

The Green Manual (MCC Pilot Project)

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About the Contributors

All of the writers have been directly involved in creating communities of support for sex offenders.

Evan Heise, project coordinator, is a staff person with Mennonite Central Committee (Ontario) Community Justice Ministries.

Les Horne, researcher/writer, is retired from the Ontario Child Advocacy office and is a board member of Welcome Inn Church in Hamilton, Ontario.

Hugh Kirkegaard, researcher/writer, is a community chaplain with Correctional Services Canada and an ordained minister with the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec.

Harry Nigh, researcher/writer, is a minister with the Mennonite Conference of Eastern Canada at Welcome Inn Church in Hamilton, Ontario. Harry was the Director of M2/W2 Ontario for over a decade.

Ingrid Peters Derry, writer and editor, is an ordained minister with the Mennonite Conference of Eastern Canada who has been a chaplain at two federal institutions.

Valerie Steinmann, editor, is a Master's student in Community Development and Program Assistant at Conflict Mediation Services, Downsview, Ontario.

Mark Yantzi, researcher/writer is a City Councillor for the City of Kitchener and the Director of the Sexual Assault Treatment Program of Community Justice Initiatives, Waterloo Region. Mark was one of the persons involved in the establishment of Victim-Offender programs in North America.

Dave Worth, editor in chief, is the Executive Director of Mennonite Central Committee (Ontario). Together with Mark, Dave initiated the Victim-Offender programs in North America. He was also Director of Victim-Offender Ministries for Mennonite Central Committee Canada.

1. Introduction and Overview

Mission Statement

The purpose of the Community Reintegration Project is to reduce the risk of re-offence by individuals convicted of sexual offenses and to ease their transition into the community, and speak to the fears of victims. The Project involves volunteers primarily from the faith community forming support groups or 'Circles of Support' with potentially high profile sex offenders who are re-entering the community at Warrant Expiry from the prison system. We welcome volunteers from a variety of backgrounds and life experiences and invite them to share their gifts and energies in healthy and life giving ways to the men we walk with.

The relationship between volunteers and “ ex-offender” includes a commitment on the part of the ex-offender to relate to the 'Circle of Support' and accept its help and advice, to pursue appropriate treatment and to act responsibly in the community. The 'Circle of Support' provides intensive support for the ex-offender, mediating between police, media, and the community-at-large to assist in a safe, orderly adjustment to everyday life in the community.

Background: The Problem

An increasing percentage of sex offenders is being denied parole. 1994 Correctional Service Canada (CSC) statistics identified 153 sex offenders scheduled for release from Federal institutions in Ontario between March 1, 1995 and March 1, 1996. These individuals enter our communities at the end of their term (Warrant Expiry). They have no structured supports to assist their readjustment and there are no safeguards for the public except public notification and/or expensive, often short-lived police surveillance or the use of a Peace Bond under section 810.1 or 810.2 of the Criminal Code (Canada). These procedures are controversial and face legal challenges.

A number of sex offenders released from Federal correctional institutions have stirred intense public reaction and an increasing demand for measures to ensure public safety and protection. This has created a dilemma for the traditional support agencies and the correctional/parole systems in their ability to provide meaningful assistance to these men.

Contributing Factors

Several historical, societal and legal factors have contributed to the gravity of the problem:

- ◆ A heightened awareness of sexual abuse in Canadian society and a more receptive atmosphere for victims to disclose incidents of abuse both past and present has led in recent years to an increased reporting of offenses. Many reports have resulted in criminal convictions which has led to a dramatic rise in the number of sex offenders in the prison population.
- ◆ Laws in the criminal code regarding sexual assaults have been redefined. These changes have had an impact upon the reporting and prosecution of sexual assaults as well as upon the perceived nature of the problem confronting the criminal justice system in sexual assault

cases.

- ◆ Detention legislation (commonly known as "gating" offenders) has emerged as a systemic response to increased public fears about the release of violent and sex offenders into the community prior to their Warrant Expiry date. Since then, several sensational incidents have led to significant lobbying efforts seeking greater accountability for the Parole Board and substantive changes to the laws regarding violent offenses.
- There has been a dramatic increase in the use of the detention legislation, particularly in the Ontario region. According to National Parole Board statistics the percentage of prisoners in the total prison population actually referred for detention across the country has increased from 4.3% in 1989/90 to 10.2% in 1994/95. The statistics for referral in Ontario and the Pacific region are above the national average.

Our Story

Recently we have been witnesses to the challenges created by this situation. Through contact with institutional staff, we initiated 'Circles of Support' in response to the release at Warrant Expiry of several high needs ex-offenders into hostile communities. In each case, there was a public perception that the individual presented a serious threat to public safety and there was strong media reinforcement of this attitude. In the face of public reaction, traditional support agencies were unable or unwilling to help these men. In each situation we have been involved with others from the faith community in developing 'Circles of Support' to work in cooperation with the police, neighbourhood groups and treatment professionals. The 'Circles' have provided guidance, hospitality and caring accountability to men who are frightened and bewildered by public anger. Without that support, the hostility would have continued to grow and the reactions of the individuals would have been unpredictable, perhaps resulting in re-offense.

The following story reflects the reality of Circles of Support. The facts of the story are a composite of several cases. The names and details of the story have been changed to preserve the anonymity of the individuals involved.

It began with a telephone call. "Can you help me?" the caller asked. "I'm just out of prison, and the police already have been warning everyone that I'm in town. Where am I going to find a quiet place to live?" Joe, 54, had been released on Warrant Expiry from prison after serving a 6 year sentence for sexual assault against a child. It was his 8th conviction.

If we had known what was going to happen, we would have found an excuse to side-step the plea for help. But we had come to know Joe well through AA in the prison where he had served his sentence. We knew that if we didn't come to Joe's aid, he had no one else. How do you turn your back on a friend?

And so it began. We met with Joe and a sympathetic case worker and drew up a plan to create a Circle of Support for Joe. Joe wanted to come to our city for several reasons. He knew us, he had met public resistance in another town when he attempted to settle there before his parole was reversed, and he suspected that he could get help in relapse prevention. We agreed to help him find accommodation, help him to find a job, and try to build a Circle of friendship and support in his new city. We thought of people that we knew who could help in each of these areas and who would

be willing to work with us. We also agreed to make contact with the police. The detectives, when we met with them, candidly said, " We don't want him here." Based on institutional reports, the police felt Joe was likely to re-offend. There had been a lot of negative publicity recently about released prisoners re-offending, and they didn't want any of that kind of publicity for their department.

When Joe came to stay with us for the weekend while beginning the apartment search, the police quickly made his picture available to the media and warned the community of his presence among us.

The media descended upon us because we had been identified as providing support for Joe. Pickets of irate and concerned parents arrived in front of our home. After a number of angry and threatening phone calls, we finally bought a telephone answering machine.

The police mounted a plan of surveillance. They felt sure he would re-offend within a short period. They were concerned about the safety of the children in the neighbourhood, but they also wanted to ensure Joe's safety.

One of the neighbours had called the police and had a lengthy discussion with the detective. She later called to talk with me. Ann had small children and was very concerned for their safety and that of the many other children living in the area. After a discussion with her, and later with Joe, we agreed that he would meet with her to discuss her concerns. Lengthy negotiations ensued, finally resulting in a meeting proposed in a neutral site, and several other neighbours were invited to participate. The police detectives were also to be present. They would be there not only as a resource, but also as people who could add to the participants' feelings of security.

Joe, accompanied by two of his friends, was the first to arrive at the meeting and take seats on the far side of the room. Soon the neighbours began to arrive. Then the detectives entered. The ground rules of the meeting were outlined. We would go around the circle to allow everyone an opportunity to share their first name and a particular concern they brought with them. We would have a statement from the neighbourhood group, followed by an opportunity for Joe to share, and from there we would move to addressing the issues presented. Only one person at a time would speak, and they would follow our direction and instructions for the orderly addressing of the issues. Before the end of the meeting, we would decide together what of this meeting would be appropriate to share with other people, outside of this meeting.

As we began to go around the circle, the first person began by saying how much she appreciated the willingness of Joe and his friends to attend such a meeting. Ann outlined the questions she had heard others discussing with her. There was a long list of questions: they wanted to know what had happened, what the sentence was, what treatment he had obtained, and what treatment he planned to receive now that he was released. "From your experience, what is the best way to avoid the behaviour you were charged with?" "How do you plan to deal with the negative reactions and anger of some individuals in this community?"

Joe responded, outlining in general terms his offenses. Appreciation was expressed for the constructive method the residents had chosen to address their concerns, which he acknowledged, was understandable. He indicated that he had received some treatment while in the institution and was planning to arrange suitable community-based therapy and had indeed made arrangements for

that already. He had also set up an accountability system through his Circle of Support, by which he had daily contact with us and we were able to make inquiry as to his faithfulness to his commitments in specific relevant areas.

We talked, and the earlier tension in the room eased as we got on with the task of problem-solving around the various issues at hand. Though all the questions were not answered, by the end of the 2 ½ hour meeting, there was a feeling of accomplishment and a readiness to move on.

Out of that meeting and others we had, some bridges were built. Neighbourhood residents, some of whom were vocally angry, began to see Joe as a person, and recognized the difficulties with which he coped.

Throughout this time, Joe's Circle of Support met regularly with him. At least one of the Circle Members contacted him every day. After a year, we still talk to him daily. We took him to do his laundry, to shop for groceries and furnishings for his apartment.

