Instruction Manual for Facilitating

Circles of Support for People with Mental Illnesses in

Supported Employment Settings

UMDNJ

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHIATRIC REHABILITATION AND COUNSELING PROFESSIONS

SCHOOL OF HEALTH RELATED PROFESSIONS

University of Medicine & Dentistry of New Jersey

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Supported Employment Settings

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Purpose of the Manual

This manual is meant to serve as a training tool for people learning to implement Circles of Support. The manual was developed as part of a research project designed to evaluate the use of Circles of Support in Supported Employment (SE) service settings. The research was conducted by the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey (UMDNJ) and funded by the National Institute on Disability Research and Rehabilitation (NIDRR) Rehabilitation and Research Training Center (RRTC) on Community Integration awarded to the University of Pennsylvania. This manual can be used by mental health service providers, family members and friends of people with mental illness. The manual details the first four sessions of a Circle of Support and provides strategies, sample goals, and common activities used during the planning and facilitation of Circle meetings. This manual is meant to be used in conjunction with additional training in Circles of Support. There is also a companion DVD that illustrates a typical Circle of Support meeting. Training points for using the DVD can be found in Appendix A.

Natural Supports and Employment

People with psychiatric disabilities generally experience some degree of social isolation, possibly caused by factors such as entrenchment in the mental health system, effects of their mental illness on families and friends, or simply the lack of social opportunities as a result of unemployment. People with and without disabilities use natural supports as a strategy to reduce stress, seek advice, and feel connected to others. By developing a naturally occurring support network for people with psychiatric disabilities, it is our hope that the need for paid supports will decrease and social integration will increase promoting longer job tenure.

A critical feature of SE efforts is an emphasis on natural supports. Conventional "on site" job coaching may actually impede the integration and acceptance of individuals with psychiatric disabilities in the workplace by bringing attention to the new employee receiving specialized services that were not provided to other co-workers (Mank, Cioffi, & Yovanoff, 1997). Researchers have noted that successful community employment for individuals with severe disabilities is contingent upon the implementation of

supports provided by people other than agency personnel (Callahan, 1992; Fabian & Lueking, 1991). The use of natural supports has also been advocated as a better strategy for providing long-term vocational supports to maintain a job and increase integration in the workplace than the reliance upon paid professionals such as job coaches and employment specialists (Storey, 2003). Follow-along or long-term employment supports are critical to the maintenance of jobs for people with psychiatric disabilities. In order to fade out the traditional support services offered from a job coach, a system for developing on-going natural supports is necessary. One promising approach to the development of natural support networks for people with psychiatric disabilities is the Circle of Support approach.

Overview of the Approach:
Circles of Support

Circles of Support emphasize an increased reliance on natural supports as a complement to or in place of typical paid supports for people with disabilities. This innovative approach was first introduced in the 1970s for people with developmental disabilities, and gained momentum over the following four decades (O'Brien & O'Brien, 2002). The hallmark component of the Circles of Support technique is the development of a vision of a desirable future (Coyle & Moloney, 1999). This desirable future goal statement leads the entire process and is consistently referred to during all planning and facilitation of the Circle. An additional critical feature of the Circles of Support approach is the composition of the person's support network or Circle. The members of a Circle of Support can consist of family members, friends, neighbors, co-workers, people at a house of worship, and sometimes service providers (Bradley, 2000). This group should be comprised of primarily non-paid supporters who have committed themselves to working together on behalf of the *focus person* (i.e., the person with a disability upon whom the Circle of Support will focus) to achieve his/her desirable future. Often, the desirable future reflects all life areas (living, learning, working and social), or sometimes the desirable future is specific to one domain of living. This manual focuses on the work environment, that is, employment goals.

Principles of Circles of Support

Circles of Support operate on principles of personal empowerment. These include: (1) involvement of invested and interested people, (2) focus on the individual's preferences, talents and dreams, and (3) emphasis on personal strengths, not deficits (Whitney-Thomas, Shaw, Honey, & Butterworth, 1998). The primary purpose of the development and maintenance of a Circle of Support is the mobilization of natural supports and the development of frameworks for organizing the participation of individuals connected to the focus person. Those involved in the Circle of Support contribute to the achievement of that individual's personal vision (Bradley, 2000). Circle of Support members assist the focus person in making social connections in order to access services and supports he or she would typically not secure otherwise. In addition, the members of a Circle of Support help the focus person make progress toward his or her stated vision by reviewing the challenges that may be encountered in the pursuit of the vision as well as brainstorming strategies to overcome those challenges and barriers (Bradley, 2000).

