?

12. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience or any further feedback that you have for the program?

Thank you!

Volunteers: End-of-Year Questionnaire

-Support Circle volunteers nearing the end of the 12-month period-

First name of Partner: _____

1. How prepared were you for this experience? (Check one)

Very well Sufficiently Insufficiently

Comments or area(s) in which more preparation was needed:

2. What did you appreciate most about your Support Circle experience?

3. Was your experience with the Support Circle Liaison helpful? (Circle) Yes or No

Comments: _____

4. Was your experience with the Support Circle Coordinator helpful? (Circle) Yes or No

Comments: _____

5. What were some things that went very well in your Support Circle?

6. What were some things that were more challenging?

7. Has this Program changed your views on homelessness, poverty, racism, etc.?

(Circle) Yes or No

Comments:

Case Managers: End-of-Year Questionnaire

Orange County Support Circle Program

First name of Partner: _____ Name of Agency: _____

1. Did you feel you had an adequate understanding of the program in the beginning? Please explain.

2. How would you describe your overall experience with the Support Circle: a) relating to Partner b) relating to Support Circle c) relating to liaison d) relating to Advisory Workgroup/Coordinator

3. What were some things that went very well?

4. What were some things that were more challenging?

5. How *often* were you in communication with a) the Partner b) the Support Circle c) the liaison d) the Advisory Committee? Would you have preferred more communication or less?

6. How do you feel the Partner benefited from having a Support Circle?

7. Do you have any additional comments or thoughts to share?

8. Would you make a referral to the Support Program in the future?

Appendix 2: Icebreakers, Reflections, & Guidelines for Meetings



Team Reflections/ Self-Analysis:

Orange County Support Circles Program

How frequently has our Support Circle been meeting-- With our partner? Without our partner?

Is this too often, just right, not often enough--What does our Partner think? What do we think?

Do our meetings seem purposeful? Are our socials enjoyable to our Partner and the rest of the Support Circle?

Is each Circle member as involved as s/he would like to be? Overcommitted? Lacking opportunities to engage?

Do we prioritize socials and/or other opportunities to simply enjoy each other's company/build relationships?

Do our methods of communication work well? Does everyone feel informed?

Does our Partner feel like we communicate sufficiently with them? How often would they appreciate communication with the group? Prefer in person or by phone/text/email?

How is the weekly point person method working? Does the Partner prefer to initiate contact or prefer that the Support Circle initiate contact?

Is each person having a chance to speak at meetings? Does each person feel heard?

Do we have appropriate outlets/opportunities to process our experiences?

Have our own needs/desires conflicted with our Partner's needs/desires at any time? How have we dealt with that?

Is our liaison involved? Can we contact them when needed?

What extra support could we use from our liaison or the Advisory Committee? Extra training?

Do we feel guided by the covenant? Does it still feel up to date?

Does each person who has a specific role in the Support Circle feel comfortable in their role? Are their questions about what any role entails?

Do we remain curious about our Partner and open to learning from him/her?

Any other insights, concerns, surprises about the Support Circle?

Do we celebrate progress?

ORANGE COUNTY PARTNERSHIP TO END HOMELESSNESS - SUPPORT CIRCLES PROGRAM
Guidelines for Support-Circle Meetings

As we begin this meeting, we remember that:

We are not here to fix our Partner or their family.

- Our Partner sets the course for their life and has a right to make their own decisions.
- We will allow and encourage our Partner to do for themselves what they are able to do for themselves.
- We will connect our Partner with existing resources when desired, rather than duplicating services.
- We will focus on recognizing strengths and how to build on them.
- We will celebrate the steps together, no matter how small they may seem.

We all benefit from building healthy, trusting relationships and making connections.

- We ALL have something to offer each other (e.g. wisdom, patience, etc.).
- We may think of our relationship as an act of walking along side each other.
- Sometimes our Partner may just want to talk or have a sounding board, so just being there to listen is enough.
- We sometimes learn skills simply by seeing them modeled.
- We can ask questions, in order to learn from and about our Partner.
- It is healthy to experience disagreements about approaches. It can lead to new understandings.

We recognize our biases in order to move past them.

- We question our own ideas by asking: "How would this be viewed by our Partner?"
- We recognize that full recovery from homelessness moves at a different pace for each person; such progress is not linear and often takes a long time.

We want our Partner to feel empowered:

- by leading the path to their own accomplishments
- by encouragement
- by developing more skills and gaining knowledge
- by gaining more access to resources
- by gaining access to power and authority
- by being heard
- by having options
- by gaining more stability

GUIDELINES FOR ACTIVE LISTENING

I. Use open-ended questions, like:

- ◆ What do you think about (x) . . .?
- ◆ How did you manage . . .?
- ◆ What kinds of things do you enjoy doing. . .?
- ◆ What was it like for you when . . .?
- ◆ How do you feel about . . .?
- ◆ How do you describe your situation now?
- ◆ In what way does this. . .?
- ◆ How can I help you with. . .?
- ◆ In what way would you like it to be different?
- ◆ Can you tell me more about . . .?

II. Use Responses that Indicate Reflective Listening:

- ◆ So you feel...
- ◆ It sounds like you...
- ◆ You're wondering if...
- ◆ So what I hear you saying is...
- ◆ This is what I am hearing, please correct me if I am wrong.....

ICE-BREAKER / TEAM-BUILDING ACTIVITIES



TWO TRUTHS AND A LIE – Every team member must think of three things to say about themselves; two real facts and one mock fact. In pairs or small groups, share your facts, and see if your team members can guess the lie!



WHO IS IT? – Everyone receives two or three blank pieces of paper on which they answer questions about themselves (see examples below). One person collects the pieces of paper and reads each one aloud. The group guesses which person wrote which answer.

Examples: -What is one of your pet peeves?

-If you could be any cartoon character which would it be and why?

-If you had to spend the rest of your life in a film, which film would it be?

-If you could change one thing about your community, what would it be?

-Name one thing for which you have a lot of patience and then little patience.

-Education and self-doubt aside, if you could choose any career what would it be and why?



HUMAN BINGO GAME – Make a bingo matrix and at the top of each square put something that someone in the group might have done - for example, watched a certain TV show recently, lived in NC all their lives, etc. Everyone gets a copy and is asked to circulate, getting other group members to sign one square that applies to them. The first person to get "bingo" wins the prize (a candy bar or some other small item).



WHAT I'M THANKFUL FOR – Each team member shares one thing that they are thankful for this week.



WHAT WE APPRECIATE – Every team member writes down on a piece of paper a quality that they appreciate in each of the other members of their group. Each person collects the various comments made about them and then shares with the group the comment that they find most surprising.



THE POCKET/PURSE GAME – Everyone selects one item from their pocket or purse that has some personal significance to them. They introduce themselves and do a show and tell for the selected item and explain why it is important to them.



THREE IN COMMON GAME – Break the group into 3's. The objective is for each group to find 3 things (besides physical attributes) that they have in common. After conversing for 10-15 minutes, each group must report on the 3 things they have in common.



FAMOUS PEOPLE/CITIES GAME – As each participant arrives, tape a 3 x 5 index card on their back with the name of a famous person or city. They must circulate in the room and ask questions that can ONLY be answered with a YES or NO to identify clues that will help them find out the name of the person or city on their index card.