The police have been partners with us in Joe's Circle of Support. Without the patient, humorous, understanding commitment of the detectives with whom we dealt most frequently, our efforts might not have reached this point. They came to our Circle meetings. They checked in with us frequently and we trusted their openness with us. Similarly, the police served as a buffer with the community, correcting rumours and diffusing problems.

Joe's life has settled into a comfortable pattern. He maintains a clean, comfortable apartment and has developed some close relationships. He is finding ways to spend his time and is slowly developing a small network of friends, although trust takes a long time.

The Mennonite community in Ontario has been involved in victim offender issues for some twenty-five years. Based on this experience and concern Mennonite Central Committee Ontario in cooperation with Toronto Community Chaplaincy initiated a meeting of some thirty-five volunteers from the faith community in November 1995 to discuss their experiences supporting the re-integration of sex offenders into a number of communities in Ontario and to hear from experts working with them. The model developed in this paper has emerged from the shared concern and vision expressed at that gathering, and in response to the need to develop the concept of 'Circles of Support' into a document that will enable the concept to be transplanted, enlarged and critiqued.

The Circle of Support has filled a number of roles: advocating with various systems; confronting Joe on numerous occasions about his attitudes and behaviour; walking with him through emergencies; mediating landlord-tenant conflicts; and celebrating - anniversaries and milestones, all the small victories in Joe's journey of reintegration.

The Circle has felt keenly a dual responsibility: to be a caring community for Joe in the midst of the hostility of the larger community, but also to a responsible community, concerned that community safety not be compromised. We have always hoped that our presence might avert a situation developing in which someone else becomes a victim. No one can ever guarantee that Joe will not re-offend, but we do not find these two responsibilities to be incompatible.

The structure, dynamics and experience of each Circle that develops is different, but the features of accountability, availability, and mediation characterize our experiences in attempting to assist these

individuals to integrate into their communities in a way that reduces the risk of re-offense.

While a group of community members may form spontaneously around a particular offender in certain circumstances, the majority of the high profile clientele have few connections in the community for that to happen. For a successful program resources will be needed for volunteer recruitment, training, advice and encouragement.

The pilot project developing this manual endeavours to use a de-centralized model that would allow 'Circles of Support' to be established, with staff support, in selected communities the ex-offender chooses to live in after release from prison.

Theology of Support

" . . . for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.' . . . And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.' (Matthew 25: 35, 36, 40 NRSV)

The creation of Circles of Support by the faith community for those who have been marginalized in the wider community due to their own actions or by the actions of the community is a pastoral response in keeping with both a strong biblical mandate and a rich theological tradition. Indeed, the work of the circles resonates with a number of important biblical themes including God's mercy (mishpat); God's steadfast love (hesed); and the consistent concern of God for the alien, the prisoner, and the dispossessed (anawim) as an expression of both of these characteristics. At the heart of these understandings lies an even more fundamental reality, the God-human relationship shaped in covenant community.

Covenant

It is within the context of covenant, the unique and special relationship with the Hebrew people, that God works out his purposes in the world of the Old Testament. It is in the context of the covenantal relationship that God shows his mercy and demonstrates his love. Similarly it is in the context of this relationship of shared understandings and commitments that God's people are called to live as a reflection of God's own character.

The covenants of the Old Testament were struck with a small nomadic tribe which was considered the weakest of the peoples of the Ancient Near East. God's covenant with specific individuals among this people involved the promise of a future and a hope for them. The people responded in faith to God's gracious initiative toward them. In a parallel way, in the New Testament, God acted in Jesus to express mercy and love for even those who were alienated from God. In the death and resurrection of Jesus a new covenant was struck with humanity, one which was based on God's willingness to risk loving at great personal cost.

Community

The Christian community is based on this covenantal relationship with God. The early Church took seriously the call to be a distinct community, living in the world but not of the world; committed to disciplines of prayer and study, it practiced mutual aid and compassion. Non-Christians in the first centuries were amazed by the way Christians cared for and loved one another. The emerging Christian community was a place of reconciliation and healing where wealthy and poor, Jews and Greeks, slaves and free, victims and offenders were all welcome and found a place. It was also a place where people took seriously Christ's call to care for the widows and orphans, to feed the hungry, to visit the prisoner and welcome the stranger. Then, as now, the prisoner and the stranger are people alienated from the community. The continuing challenge, which the Christian community must address, involves including those people on the margins of society in the life of the community.

Radical Christian Hospitality

Just as the early Church was considered a radical community in its time, so too are we called to give expression to the healing power of God by living as a risking, reconciling community in the world. The most practical expression of such a community is hospitality. Recognized as a 'work of mercy' in Scripture, hospitality is one of the hallmarks of genuine Christian community. The Greek word for hospitality (philoxenia) means, literally, 'love of the stranger'. Christians are called upon to exercise the kind of radical hospitality which risks welcoming the stranger, just as we are welcomed into God's family. This is the kind of hospitality displayed by the Good Samaritan who reached across the religious and racial prejudices of his day to care for the wounded victim. This is the kind of risking Jesus demonstrated in healing lepers and reaching out to the criminally insane. Such is the challenge facing us today as we welcome the sexual offender into a supportive, caring community where restoration and healing can take place.

The foundational understanding of our work emerges from these theological perspectives and our faith in a personal, reconciling God. We believe that it is our response to the strangers - today's victims - and the lepers - today's offenders - in our midst that is the litmus test of our concept of justice and our vision of community.

In the Judeo-Christian tradition, which has shaped much of what we know as western culture, justice should be understood as essentially restorative in nature and not punitive as is commonly held in our society. When a crime is committed, the community is damaged by it. Restorative justice seeks to restore the fabric of the life of the community by addressing the needs of the victim, the fears of the community and the issues in the life of the offender. Based on this premise the work of dealing with sex offenders who are estranged and alienated from the community becomes a process of restoration of community, re-creating community in a way which holds both the offender and the community accountable and makes all of our communities safer places.

Guiding Principles for the Work of 'Circles of Support'

We affirm that the community bears responsibility for the re-integration of offenders and the restoration of victims. Although judicial and correctional systems have assumed this responsibility historically, we believe that it is essential to the life of the community that it reclaim its role in dealing with criminal conflict, with victims and offenders. Hence, we are involved in this work as members of the faith community and out of concern for the health and safety of the wider

community

- ◆ We believe in a loving and reconciling God who calls us to be agents of healing work in the world
- ◆ We recognize the humanity of both the victim and the offender
- ◆ We acknowledge the ongoing pain and the need for healing of victims of sexual abuse
- ◆ We affirm that only love has the potential to heal the wounds of the victim, the offender and the community. This love is lived out in the context of meaningful and accountable relationships where support and care takes on a human face
- ◆ We welcome the offender into community and accountability. Where this does not exist for them, we seek to "re-create community" with them in responsible, safe, healthy and life-giving ways
- ◆ We seek to prevent further victimization both through reducing recidivism by offenders and increasing public awareness in the wider community. It is through education about the roots of violence and abuse that our communities become safer
- ◆ We accept God's call to radical hospitality, sharing our lives with one another in community and taking on risks in the service of love.

The Motivation for Volunteering

Why would anyone take on this task? Some people believe in human rights. Some share the anger of the community over the victimization of children and want to create more safety for them. Some believe that the Church is called to lead the way to social justice in the community. Some understand that God's love was not given to us to hide. Some believe in the importance of bringing healing to the brokenness of relationships that disempower so many people. The prospect of applying these convictions to sexual abuse issues is probably as challenging a proposition as any.

We recognize that there will be a cost to each of us and to our churches when we commit ourselves to join a Circle around an angry, often confused individual who is like a leper in the community. Integral to our motivation is our belief that Christ is still vitally alive in this world. In exchange for sharing the task, we will learn more about Christ's love, receive firsthand knowledge of the problems of the criminal justice system, and experience rewards that can never be measured in terms of societal values.

We know, from talking to survivors and offenders, that sexual abuse patterns do not end within a single generation but can be traced through series of generations within families, sometimes skipping a generation, but invariably recurring. It is important to provide therapeutic support for

those who have been harmed physically, emotionally, and spiritually by the intrusive disregard of child sexual abuse. And yet, even if we could address all of the victim's needs, it would seem incomplete, analogous to diligently mopping up from a dripping tap without seeking to prevent the water from dripping.

Many ex-offenders can experience significant and sustainable change if given a supportive environment that respects them as people despite their past actions. They need to be provided with significant challenges to their belief system and the way they have come to view their actions. Persons can learn to grapple with the experiences of their past that drive their "out of control" existence. When they do this, they come to see how freeing it can be to face their past demons. There are processes that assist change. Rejection and isolation destroy self-esteem. Processes that strengthen self-esteem are many times more effective in reducing risk. When the offender succeeds, we all succeed; this success requires co-responsibility.

A belief in the principles of restorative justice requires that we work to reduce the risks to the community by committing ourselves to the service of every offender. At the same time the needs of each victim of abuse or violence must be similarly addressed. Men and women who have experienced sexual abuse have every reason to be skeptical about the sincerity of those who are involved in the offender program. It is so easy to become focused on the pain of the offender that you can lose the perspective of those affected by the abuse. The effects on those who have experienced sexual abuse are not short term but have to be addressed on an ongoing basis over the long term.