Composition of the Circle

As mentioned earlier, the Circle of Support can consist of family members, friends, people from the individual's house of worship, work colleagues, or neighbors. The important thing to note is that even people who have a relatively small number of supporters can benefit from a Circle. One of the primary purposes of developing a Circle of Support is to increase the number and quality of people in the individual's support network. In addition, it is also important to recognize that some members of the Circle will be long-term supporters while others are invited to join the Circle for a specific amount of time in order to help the focus person accomplish specific tasks related to his/her goal.

What are MAPs and Why Should I Use Them?

The objective of any MAP is to record information in a way that both you and the focus person can see the information presented. MAPs may be used in subsequent Circle of Support meetings so the information should be legible and large enough for a group of people to see. It is helpful to use a blank sheet of easel pad paper. In addition to written text, MAPs also

use colors and graphics. The graphics are meant to assist those who assimilate and convey information better through graphics but are not a requirement of a comprehensive MAP. (See examples of MAPs in Appendix D).

Types of MAPs

Each of the MAPs you use will serve a particular purpose. Here are the brief objectives for each of the MAPs.

Places MAP: Describes the typical pattern of the person's current life and focuses on all of the places in which a person functions in a typical month.

Relationship MAP: Illustrates the people in the person's life as well as people who may be available in the future to provide support.

Background MAP: Provides an overview of the life experiences of the focus person and his/her family.

Preferences MAP: Details personal preferences, strengths, interests and specific conditions to avoid.

Dreams MAP: Describes ideas about dreams and desires for the future.

Hopes and Fears MAP: Describes how people feel about opportunities and obstacles.

Using Text, Colors, and Group Graphics

Comments and information recorded on MAPs or other informational assessments are coded using colors, symbols, and words. The following key can be used for color coding information:

Green: Positive experiences, opportunities, places, and people.

Red: Negative experiences, opportunities, places, and people.

Blue: Basic information and strategies/ facts.

Suggestions for Getting Started

If someone you know or provide services to seems like a person who would benefit from having a Circle of Support, there are some things you can do to get the process started.

Step 1: Familiarize yourself with this manual and associated readings contained within it. The first step in ensuring the success of a Circle is understanding the philosophy of the approach. The actual techniques for developing and facilitating a Circle can be learned but the basic principles must resonate with you.

Notes

Step 2: Help the focus person decide that they are worth the time and effort of others. One of the most difficult tasks associated with developing a Circle is recognizing that although supporters need to sacrifice their time and commit to supporting the focus person, many people may be willing to do just that! The focus person will never know if people are willing to engage in the process on their behalf unless they ask.

Step 3: Commit yourself to the process. If you expect to have others support and develop action plans to help the focus person obtain the desirable future, you too have to make that commitment. Organization and dedication to aiding the focus person in developing goals and identifying action steps are responsibilities of the Circle facilitator. The commitment to develop a Circle of Support needs to be shared by the focus person as well. Therefore, identifying the critical roles of each person involved in the Circle is crucial to its success. Make the time to ensure the focus person understands the process and is invested.

Chapter 2: Pre Circle Meetings

This chapter explains the process for completing five critical activities prior to starting the Circle of Support. Those activities are (1) introducing the Circle of Support approach, (2) introducing the Relationship MAP, (3) generating the goals for the first Circle of Support meeting, (4) identifying the supporters to invite to the Circle, and (5) contacting the supporters. For each of these activities, the manual describes what the facilitator should do, and in some cases say, to complete the activity and facilitate the meeting. The descriptions of what the facilitator does during this meeting are meant to serve as a guideline and should be adapted to match your style. However, the core components should all be covered during this session. Keep in mind, the first session may need to be separated into two meetings if the focus person or Circle members would prefer shorter meetings.

*Each meeting should be approximately one to one and a half hours.

Session 1: Pre-Circle Meeting, the Getting-to-Know-You Session
Individuals Present:
- The focus person;
- The facilitator (can be the staff person, other staff involved in the focus person's rehabilitation, or any supportive person chosen by the focus person including a family member or friend).

