

**2007 Innovations Awards Program
APPLICATION**

- ID #:** 07-S-02SCGIRLSCIRCLE
- State:** South Carolina
- Program Category:** Public Safety – Criminal Justice
- 1. Program Name:** Girls Circle
- 2. Administering Agency:** South Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice
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9. Please provide a two-sentence description of the program.

Girl Circle is a resiliency program that encourages the development of strength, courage, confidence, honesty and communication skills for girls. Girls Circles are uniquely positioned to address and challenge cultural messages, ideologies and social practices that limit and distort a girl's self-image.

10. How long has this program been operational (month and year)?

Facilitator training was conducted by the Girls Circle Association in May 25-26, 2006. 44 staff were certified in the curriculum, and 21 agreed to conduct girls circle groups. Trained facilitators at the Willow Lane campus for girls began conducting Girls Circles in July 2006. These facilitators included juvenile correctional officers, chaplains, clinicians, and educators.

Girls Circle was also implemented at the Dillon Teen After-School Center in October 2006, and the Youth Development Center, a DJJ-contracted program for short-term offenders, in January 2007.

11. Why was the program created? What problem[s] or issue[s] was it designed to address?

The goal of the program is to create a safe place where girls can take full advantage of their talents, academic interests, and potential for healthy relationships. Implementation of girls circles at Willow Lane was part of the agency's overall reform effort, to transform the way in which staff provide gender-responsive programming.

12. Describe the specific activities and operations of the program in chronological order.

May 2006	Girls Circle Facilitator training
July 2006-August 2006	First girls circles implemented at Willow Lane (8-week module)
August 2006	SCDJJ agreed to be part of Girls Circle National Evaluation
September 2006	Second round of girls circles implemented at Willow Lane (12 week module)
October 2006	Girls Circle implemented at Dillon Teen After School Center
January 2007	Girls Circle implemented at Youth Development Center
February 2007	Third round of girls circles implemented at Willow Lane (8 week module)
May 2007	New facilitator training will be conducted by Girls Circle Association

13. Why is the program a new and creative approach or method?

The Girls Circle Association provides specialized training for staff working with girls in group settings. They are national consultants for the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, and they are also recommended by the National Girls Caucus. The model utilized is unique in that it is relational and creates safety and bonding, combining verbal and creative activities to encourage respectful and purposeful participation.

14. What were the program's start-up costs? (Provide details about specific purchases for this program, staffing needs and other financial expenditures, as well as existing materials, technology and staff already in place.)

The initial training was obtained through technical assistance (Formula Grants), and represented no cost to the department. Additional training is estimated at \$6475 per 2-day training session.

15. What are the program's annual operational costs?

\$6475 for the training of up to 50 additional facilitators, and \$500 for materials and incentives.

16. How is the program funded?

Initially, the program was funded out of federally-sponsored technical assistance. Future training will be funded through non-recurring state appropriations.

17. Did this program require the passage of legislation, executive order or regulations? If YES, please indicate the citation number.

NO

18. What equipment, technology and software are used to operate and administer this program?

None...the Girls Circle curriculum is an activity-based, hands-on curriculum, and is delivered through use of handbooks and activity guides.

As of January 2007, SCDJJ utilizes the Girls Circle Evaluation Tool Kit, to conduct pre-and-post test for all participants. An electronic spreadsheet is used to track participants for the Girls Circle National Evaluation.

19. To the best of your knowledge, did this program originate in your state? If YES, please indicate the innovator's name, present address, telephone number and e-mail address.

No...the program did not originate in South Carolina. However, DJJ is the only agency in South Carolina that has staff that are certified to conduct Girls Circles, and is the only agency in SC currently implementing this best-practices program.

20. Are you aware of similar programs in other states? If YES, which ones and how does this program differ?

Yes—see Girls Circle Association website for other states. South Carolina's program is different in that it is primarily administered in a girl's juvenile justice facility. It is also the only program in the country where trained facilitators meet once-weekly, after circles are conducted for girls, to plan for program improvements and promote staff teamwork.

21. Has the program been fully implemented? If NO, what actions remain to be taken?

The program is still under development. Future activities include:

April 2007	DJJ to contract with Clemson University's Girls Center to obtain gender-responsive training, to include Girls Circle training
May 2007	Training of Girls Transition Home staff and clinicians in Girls Circles
June 2007	Expansion of Implementation of Girls Circles to DJJ girls community-based group homes
September 2007	Advanced facilitator training for DJJ staff
September 2007	Training-of –Trainers for Girls Center staff
October 2007	Girls Center of Clemson University to become licensed in providing Girls Circle training in South Carolina
October 2007	Girls Circle training will be made available to state agencies, non-profits, schools, churches, etc. through Clemson's Girls Center

22. Briefly evaluate (pro and con) the program's effectiveness in addressing the defined problem[s] or issue[s]. Provide tangible examples.

Quantitative data is currently being collected to demonstrate the reduction in juvenile-on-juvenile conflict as a result of Girls Circles. Girls at Willow Lane evaluate the program after each module series is completed, and have reported that the program has helped increase their self-esteem, encouraged respect and friendship amongst girls, and promoted a positive and safe environment. Staff have reported that girls are less likely to misbehave as a result of their participation.

23. How has the program grown and/or changed since its inception?

Modifications have been made to address the constant changes in population at Willow Lane, allowing girls to come into group as long as girls are comfortable with bringing in new members. Graduation ceremonies have been built into the program, and girls are now given certificates of completion and "incentives", such as girls circle bracelets, pictures, and home-cooked meals.

24. What limitations or obstacles might other states expect to encounter if they attempt to adopt this program?

It is extremely important that other jurisdictions recognize that an overall safe and confidential environment must be established BEFORE the implementation of girls circles. SCDJJ spent over a year working with their staff on creating a safe environment, conducting gender-responsive training, and assuring that each staff member was committed to working with girls.

Without a base foundation of safety and confidentiality, the implementation of girls circle (an empowerment model) could essentially re-victimize girls. Girls Circles are intended to be a safe place where girls can express themselves without fear of retaliation or loss of trust. Staff must be committed and focused, and must be willing to take steps to protect girls' confidentiality.