Despite the healthy skepticism, some men and women who are survivors of sexual abuse state that it gives them a "sense of hope" that things can change when they have an opportunity to interact indirectly or directly with those who have offended. Often, their own perpetrator is still denying that anything untoward has happened. The survivor's isolation is further increased if their family does not validate their experience. The awareness that there are persons acknowledging sexual abuse against children and others in powerless positions, provides affirmation of the validity of their experience in a way that can assist them in the struggle to overcome the pervasive cloud of sexual abuse.

It is not our wish to put a surface bandage on a gaping wound to make it appear better than it is. Neither do we feel that restoration is achievable in all situations. We are also aware that the presence of a restorative option sometimes allows persons directly or indirectly to pressure a victim to "reconcile" for the sake of the family or whatever the rationale may be. None of these options are constructive or healing. They are not what restorative justice is about.

Persons involved in this project are seeking to address concerns that are usually seen as divergent and contradictory. Consistent with restorative justice, it seeks to include varied "camps" while at the same time hearing and absorbing some of the pain evident from all perspectives on this issue.

It is important to keep searching for creative ways to address issues surrounding sexual abuse which have seemingly defied resolution over the centuries of human interaction. We want to openly explore other ways to address this old issue, and in so doing, open us up to the criticism and challenge of others regarding the importance of problems these interventions are causing. At the

same time we hope that others, whether they are survivors/victims, offenders, or other community members are open to sharing and deliberating with us as we seek to learn and grow together.

2. Circles of Support

The role of a Circle of Support is to facilitate the reintegration of an ex-offender from a prison into the community in such a way as to enhance public safety when there is a perceived abnormal element of risk. The Circle is a support and safety mechanism. At the centre of the Circle is the ex-offender, the Core Member. He is involved from the beginning and included in all decision making.

The Circle of Support is a group of volunteers based in the faith community. It relates to others such as family members, treatment professionals, police, service clubs, self-help groups (A.A., N.A., ex-offender groups), and educators. A victim or victim representative who has processed his or her experience well adds a valuable perspective to the Circle. The diagram on the following page illustrates the relationships of the Circle within the community. The ideal size of each Circle is about 6 members; small enough to optimize trust and communication among Circle Members and large enough to share responsibility for the Core Member's support needs.

The ex-offender who re-enters a community faces problems that he may not be equipped to manage. Everyone in the community benefits if a plan is in place which provides solutions. The ideal plan prepares the Circle to receive the offender on discharge and maintains the necessary supports for as long as necessary to reduce the risk effectively. Each Circle and plan has its own personality because it is designed around the unique profile of the Core Member. The life of a Circle extends as long as the risks to the community and the Core Member are above average. The intensity with which members of the Circle are actively involved in the life of the Core Member varies and will, hopefully, diminish over time.

Reducing Risk

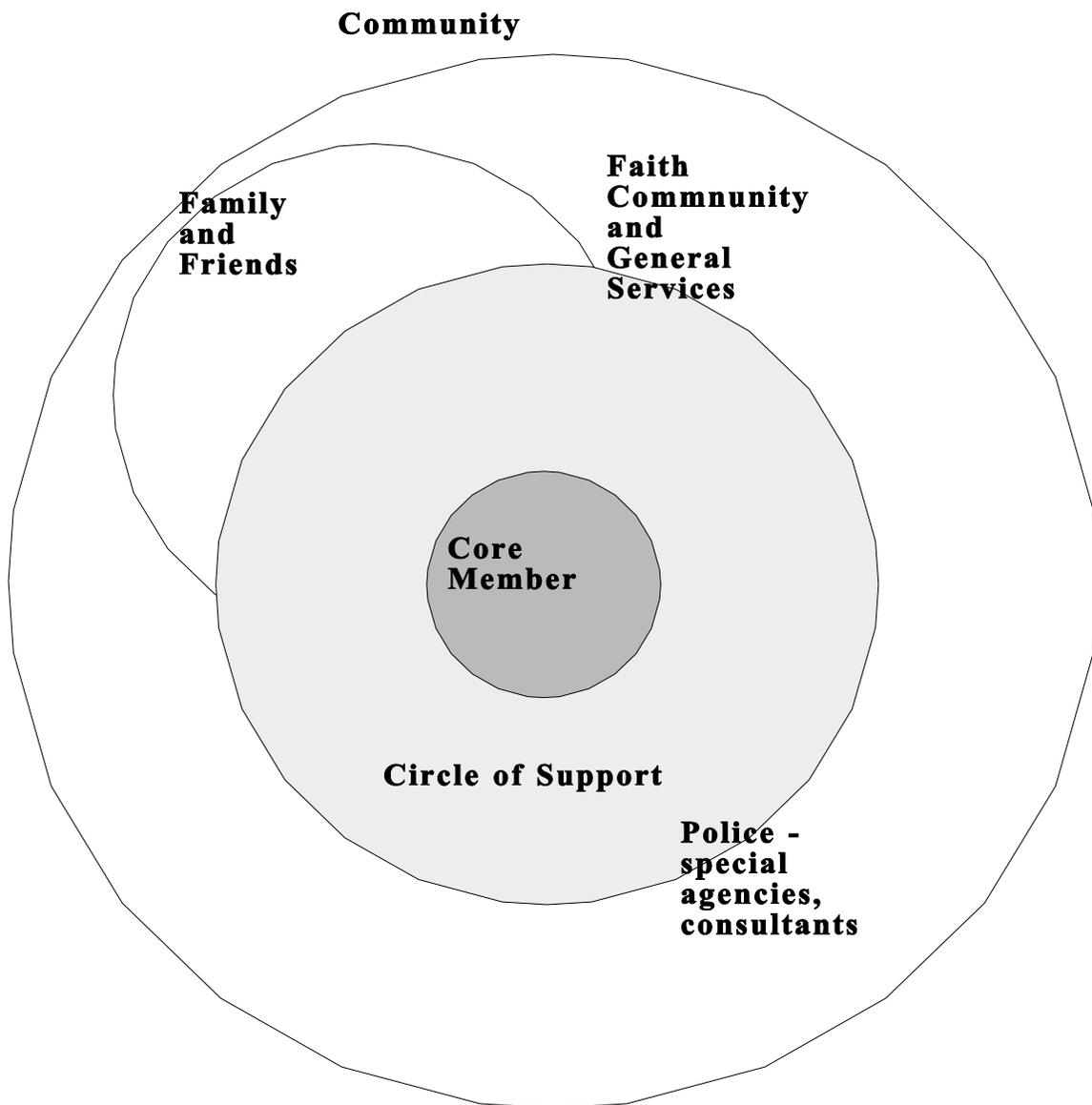
The risk for the community lies in the possibility of re-offense. Sexual offences against children are among the most abhorrent to communities, inside the institution and outside. The first concern of the Circle will be to minimize any risk to children.

The risk for the ex-offender lies in the reaction of the community, police attitudes, media responses, and his own personality and lack of experience. The concern of the Circle is to protect his rights as a citizen and to support him in his efforts to integrate into society.

The risk for the victim/s lies in the fear of facing their perpetrator, in their own vulnerability, and the fear that the offender will violate someone else close to them. The concern of the Circle is to ensure that the victims are accessing the available resources in the community to meet their personal needs for healing and safety. In addition, direct input by the victim to the Circle where applicable provides valuable insights for monitoring relapse prevention strategies.

There is a direct correlation between needs and risk. The stress created for the ex-offender when his basic needs are not being met leads to escalation in the risk of re-offense. A Circle of Support assists the Core Member to ensure that basic needs are met in order to minimize the risk of re-offense.

Figure 1: Relationships of the Circle within the Community



Aspects of Circle Functioning

Covenant Making

The Core Member and other members of the Circle enter into a mutual agreement, or covenant. The covenant, signed by all Circle Members and the Core Member, establishes agreed upon acceptable norms of behaviour and associations for the ex-offender and clarifies the expectations to be met by the Circle volunteers. It establishes procedures for dealing with failure to live up to these commitments, breaches of the agreement, and failure to meet the conditions. Consequences may include notification of authorities or potential withdrawal of support or adjustment of expectations.

The covenant is reviewed at regular intervals and revised when necessary.

Trust is the key factor in the covenant making and eventual success of each Circle. Generally speaking, the individual on discharge has very little trust to give and resorts to many strategies to avoid open and direct communication. Trust builds very slowly. Confrontation is difficult. To compensate for this, the members of the Circle need to show themselves to be trustworthy, and model open and trusting behaviour among themselves and with the Core Member. Trust usually builds in direct proportion to the one-on-one time spent by individual volunteers with the core member.

While each Circle creates a covenant document that is unique to its context, several components are important for inclusion in all Circle covenants. Concern for confidentiality, community and Core Member safety, professionalism and mutual respect should be reflected in the covenant, as well as protocols for responding to media attention or re-offense warning signs on the part of the Core Member. Care must be taken not to commit to doing anything that is beyond the realistic capacity of the Circle. The Covenant should be worded carefully and appropriately.