Goals of the Meeting: The following activities should be done during Session 1:
- Complete the Relationship MAP;
- Generate goals to work on during the first Circle of Support meeting;
- Identify the names of people the focus person may be interested in inviting to his or her Circle of Support.

Helpful Hint: The facilitator should start the session by reviewing the goals of the meeting with the focus person. The goals of the meeting can be written on a handout or large piece of paper for the focus person to see and refer to during the meeting. This may help the focus person remain centered on the session's activities.

<u>**Meeting Agenda**</u>

1. **Introduction of the Facilitator**

- The facilitator introduces self to the focus person, if not known before, and identifies the role and responsibilities of the facilitator.

- The following definitions of facilitator and focus person can be provided:

  o Facilitator: this person helps the focus person organize the meetings, generate goals for each of the meetings, invite supporters, locate meeting space, identify action steps, and review progress made by the focus person and individual supporters. The ultimate goal is that once the Circle of Support is running effectively, the facilitator has less involvement and the focus person takes the lead in running the Circle.

  o Focus Person: this person is an individual who would like support in identifying or achieving a desirable future. Supporters are brought together to assist the focus person in making action steps and achieving goals. You are considered the focus person in this approach.

Helpful Hint: The individual you are working with may not feel comfortable with the term "focus person." This term may seem too formal. In this case, you should discuss with the individual how he or she would like to be referred to.

2. **Introduction of the Circle of Support Approach**

- Introduce the idea of developing a Circle of Support. Discuss the positive benefits associated with having a Circle of Support.

You may use the following description:

"Social support networks are comprised of family, friends, coworkers and other acquaintances. These are examples of individuals that you can turn to, whether in times of crisis or simply for fun and entertainment. Many people have found that social support is beneficial for them in times of stress, crisis, job uncertainty or job transition.

A Circle of Support is a group of people who have agreed to work together on your behalf to help you achieve your desirable future. The members of a Circle of Support can consist of family members, friends, neighbors, co-workers, people at a house of worship, people from your community and sometimes service providers. You choose the people who you wish to invite to be a part of your Circle. The Circle of Support meets on a regular basis as often as you think is necessary. The Circle will provide you with support in achieving your goals or help you to set a goal for yourself and determine the steps needed to get there. Each person in the Circle will identify things that he or she can do to help you overcome barriers and use your strengths to meet your goals.

In order to do this, we are going to identify the important people in your life, and then we will determine what goals you would like to achieve in the area of employment. Once we have identified your supporters and outlined your employment goal, we can better understand how your support network can assist you in achieving that goal."

You may also choose to review the Circles of Support brochure provided in Appendix B with the focus person at this point.

Helpful Hint: After describing the Circle of Support approach to the focus person, it is helpful to have them summarize what the approach is. You should also ask the focus person at this point what questions they have.

3. **Introduction of the Relationship MAP**
    - Introduce the type of information contained in a Relationship MAP and the benefits of completing a Relationship MAP.

    You can state,

    "*People often find it helpful to complete a Relationship MAP to see who the important people in their lives are. We will complete a Relationship MAP in this meeting and use it to help identify people you may want to invite to be part of your Circle of Support. We may also use this MAP in the future at a Circle of Support meeting."*

- Completing the Circle of Support Worksheet - this worksheet (Appendix C) should be used to begin brainstorming all of the people that are in the focus person's life. Using the worksheet, the following instructions should be provided:

  a. "Before we develop the Relationship MAP, it is helpful to first identify all of the people who you encounter in your everyday life. So let's start by using this worksheet to discuss who you know in each of the life areas on the worksheet. Keep in mind, we do not have to identify whether or not the relationship you have with each person is positive or supportive at this time. We just want to list every person you know, have contact with, or would like to have contact with. For each Circle represented on the worksheet, I would like for you to identify the names of people who fit in that Circle. For example, in the Circle entitled 'Family', list all of the people in your family that you have contact with or would like to have contact with."