Key Components of a Covenant (see Appendix A)

I. The Core Member will:

- ◆ share his Relapse Prevention Plan with the Circle and agree to follow it
- ◆ be open and honest with other Circle Members
- ◆ consult with the Circle **before** engaging in dialogue with community members outside the circle (e.g. media, police)
- ◆ abide by the consensus of the Circle
- ◆ respect confidentiality of personal information shared by other Circle Members
- ◆ identify medical and counselling needs and commit to dealing with them
- ◆ adhere to a Release Plan including treatment
- ◆ identify any substance abuse history and follow a plan to address these issues
- ◆ sign a Form 14 to release confidential information to at least one Circle Member

II. The Circle Members will provide a community of care and accountability through:

- ◆ assisting with practical living needs
- ◆ open and honest communication with each other
- ◆ consulting with the Circle **before** engaging in dialogue with community members outside

the circle (e.g. media, police)

- ◆ mediating with the outside community (e.g., police, media)
- ◆ adhering to the consensus of the Circle pertaining to the Core Member
- ◆ defining consequences of failure to meet the agreements of the covenant by Circle Members and the Core Member (e.g. dissolution of the circle and/or notifying authorities -- police, psychiatrist; withdrawal from the circle)
- ◆ designating key members who will screen sensitive confidential information released by therapists etc. (not necessarily shared with the whole circle)
- ◆ appropriate conduct and respect for the consensus process of the circle

Confidentiality

Within the circle there are no secrets. Outside the circle maintaining confidentiality is an important principle when someone, through the course of his or her paid work or volunteer involvement, has access to private information about another person. Providing this protection is equally important when there is extensive media disclosure of material concerning an ex-offender. Often the most difficult situations arise when media disclosure concerning an ex-offender leads to social conversations where it is sometimes difficult for persons to sort out what is appropriate to share. If there are questions it is important to err on the side of maintaining confidentiality and consulting with the appropriate staff or Circle representative concerning issues in this regard.

There are, however, also limits to confidentiality. Some are legislated while others require a balancing of the rights of the ex-offender with those of the past victims and the broader community. Any information to be shared outside the circle must be processed by the Circle. Members and volunteers should be prepared for potential repercussions.

Collaborative Relationships

Institutions such as maximum security prisons have a dehumanizing effect on the "keepers and the kept". Sometimes persons getting involved as volunteers see their role as intervening to correct these patterns by advocating for the sentenced individual in battles with the institution. While there are appropriate avenues for advocacy, it is important for the initiation and operation of this project that persons involved have a sense of respect for the institutional staff persons whose assistance and information are essential, while at the same time remaining respectful and open with the ex-offender.

In order for the Circle to function effectively, collaborative relationships between Circle Members and professionals relating directly or indirectly to the Circle are essential.

Crisis Intervention

Circle Members must have a commitment to immediate response in crisis situations. Any response must include at least 2-3 members of the circle who will meet, pray, assess the situation, and act.

Often immediate action is required (e.g., calling an ambulance or the police, checking into a hostel, or detox, etc.) Actions must be taken in consultation with as many members of the circle as possible at the time. Circle Members unavailable at the time of crisis will support the decision made.

Profiles of Needs, Abilities and Resources

A needs profile will be completed for each offender who is considered for the project. The profile is based on the range of personal and social means that he requires to survive in the community, and is used by the Circle to create an appropriate support plan for the Core Member. The purpose of the profile is to ensure, as completely as is possible, that the Core Member's personal skills combined with the resources that will be provided to him are sufficient to enable him to live safely in the community. For example, if a Core Member is illiterate, the plan must include attention to his need for help in deciphering letters and documents, even in reading menus and tasks which are taken for granted. He may try to disguise his deficiency.

The profile touches on all areas of an individual's life, including psychological and basic life skill needs. When the needs profile is complete, it is possible to prepare a parallel resource profile to reflect the requirements for support. The Circle of Support may help to identify the resources that are available to the Core Member. For example, a lack of money management skills might require that a Circle Member be designated to teach budgeting and share a joint account with the Core Member.

The table in Appendix B indicates the range of needs and abilities considered in compiling a needs profile. The process of identifying appropriate supports to parallel the Core Member's needs can also be recorded in this table.

Appropriate Documentation

Instructions will be provided for any recording that is required. For reasons of confidentiality, documentation is limited to essential information around the covenant and resource profile -- who has agreed to do what. Detailed "Minutes" of meetings are not required or encouraged. For the most part, assistance is of a practical nature, such as providing accompaniment to and from various activities. The circle may wish to note commitments made by circle members for the week - e.g. Who is taking Joe to the Doctor on Wednesday, etc.- as a memory aid for the volunteers and Core Member. The presence of the Circle Member with the Core Member provides a very real source of safety and security for the community and for the Core Member as well.

For the purposes of evaluation of a project, the Circle may keep a journal. Please see Appendix C for the notekeeping guidelines for the MCCO pilot project.

Evolution of Circle Functioning

Circles of Support typically move through a series of stages, starting with limited contact with the Core Member during the initiation phase prior to his release from prison. In the 3 to 6 months immediately following the Core Member's release, the Circle will provide intensive support, contacting or meeting with the Core Member on a daily basis. At this stage, communicating with community supports (e.g. welfare), mediating with police, community groups and the media may

also be intensive. As the Core Member develops friendships within and outside of the Circle, and establishes a growing sense of confidence and responsibility, 3 or 4 contacts each week with the Circle Members are appropriate. Formal involvement of the Circle in the life of the Core Member continues to diminish as reintegration progresses, and in the later stages of the Circle's life, weekly or bi-weekly check-ins may be adequate. At any phase, a crisis in the life of the Core Member requires more intensive support until the crisis can be resolved.

Roles and Responsibilities within the Circle

Leadership and Decision making

The Circle employs a consensus model for decision making whenever possible. It is vital to maintain strong, open communication, to act together in times of crisis, and to support the commitment of individual members. While various roles and responsibilities are identified for the Circle, leadership can be shared and rotated among members if the group decides this appropriate for its Circle.

Dynamics of Group Functioning

All Circle Members share responsibility for creating and maintaining effective group dynamics in the Circle. Given the intensity of the Circle, particularly in its early stages, special care is required to nurture a cohesive and safe environment for all members. Communicating openly and honestly with each other, and refraining from judging or putting down others facilitates a supportive group dynamic. An excellent resource for understanding group dynamics for team work is *The Anatomy of High Performing Teams* by Marilyn Laiken (1994).

Circle Facilitator

This is a critical role for the success of the Circle. It requires leadership, a sensitivity to group process and listening skills. Experience in problem solving and conflict resolution is also important. This role may be rotated or one member may be designated as facilitator for the duration of the Circle. The facilitator will:

- ◆ Convene and facilitate meetings of the Circle
- ◆ Arrange consultations
- ◆ Ensure that there is balanced participation by members
- ◆ Ensure that the Core Member understands the process
- ◆ Ensure that there is a liaison with professionals

Recording Secretary

While minutes of each meeting are not essential, certain documentation may be kept with regard to important decisions and communication with professionals or for program evaluation purposes. A member of the Circle is appointed to keep these records. The task may be rotated between the members.

Special Tasks for Circle Members

A variety of skills is required among Circle Members in order to provide effective support to the Core Member. Members share a variety of special tasks according to their own gifts and interests. Some of these tasks include:

- ◆ monitoring the Core Member's Relapse Prevention Plan
- ◆ ensuring regular liaison with professionals (e.g. mental health, addictions, social worker) and initiating joint case management/Circle of Support meetings if appropriate
- ◆ communicating with neighbourhood/community groups
- ◆ connecting with or representing special self help groups (e.g. A.A., N.A.)
- ◆ advocating for concerns of victims
- ◆ crisis intervention

Professional Advisors to the Circle

To augment the skills of the Circle Members, other professionals with various areas of expertise relate to the Circle. A good relationship developed with professionals may significantly aid the success of the Circle. We acknowledge that lawyers, police officers, psychologists, or pastors who provide advisory support may need to balance their commitment to the Circle with responsibilities and accountability to other authorities. For example, a lawyer is bound by lawyer/client confidentiality, a police officer by the instructions of superior officers, and clergy of some denominations by the secrecy of the confessional.

The role of these professionals is to share their expertise and humanity in the Circle and to assist in the common purpose. While these professionals may not be able to attend Circle meetings regularly, the Circle can call upon the appropriate individual when his or her particular advice or expertise is required. A member of the Circle should be designated as the liaison with the professional who will be consulted. The Circle may benefit from case conferences with such professionals. The designated liaison initiates case conferences. Each set of circumstances is unique and it is important to establish expectations for these special relationships as early as possible. There is no hierarchy in the Circle but we seek to establish mutual respect for the skills and limitations of each participant.

3. Selection of Core Members

In the case of the MCCO pilot project, program staff employed by the project work very closely with institutional staff, specifically institutional parole officers, psychologists and/or chaplains, throughout the life of the project and especially during the phase of selecting Core Members.

Criteria for Selection of Inmates

The goal of the pilot project is to identify twelve men a year (initially, at least, we will be working with male participants) convicted of sexual offenses who are due for Warrant Expiry release, who would benefit from the program, and who will agree to enter a relationship of mutual responsibility with a Circle of Support. In addition to meeting the eligibility criteria, the inmate's participation depends on finding volunteers for the Circle of Support in the geographic community of re-entry. Inmates who are eligible for this project must meet all level (1) criteria and some combination of level (2) criteria:

Level (1) Criteria:

- ◆ are sex offenders serving their sentence in a Federal institution
- ◆ will likely reach their Warrant Expiry date without supervised release into the community. Inmates eligible for this program have been denied parole and mandatory supervision due to the high profile of their case. They will be identified as potential candidates for the program up to one year before release.
- ◆ must be willing to allow program staff to contact their victims and potentially to involve them in the reintegration process if deemed beneficial to the victim
- ◆ understand and accept the limits of accountability to a Circle of Support.
- ◆ must voluntarily enter such a supportive relationship, be aware of their accountability to the Circle, and desire its support. This presumes that the inmate has some understanding about the nature of his crimes, and is willing to take responsibility for his actions and seek help in developing a new lifestyle. He should be open to participating in relapse prevention counselling.

Level (2) Criteria:

- ◆ are considered at high risk to re-offend upon release without community support and accountability.
- ◆ are potentially high profile upon release. It may be difficult to determine which cases will be high profile when the inmates reach Warrant Expiry. However, access to inmate files may be helpful. Why was the inmate denied parole? How much attention did his case receive from the media during arrest and conviction? To which community is the inmate hoping to be released? What is the level of sensitivity to issues of sexual abuse in that community? Are there victim issues which need to be addressed?

- ◆ have high needs. This is determined by a needs profile to be completed by each potential candidate.
- ◆ have little or no community support. This is determined by the needs profile.

Working with Institutional Staff

- ◆ Representative(s) of the Circles of Support Project, in consultation with selected institutional staff, will initiate a meeting regarding the Circles of Support project. The purpose of this meeting is to inform institutional staff of the project and solicit their advice in the selection of candidates. Meetings should be scheduled once or twice a year to keep staff updated and answer questions they may have.
 - ◆ Institutional staff will be asked to discuss the possibility of participating in this program with individual inmates who meet the program's criteria. They will provide a copy of Circles of Support brochure (see Appendix D) for potential program candidates to read and consider.
 - ◆ Inmates may contact program staff through institutional staff, submitting a request for an interview. Inmates can expect this request to be confidential.
 - ◆ A Circle of Support representative will meet with each inmate who requests an interview, explaining the program goals, expectations, and procedures.
 - ◆ The potential program participant, if still interested, will complete a needs profile which is used by the program staff or volunteers to develop the necessary resources in the community. This needs profile augments the risk-needs profile jointly prepared by the inmate and institutional staff.
 - ◆ The 'Circles' liaison will confer with institutional staff to decide which inmates to accept into the program. The cooperation of the institutional staff is required to determine which confidential information is required by the Circle to facilitate its provision of adequate support. Institutional staff will negotiate with the offender regarding the release of any confidential information. In most cases, this includes, at least, the release of the offender's Relapse Prevention Plan.
 - ◆ After decisions are made, participants will be informed that they have been approved for the program and the process of negotiating a covenant with Circle Members can begin. Other inmates, refused for various reasons, will be informed preferably in person. Institutional staff will be informed of these decisions so they are able to engage in appropriate follow-up.
 - ◆ The assistance of institutional staff is required after selections have been made to facilitate at least one visit by Circle Members with the Core Member in the months prior to release.
- Working with Inmates (before release)**

- ◆ Selected inmates must understand their participation within the Circle. Project staff work with all Core Members prior to their release to develop, negotiate, and implement the set of expectations.

- ◆ To function effectively, Circles must be well informed of the offender's situation. The offender's own insights regarding the warning signs that indicate risk of re-offence are especially helpful for the Circle of Support. This augments the needs profile, Relapse Prevention Plan and other information provided by the institutional staff.
- ◆ Efforts are made to contact the victim/s of each selected offender to inform them of the status pertaining to release and to solicit their concerns as related to safety and boundaries, particularly if the offender is to be released into their community. The staff or volunteers contacting the victims will inquire about their need for further support or assistance in dealing with their victimization. Follow-up efforts will be made to connect them with the appropriate agencies.
- ◆ The inmate will sign a Form 14 to grant complete access to his files, including the full copy of the reasons for the judgment on his case and the reasons for sentencing.
- ◆ The 'Circles' coordinator draws on the information about the offender to discern the support resources that may be required through the Circle. This list is then used to recruit appropriate Circle Members.
- ◆ If at all possible, at least one meeting of all Circle Members occurs in the last 2 months of incarceration. Because these meetings take place within the institution, program staff require the assistance of institutional staff to arrange security clearance and meeting space.

The purpose of the pre-release meeting(s) is to:

- ◆ introduce Circle Members to each other - program staff facilitate this part of the meeting. One of the group members will later take the role of facilitator.
- ◆ determine the role of each person within the group
- ◆ negotiate accountability of participants to each other in order to develop a covenant between all Circle Members. Covenant building must be a mutual process in which all Circle Members participate. This initial covenant will likely need to be amended once the realities of community life are realized.
- ◆ determine how failure to fulfill the covenant will be handled. Each Circle Member is responsible for living up to the terms of the covenant. The Circle determines what to do when understandings have been breached by any member; action taken may include notification of authorities when the community may be at risk or withdrawal of support.

4. Selection of Circle Members

Expectations of Volunteers

It is their understanding that persons who volunteer to be involved in this undertaking will meet the following expectations:

- ◆ Minimum one year commitment unless otherwise negotiated.
- ◆ Participation in initial training and in-service training as provided. Training sessions facilitate relationship building among Circle Members as well as learning for the individual member.
- ◆ Maintenance of any records/documentation as indicated in the training.
- ◆ Advising Circle representative immediately of any potentially volatile situation.
- ◆ Responsibility in following through with commitments undertaken.
- ◆ That volunteers be comfortable with Restorative Justice Philosophy.
- ◆ Adherence to operating principles with regard to relating to the Core Member.
- ◆ Appropriate self-care.

What Volunteers Can Expect From A Sponsoring Agency

- ◆ To be valued as a team member.
- ◆ To be provided with the necessary orientation and practical tools to perform effectively.
- ◆ Access to a library of relevant print and video resources.
- ◆ Backup support and consultation from staff and Circle Members. Program staff work in decentralized locations. E-mail and telephone correspondence augment personal communication.
- ◆ Periodic peer support with persons working in other geographic settings.
- ◆ Information on relevant workshops and seminars.
- ◆ Provision of necessary, specific, confidential information concerning the Core Member.
- ◆ Legal counsel as required, arranged by each Circle.
- ◆ A secure repository for any confidential files.
- ◆ Periodic feedback on performance.

Recruitment

- ◆ General information about the project in Churches and Church periodicals.
- ◆ Targeted recruitment within particular Church communities in response to specific requests for Circles for offenders who will be released.
- ◆ Targeted recruitment through key community leaders. Empathetic professionals (police officer, lawyer, etc.) are extremely important for the success of a Circle.
- ◆ Provide opportunities for experienced Circle Members to share their own stories and experiences with potential volunteers.

Please see Appendix E for the Volunteer Application.

Recommended Policies Affecting Volunteers

1. Expenses

The sponsoring agency is encouraged to have a fund to compensate those volunteers who, whether due to the extent of their volunteer activity or because of their financial situation, require reimbursement of expenses to facilitate their participation.

2. Insurance

a. Automobile

Persons using their automobiles to provide transportation are required to provide a letter indicating that their insurance covers such activity.

b. Liability

Volunteers and the person at the core of the project of the Circle may be asked to sign a full waiver releasing the Project, from all liability, either statutory or at law or equity, arising from their participation in the project.

Churches who are providing volunteers for a Circle are encouraged to review their liability coverage in this context.

3. Criminal Records Check

The purpose of a criminal records check is to provide assurance that there is full awareness of any past criminal activity. It is not intended to restrict persons who may have a past record. In fact, quite to the contrary, there may be persons with past criminal records who can provide a significant perspective to the Circle.

4. Safety Issues

An underlying purpose for the pilot project is to prevent the occurrence of further offenses and the creation of additional victims. The safety and sense of security for all persons involved is consistent with this goal. While it is difficult to set absolute rules which apply in all situations, it is expected that each Circle address the issue of safety, specifically as it relates to the ex-offender who is the Core Member, to ensure that any discomfort with arrangements can be addressed well before there is a more concrete concern.

5. Training Volunteers

The material in this outline will be organized into 1 ½ - 2 hour blocks presented either on a weekend or series of evenings.

Goals of Volunteer Training

Training prepares prospective volunteers for the practical issues/functions of the Circle. It also covers the broad issues related to the justice system and sexual offenses.

- ◆ Prepare volunteers to work as a team

Working as a cooperative team is an essential dynamic for the Circle. It is important that Circle Members participate not only to absorb the necessary background material, but to begin to know and work together with other Circle Members as well.

- ◆ Prepare the Circle to work effectively with the Core Member

Training provides valuable information about the Criminal Justice System that helps the volunteer to better understand the Core Member's situation.

- ◆ Sexual abuse prevention in the community

This project needs to convey to volunteers that the intent is more than avoiding further offenses by this person. While in the process of preventing sexual offenders from re-offending, the broader goal is a better educated citizenry to work at the prevention of sexual abuse in our communities.

Overview of Training

Volunteer training consists of the following areas which together give a context for understanding the Core Member, and skills for working together as a team to meet his particular needs:

Restorative Justice

Overview of Criminal Justice System

Understanding Sexuality and Sexual Deviation

Sexual Abuse from Victim, Offender, & Community Perspective

Core Member's Needs and the Circle's Responses/One-on-One Interaction

Group Dynamics & Functions of the Circle

Circle Members' Self-Care

Theme 1: Restorative Justice

Restorative Justice includes the characteristics of respect, integration, democracy, advocacy, and honesty. For more details see Appendix F.

Theme 2: Overview of Criminal Justice System

1. The Police and the Court System

By hearing from police and court officials, volunteers will gain an understanding of the procedures followed. The role of victims in the adjudicative court procedure is also discussed.

2. Sentencing - Aims of Sentencing

From “penitence” to penitentiary--a look at how the aims of sentencing have changed or remained the same over the centuries. In many ways, sentencing is an expression of core community values surrounding responses to harm-doers, utilizing the principles of **punishment, deterrence, & rehabilitation.**

3. Understanding Prison Culture

The three worlds within a prison, “Administration,” “Guards,” and “Inmates” are explored to provide an understanding of why prisons function in the manner they do within the existing system. The impact of this highly controlled environment on the inmate is explored with application made to how this may affect an inmate released from the prison community into a Circle of Support.

4. Release Options

Several release options are available (see Appendix G for more details). The persons who are part of a Circle of Support have been released under the fifth, Warrant Expiry. The other options are given for context since many of the men presently being released under Warrant Expiry have, during previous periods of incarceration, been released under one of the other options; it may have been their lack of positive response to these options that has led to them being held for Warrant Expiry.

5. Police Options in Response to a “High Risk Release”

- ◆ Public Notification
- ◆ 810.1, 810.2
- ◆ Surveillance

Theme 3: Understanding Sexuality and Sexual Deviation

When dealing with issues of sexual offenses there is a tendency to focus on the various forms of sexual deviation that occur. It is important that the initial focus be broader in order to elaborate on the context within which sexual offending takes place and to reinforce the long term goal of prevention through a change in the societal attitude toward human sexuality.

1. Human Sexuality

It is important for participants to be aware of their own sexuality and to be open to understanding how their experiences may impact on their ability to address issues of sexuality. Few persons in the community would not identify some sense in which they have been affected by a less than wholesome view of sexuality.

How does the restricted and/or permissive range of sexual experiences by sexual offenders impact their ability to address issues of sexuality?

It is important for the volunteer participants to understand issues around sexual orientation and to be able to express and assess their own attitudes and theological belief, to ensure that the issue of sexual orientation does not become a barrier to the positive growth and response of a Circle Member.

2. Sexual Deviance

In this section the group will gain some understanding of the causes of sexual abuse, and review current treatment options for offenders.

Description of varying forms of sexual deviancy

CSC Sex Offender Training Participants Manual Unit 1 (CSC - PM1) p. 15-23
Ontario Ministry Corrections (OMC) p. 25-31

Approaches to treatment

CSC Risk Assessment Course, chapter 5, p. 21-10

The role of the Circle in relation to treatment resources

The Circle is supportive of treatment and can have a significantly therapeutic effect even though its interventions are not defined as treatment. The relationship of the Circle to those providing treatment becomes an important aspect of the Circle's functioning.

3. Sexual Attitudes and Awareness

Understanding my sexual attitudes

CSC PM-1 p. 6-9
OMC p. 20-22

The goal here is to help volunteers understand their own attitudes, beliefs, and responses so that they may begin to predict their response to such activities with which they may be confronted in their role as Circle Member. This includes sensitizing the volunteers to the influence and effect of societal sexual values so that they begin to understand how we absorb the values of our surrounding society.

Characteristics necessary for working effectively with sexual offenders

Volunteers must be straightforward in their communication, decisive and caring, and comfortable with consultation. It is important that Circle Members be “team players.”

Theme 4: Sexual Abuse from Victim, Offender, & Community Perspective

1. Victim Perspectives

Understanding the issues in sexual abuse requires an understanding of the hurt of the victim, his/her feelings of isolation, fear and abandonment, and the questioning that results from the abuse. Input from a treatment professional (e.g. from a rape crisis centre) or a psychologist who works with survivors, is useful.

OMC p. 181-202

2. Offender Perspectives

Offenders may be at various places in understanding their offensive behaviour. In light of this it is important to understand patterns of minimization and denial which may have contributed to past re-offending.

CSC PM-1 p. 56

3. Community Perspectives

Using a number of relevant case studies, volunteers will explore community needs and community concerns, and how they can best be addressed using this model.

◆ Changing attitudes

Recent newspaper and magazine articles on the subject are clipped and reviewed.

◆ Interaction of community and CJS professionals

Local community leaders and criminal justice system professionals are invited to speak about issues relating to reintegration of sex offenders.

◆ Dealing with the media

OMC pg. 177

See chapter 2, ‘Key Components of a Covenant’

◆ Balancing the core member’s individual rights with community/victim rights

Our goal is to make the community safe for everyone. In order to do that, we seek to avoid adversarial approaches.

See Appendix G for an explanation of the Peace Bond provision (section 810.1 and 810.2)

Theme 5: Core Member’s Needs and the Circle’s Responses/One-on-One Interaction

1. Assessment of the Individual's Needs

Practical needs

Persons being released from prisons may experience various consequences of institutionalization. Often, the longer their incarceration, the greater their dependence and difficulty with even simple tasks, such as shopping, doing the laundry, and apartment-hunting.

Professional needs

Needs in terms of counselling, medical attention, and employment/employability are assessed through the use of the Needs and Resources Profile (see Appendix B).

Social and emotional needs and connection to family

Individuals with high needs and without significant family and friend support look to the Circle of Support to meet these needs initially. In some ways, the Circle of Support becomes the family and friends of the Core Member. The goal of the Circle is to gradually broaden the support available to the Core Member.

Spirituality needs - addressing felt needs vs. proselytizing Privacy needs

Volunteer training reviews recent media coverage of pedophiles to gain some sense of the media's treatment of such sensational stories. Appreciation for the need to be very careful with any relationship with the press or the public in general outside of the Circle is vitally important for Core Members.

2. Assessment of Risk for Re-Offending

CSC PM-1 p. 75-80

It is important to understand the process institutions use to assess risk for re-offense so that the concerns identified previously can be addressed in the context of the community. This will include understanding Relapse Prevention and the offense cycle of the Core Member. This section will be delivered together with the prison liaison worker or psychologist and will include a review of the Core Member's Relapse Prevention Plan.

Theme 6: Group Dynamics & Functions of the Circle

The members of the Circle will be functioning as a group and will be subject to the normal stresses and strains of groups. Policies and procedures outlined in the previous chapters detail some of the necessary underpinnings for successful group dynamics such as confidentiality, trust and mutual aid.

Various functions and roles for members to assume are also detailed to some extent. In addition, the group needs to look at group formation theory and the dynamics of groups in order to constructively deal with tensions as they arise. A manual such as *The Anatomy of High Performing Teams* by Marilyn Laiken, trainers from a local conflict resolution or mediation program, and

teachers in Community Colleges' Community Worker/Social Work Programs are valuable resources.

Theme 7: Circle Members' Self Care

- ◆ Boundaries
- ◆ Mutual Support
- ◆ Time Out
- ◆ Volunteer Events

OMC p. 208-212

6. Evaluation

The two major components of an evaluation need to include the process - what did or did not work well in terms of group dynamics and service delivery; and the outcome - how effective were we in meeting the targets of safety for the community and normalization of functioning for the Core Member. Other benefits such as cost savings to the government, public education about the criminal justice system, and better awareness of personal safety issues in the community will also be noted. To facilitate evaluation the Circles should undertake their own self-monitoring and evaluation; the program staff needs to monitor certain aspects of the program; and some data will be needed from institutional and CSC staff.

Self monitoring and evaluation by the Circle

The recording secretary for the Circle may use the following questions as a guide to the ongoing description of events. In addition, the Circle will periodically (at least annually) reflect on the questions below:

- ◆ What have been the most difficult hurdles to reintegration?
- ◆ What have been the indicators of a lack of readiness for the Core Member's return to the community?
- ◆ What effects of institutionalization affected the Core Member's integration into the community?
- ◆ What signs have there been of an inability to trust other Circle Members?
- ◆ What were the occasions of risk and how did the Circle intervene to minimize the threat?
- ◆ How were victims' concerns addressed in the Circle?
- ◆ What impact did the input of victims have on the integration of the Core Member?
- ◆ What advantage has there been to community ownership of reintegration?
- ◆ What effect has there been on members of the Circle in terms of their increased understanding of criminal justice?
- ◆ What changes have there been in Circle Members' perception of offenders?
- ◆ What were the effects on the general public in terms of perception of the criminal justice system?
- ◆ How were restorative justice principles applied in the process of integration?

Please see Appendix H for a qualitative evaluation with Circle Members and Core Members developed by Carla Cesaroni.

Program staff monitoring and evaluation

The program staff will review annually the documentation collected by the various Circles of Support and prepare a composite profile of the responses of each of the Circles to the questions. From this, general patterns will be noted, with the following questions as guidelines:

- ◆ Is there any advantage to community ownership of reintegration?
- ◆ How were restorative justice principles applied in the process of integration?
- ◆ What has been the success of the integration of the Core Members, measured by community acceptance, victim involvement, decrease of negative media attention, and a relatively “normal” lifestyle of the Core Member in the community, recidivism, and the need for police involvement?

In addition, the following questions should be addressed, especially by the Program staff relating to the institutions:

- ◆ What criteria have been used in the selection of candidates for the project?
- ◆ What general patterns emerge in the selection of candidates?

Institutional and CSC staff evaluation

Based on the data provided by the Program staff and the data from CSC, comparative analysis can be done on the following questions:

- ◆ How does the project reduce risk to the community? What has been the rate of recidivism of similar offenders in comparison with offenders accommodated by Circles of Support?
- ◆ What are the advantages to community ownership of reintegration? Is there a measurable decrease in level of resistance to sex offenders and other offenders coming to communities where there have been Circles of Support?
- ◆ Are there any economic benefits to CSC where Circles of Support have assisted with integration?

7. Appendices

Appendix A

A Sample Covenant

(When preparing a Covenant, the Circle may wish to seek the advice of sympathetic legal counsel with attention to liability concerns.)

This is a sample covenant between a Core Member who is committed to making a successful return to the community and is dedicated to the promise that he will make no more victims, and the people in the community who have formed a Circle of Support around him to assist his successful return to the community.

GENERAL COMMITMENTS

Confidentiality

As a Core Member or Circle Member of the Circle of Support, I agree to respect the confidentiality of the Circle. I will hold any information which is shared inside the Circle as private and privileged information which will stay within the group unless the whole Circle agrees that it should be released.

Communication

I understand that it is essential to maintain a high level of trust within the Circle. We cannot help each other unless communication is open and honest. I agree to make the building of confidence a priority, committing myself to maintaining open communication with every other member of the Circle.

Safety of the Community

I recognize that the reason for hostility in the community is that it is fearful of offenders who have committed sexual offenses. As part of the Circle, I commit myself to the safety of the community as a first priority. If, at any time, there is concern about that safety, it must be urgently discussed within the Circle. I accept this as my responsibility.

I agree that the Circle will look at the pattern of previous offenses and seek to prevent a re-occurrence of the circumstances which led to them. Any occasion of re-offense or showing high risk of re-offense will occasion an emergency meeting of the Circle.

Conformity to Legal Requirements

I will comply with any and all legal conditions imposed by Court Order, Peace Bond or administrative regulation until they are appealed or changed. When those conditions include the use of medication or cooperation with treatment services, I, as the Core Member, will comply and I, as a Circle Member, agree to support the Core Member in compliance and in dealing with any concerns that he may have.

Responsibilities of the Circle

As a Circle Member, I recognize that I have a particular role to play in support of the Core Member. That role will be (. . . .) and I will fulfil the requirements of my tasks to the best of my ability.

As the Core Member, I agree to respect this agreement with each of the other Circle Members and will not change it without discussion with the whole Circle. I will obey any conditions that are agreed within the Circle and maintain regular contact at the stipulated intervals.

Among other responsibilities, the Circle may assist the Core Member in obtaining a place to live, in equipping his residence, in coping with finances and money management, in managing leisure time, in seeking employment, in negotiating with the police, in relationships with the media, in contacts with medical services, in accessing social benefits, and in a whole range of life skills. The purpose of this covenant is to make the Core Member's return to community life as safe and successful as possible. Another purpose of this covenant is to prevent the danger of innocent people being hurt by any re-occurrence of previous behaviour. For this reason, the covenant will be maintained until there is unanimous agreement that it is no longer required. It will be reviewed annually and amended as required.

Finally, one of the benefits of the Circles of Support is that we may be able to show that there is an effective way to help people who have committed serious offenses successfully to return to the community. We need to keep careful records of the procedures that we use. For the purposes of research, I agree to provide any data that may be required provided that it never offends the principle of confidentiality. I agree to observe the terms of this contract and to commit myself to each member of the Circle to assist the successful completion of our purpose.

Dated this day of, 200...

Core Member

Member Date.....

Co-ordinator..... Date.....

Needs and Resources Profiles - Example # 1

NEED	YES	NO	SUPPORT PROVIDED/BY WHOM?
Victim safety			
A place to live			
Documentation (SIN, OHIP, Birth Cert., Driver's License)			
Income/Employment/Welfare			
Money management			
Cooking			
Shopping			
Clothing			
Laundry			
Medication/Health management			
Limit setting			
Alcohol control			
Time management			
Literacy/Education			
Recreation and hobbies			
Family relationships			
Peer relationships/Friendships			
Police relations			
Relation to neighbours			
Sexual behaviour			
Legal matters			
Church relationships			
Mood management			
Crisis response			
Media relations			
Opportunities for celebration			
Other			

Needs are Resources Profile - Example # 2

Name:

Date of Birth:

Case Management Officer:

Warrant Expiry Date:

Destination:

1. Identification

Do you have a valid driver's license?
Birth certificate?
Other forms of identification?

2. Living Arrangements

Upon release, do you have a place to live?
Are you able to live on your own?
Can you cook?
Are you comfortable shopping?
Do you know how to do laundry?
Do you have adequate clothing?

3. Transportation

Do you have your own transportation after release?
Are you familiar with & able to use public transportation in the city to which you are going?

4. Employment

Do you have a job to which you are going?
What work have you done in the past?
What would you enjoy doing?
Can you manage your own money?
Will you need social assistance?

5. Education

What education do you have?
Do you intend to upgrade?

6. Medical concerns

Do you have an OHIP number?
Do you have any specific medical conditions?
Are you on any medication?
Do you have a doctor?

7. Do you have any outstanding legal issues?

8. Free time

Can you manage your free time?
Do you have any hobbies or recreational interests?

9. Relationships

What are your relationships like with?

Family
Friends
Neighbours
Church
Police
Media

If you will be living with or in touch with family or friends, it is sometimes helpful for us to contact them. They may even be interested in being a part of your Circle. Which telephone numbers may we have?

10. Counselling concerns

Do you intend to seek counselling? Do you need a referral?
Are depression, anger, grief or suicide attempts a concern?

11. Victim concerns

Will you be seeing your victim(s)?
Will there be restrictions on your movement?
What were your offenses?
Against whom? (adults/children, male/female,
strangers/family/friends)

12. Relapse prevention plan

What have you learned about relapse prevention for yourself?
What are the risk areas for you?
Alcohol/drug use
Limit setting
Sexual behaviour
Pornography
Other

13. Resources

What skills/gifts/interests do you bring to your release which you can share with friends in a Circle?
What are you able to contribute to the community upon your release?

Appendix C

Guidelines for Notekeeping

The information each set of minutes should contain is the following:

1. The date of the circle meeting.
2. The times the meeting started and ended.
3. The names of those in attendance (for volunteers use only the first name; for Core Members use “CM”).
4. Briefly mention the topics/issues that were discussed.
5. Provide more detail for crises.
6. The date, time, and location of the next meeting.

Preferably, minutes should be sent to _____ within a few days of a circle meeting.
(e.g., Program staff)

If unable to attend a circle meeting, minute-takers are asked to designate someone else from the circle to take minutes.

WHAT ARE CIRCLES OF SUPPORT?

Community volunteers form support groups around ex-offenders who are coming back to the community from federal institutions at warrant expiry. The volunteers share the community's concern about safety and believe that the way to achieve it is through helping ex-offenders find a place in the community and by having some people who will support them and hold them accountable for their actions.

WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE CIRCLE AND AN EX-OFFENDER?

To help make the move back into the community as smooth as possible, the Circle of Support provides intensive, caring, practical support for the ex-offender. The Circle can help in mediating between police, media, the larger community and the ex-offender. The relationship between the ex-offender and the circle includes a commitment to act responsibly in the community and to follow relapse prevention strategies upon which all members of the Circle agree.

WHO RUNS THIS PROGRAM?

The program is run by Mennonite Central Committee Ontario with support from Community Chaplaincy, part of Correctional Services Canada.

WHEN AND HOW CAN I APPLY?

You can apply if you have been detained upon your Mandatory Supervision date, and have at least six months left until warrant expiry. Request an interview with a program staff member through your psychologist, psychiatrist, chaplain, or case management officer. They will forward your request to a program staff member who will come to meet and interview you. You can also contact the Toronto office directly for an interview.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR A CIRCLE OF SUPPORT?

YOU ARE ELIGIBLE FOR THIS PROJECT IF YOU:

☞ are a sex offender serving time in a Federal institution

☞ will likely be detained to your warrant expiry date. Inmates eligible for this program have been denied parole and mandatory supervision due to potential community backlash. We would like to see you at least 6 months prior to warrant expiry, but can also see you closer to your warrant expiry date if necessary.

☞ are potentially high profile upon release

☞ may need extra help coping with life in the community and have little or no community support. This will be determined by the needs profile.

☞ are willing to have the victims' perspective as part of your reintegration into the community

☞ understand and accept the limits of accountability to a support circle

☞ are committed to learning to live a more wholesome way of life and enter such a circle voluntarily.

WHAT WILL BE EXPECTED OF ME?

_After a program staff has seen you and explained the program in detail, you will be asked to complete a Needs and Resources Profile. This helps us to determine if you are suitable for the program and to recruit volunteers who are able to address the needs that you have.

_ If you are chosen for the program, you will meet with program staff who will keep you informed of the process. Finding appropriate volunteers to be part of your circle may take some time. Please be patient. We will try to keep you informed as to what is happening.

_We will make an attempt to introduce you to your circle of support before you are released. The purpose of the initial meeting with volunteers is to:

☛introduce participants to each other

☛begin to negotiate a covenant or agreement of shared understandings and commitments of participants to each other. All members of the circle will be accountable to one another.

☛begin to think about how breaches of the covenant will be handled. Part of the understanding is that serious breaches of the conditions of the covenant may include notification of authorities or withdrawal of support.

Appendix E

Restorative Justice: Principal Characteristics

Respect

This principle states that participants should be treated in a humane, egalitarian way that values their worth as human beings and respects their right to justice and dignity. When responding to persons who do not take responsibility for their actions we often begin to experience the limitations of our respect for those persons. It is easy to become impatient and disrespectful of their lack of openness. Such disregard is, in fact, short-sighted; it does not encourage the accused to move toward the end goal of having the offense acknowledged. When those who are accused are treated with respect they are more likely to acknowledge the offenses, and when such an acknowledgement occurs, there will be a more satisfactory resolution for all persons affected by the situation.

Victim Respect

This principle of respect must be interpreted within the broad perspective of restorative justice, which is as concerned to show respect to those who are harmed as to those who harm; which may, in fact, place restrictions on the expression of respect to those who offend.

Integration

It is a goal of this project to integrate the person who offended into the community as positively as possible. A limitation to this principle is that it is important to avoid accepting integration of some individuals or groups at the expense of others. For example, it would be difficult to have someone who has offended another member of a church congregation re-integrated into the fellowship if this meant that the victim of the crime would be adversely affected and perhaps be unable to continue attendance. It is essential that community integration be done in consultation with all affected groups.

In some cases, a lack of community support systems and/or a previous unsuccessful attempt at integration could mean that more restrictive responses are required. We need to develop a better understanding of the conditions which make integration work for the community, the individual who offended, and the survivor of the abuse.

Democracy

This principle rejects labelling, stigmatization, and authoritarian controls. Democracy refers to a process that encourages participation and empowers people to develop their own goals and internal controls. As with the first principle, it is easy to become impatient and seek to hurry the process along, often taking away ownership from those most directly affected. Impatience can be the greatest deterrent to the development of responsibility on the part of persons who abuse sexually. We must find ways to hold those who have offended responsible for their actions without taking over their journey toward accountability and healing. We must allow the voices of survivors and those who have offended to guide us in responding to their needs and issues.

Advocacy

Non-violent problem solving assists participants to advocate for their rights and to address rights violations by groups with authority and control. Because of our revulsion at sexual abuse, particularly in difficult cases, we may find it a struggle to ensure that the rights of those who offend are protected. Particularly when someone is denying his involvement in acts, we may be tempted to react with harshness and a denial of rights. To do so may be expedient in the short term, but it will not achieve the long-term goal of ensuring respect for a fair process. Such a lack of advocacy then compounds the confusion and damage that surrounds sexual abuse, and delays our communal healing. In difficult cases, maintaining advocacy for the rights of the accused is one way to ensure that we uphold our own standards of fairness.

Honesty

This principle states that participants are treated in an honest open manner. They are made aware of procedures and processes that can lead to the reparation of broken communities.

In accordance with this principle, it is important to tell participants what procedures are likely to occur and advise them of their options. In the same vein, it is important to be honest when you have doubts about the accuracy of someone's report that an event did not happen but to do so in an engaging way that allows for further discussion of the implications of that statement.

Release Options

Temporary Absence (TA)

Temporary Absence from an institution may be granted so that a prisoner can undertake personal development, (e.g. attend self-help group), visit family, do community service, or get medical care. The TA may be escorted (staff or citizen escort), “unescorted,” or “work release.” TAs are granted by Wardens and the National Parole Board (NPB).

Day Parole

Day parole allows a person freedom to participate in community activities during the day but requires that he or she return to an institution or halfway house each night, unless otherwise authorized by NPB. Day parole is granted at the discretion of NPB. Inmates are usually eligible for day parole 6 months prior to their full parole eligibility date. Lifers are eligible 3 years prior to full parole eligibility.

Full Parole

Full parole allows a person to serve the remainder of the sentence living independently but under supervision in the community. Some non-violent first-time offenders are granted full parole automatically at 1/3 of their sentence. Otherwise, it is granted at the discretion of the NPB and inmates are usually eligible after 1/3 of their sentence. Serious drug and violent offenders may not be eligible for full parole until a greater portion of their sentence has been served. Life sentences have a full parole eligibility date attached to them by the sentencing judge, e.g. “Life 10 (years)”, or “Life 25.”

Statutory Release

Statutory release (with supervision) is granted by law to most federal inmates after they have served 2/3 of their sentence. If a person has committed a violent or serious drug offence and has been deemed a high risk to repeat, he or she may be detained until the end of his or her sentence (warrant expiry).

Warrant Expiry

Warrant Expiry is the term used for the end of a sentence. This is the last day that Correctional Service Canada has jurisdiction over an offender. At the present time there is no authority for Correctional Service Canada to provide any support or assistance, financial or otherwise, after this point. Warrant Expiry has been used increasingly in recent years in response to concerns with offenders (particularly sex offenders) re-offending while under parole supervision. When an inmate is detained until Warrant Expiry, it does end the risk of a re-offense while under CSC supervision, but it presents a serious problem of re-adjustment for the released inmate.

It was because of these identified concerns that the Circle of Support was developed as a concept.

Peace Bond, Section 810.1 and 810.2 Criminal Code of Canada.

Section 810.1 of the Criminal Code allows anyone to lay an information before a provincial court judge in order to have a person enter into a recognizance, a “peace bond” with the court, to agree not to be involved with any activities involving contact with children under the age of 14 years. In addition, the recognizance will prohibit the person from going to certain places where children are known to be found, such as public parks, public swimming pools, daycare centres, school yards, etc.

The judge can also stipulate additional conditions, such as attending counselling/therapy. Although anyone can lay the information, it will most likely be the police who seek an 810.1 order. The person laying the information must “fear” that “on reasonable grounds” another person will commit a specific offense, i.e., and an offense of a sexual nature. The application for a s. 810.1 order will be considered in open court, and evidence will be called in order to satisfy the judge that an order should be made. The order may be for any period of time fixed by the judge, but can not exceed 12 months. In addition, either the informant or the person who is the subject of the order may seek to have the conditions varied.

Section 810.2 provides a similar set of restrictions on persons who have offended sexually against adults. The application for this can only be made by the Attorney General’s office.

Appendix H

Qualitative Evaluation

CORE MEMBERS SURVEY

1. Why did you decide to enter a Circle?
2. How did the fact that the Circles program was run by a Church organization influence your decision ?
3. What happened when you first got out? What was the most difficult part?
4. How did the Circle help you cope or adjust?
5. What do you feel might have happened if the Circles program didn't exist?
6. Prior to joining your Circle what concerns did you have about confidentiality?
7. Do you still have concerns and if so why?
8. Tell me about your Circle meetings. What if anything should be changed?
9. How do you feel about being in a Circle? Was it ever uncomfortable? Was this a necessary discomfort?
10. What do you think about the composition of your Circle? (background, age, sex)
11. When you need to call someone how do you decide which Circle members to call?
12. How has the Circle changed/evolved since you first joined it?
13. Have your Circle members been able to recognize signs of things that could lead to a lapse?
14. In the event of a possible lapse, breach of conditions or breach of covenant did you feel that the Circle was supportive? Are there any ways they could have been more supportive?
15. How long have you been out?
16. Did you have previous convictions? (sexual and non-sexual)
17. If yes, what have your periods of freedom been previously?
18. Please specify your age:
20/25 _____ 25/30 _____ 30/35 _____ 35/40 _____ 40/45 _____ 45/50 _____ 50+ _____
19. What activities have you been able to involve yourself with that have assisted in your adjustment? (job, volunteer, recreation)
20. What role has the Circle played in your involvement in these activities?

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR TIME.

CIRCLE MEMBERS SURVEY

1. How did you become involved with the Project?
2. Before your involvement with the Project what was your impression of sex offenders?
3. Has your involvement with the Core member and Circles of Support & Accountability changed your views on sex offenders? If so how?
4. Has your involvement changed your friend's or family's views?
5. Has your involvement in your Circle changed your perceptions of Corrections Canada?
6. What happened when your Core member first got out? What do you feel was the most difficult part for him?
7. How did the Circle help the Core member during this period?
8. Has your Circle been able to recognize signs of things that could lead to a lapse for the Core member?
9. In the event of a possible lapse, breach of conditions or breach of covenant did you feel that the Circle was supportive to the Core member? Are there any ways they could have been more supportive?
10. What do you feel the Core member derives from the group?
11. Do you feel the Circle is being pressured to assist the Core member in ways that it cannot or should not? (Please give examples).
12. What do you feel you derive from your involvement in your Circle?
13. What do you feel the Community derives from the existence of Circles of Support and Accountability?
14. Have you been able to set and maintain personal boundaries with your Core member? Please describe.
15. What do you think about the composition of your Circle? (background, age, sex)
16. Have you felt conflict in personal values with either the Core member or other Circle members? How have you dealt with this?
17. On what basis could the program be more helpful in addressing the dilemmas outlined in the previous question i.e.: topic specific training, counselling etc.
18. How much training have you received from the Project? (Please specify what has been most helpful and least helpful).
19. Could more training have helped prepare you prior to your involvement in the Circle?
20. Now that you are in a Circle in what areas would you like training?

21. How can the Project deliver training in a more effective way?
22. Given your own schedule, what would be the ideal time for training?
23. What other volunteer support would you feel helpful?
24. Do you feel an all-day Saturday event (like the Welcome Inn Day) would be helpful? If so, how often?
25. Age _____
26. Sex _____
27. Education _____
28. Occupation _____
29. How long have you been a Circle Member ?

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR TIME.

8. Resources

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