- Completing the MAP - The objective of any MAP is to record information in a way that both you and the focus person can see the information presented. This MAP may be used in subsequent Circle of Support meetings so the information should be legible and large enough for a group of people to see. It is helpful to use a blank sheet of easel pad paper. This can be taped to the wall if no easel is available. The first step in completing the MAP is to review the Relationship MAP introduction together. Then, ask the focus person about the current people who are in his/her life in the various categories based on the worksheet that was just completed. You can use the following statements to review the Relationship MAP process:

  - Using markers, we will write the names of the people you identified on the worksheet on the easel paper. The names will be clustered by category like employment, family, friends, etc. In addition, we will pay particular attention to the use of color to identify positive and negative influences or factors associated with each person on your MAP. So when we get to each person's name, I will ask you if they are a positive or negative influence in your life and why. After each person is listed on the MAP, we will summarize the information and add a statement to the MAP depicting all of the critical points. Do you have any questions before we start?

Helpful Hint: As was stated in the introduction to the manual, text, color, and graphics are used to represent important information on the MAP. However, some individuals may not like or feel comfortable with the pictorial representation of information. They may view this form of information sharing as juvenile. If that is the case, don't use pictures! You can get very clear and concise information from text and color. The graphics are meant to assist those who assimilate and convey information better through graphics but are not a requirement of a comprehensive MAP.

4. **Generating supporters to invite to the Circle of Support and inviting them to the first meeting.**

   a) Help the focus person plan who to invite by addressing the following questions:

   "*Who would you like to invite to the support meeting?*"

   "*Who are the people you most trust to be supportive and helpful?*"

   "*Where would be a convenient place to hold these meetings?*"

   "*What are some good times for you to meet?*"

   "*What obstacles can you identify that may interfere with having a meeting like this?*"

   b) Problem solve with the focus person strategies to decrease potential obstacles to having the first Circle of Support meeting.

   c) Facilitate phone calls to the people identified by the focus person as supporters. Assist the focus person in preparing what they want to say. If the focus person has difficulty initiating the calls, role-play first. It is recommended that the focus person call the people identified. However, the facilitator can contact them if necessary.

Helpful Hint: Prior to reaching out to potential Circle group members it is important to have a discussion with the focus person regarding the possibility that some of their supporters may not be willing or able to participate in the Circle of Support. Discuss that this could be the result of various factors and that the focus person should not take this personally.

d) When contacting the potential Circle of Support members ask them to identify possible days and times when they are available. After speaking with everyone who will be involved, set a date and time for the Circle of Support meeting and notify all the Circle members. You and the focus person may want to write invitation cards to invite the Circle members. You can refer to the sample script for inviting supporters contained in Appendix B.

*Note: In addition to the MAPs, or in lieu of completing the MAPs, Session 1 could be a "Getting-To-Know-You" session in which you and the focus person can speak more casually to establish a comfortable relationship. Also, Session 1 can be split into two meetings. The second meeting (again, with the focus person and facilitator only) could include the Hopes and Dreams MAP, the History MAP, Places MAP, and/or the Relationship MAP. In other words, the activities must be individualized and can be introduced in any order that makes sense for the focus person and his or her goal. For example, a person may be very isolated and have difficulties identifying relationships to MAP out. Therefore, a Hopes and Dreams MAP may make more sense for this individual. Additionally, a person may be extremely willing and eager to talk about his/her experiences, and would need extra time and effort to get organized. This may result in only one MAP being completed during the initial meeting with the facilitator.

It is also recommended that the facilitator consistently use reflective responding during this meeting. It is critical to engage the focus person and allow him or her to share their personal story and vision for the future. Summarizing the focus person's main points and reflecting on the feelings evoked by sharing personal information are necessary skills critical to fostering a trusting and productive working relationship.

Chapter 3: Meeting with the Circle of Support

This chapter is meant to serve as the guideline for the first meeting of the Circle of Support. Included in this chapter are suggestions for introducing the members of the Circle to one another, reviewing the purpose and benefits of a Circle with each member, identifying the process for recording information during the meeting, completing a MAP, and discussing the focus person's goals and action steps with the members.

When scheduling this meeting, it is important to consider a location and time that is most convenient for the members and the focus person. In addition, you should also consider creative strategies for including all members like using a phone that allows conference calling or meeting somewhere in the community like the library.

Session 2: Meeting and Working with the Circle of Support

Individuals Present:
- Focus Person
- Facilitator
- Circle of Support Members

Goals of the Meeting: The following activities should be done during Session 2:
- Introduce the Circle Members;
- Review the purpose of the Circle of Support meetings and the role expectations for the focus person, the facilitator, and the Circle members;
- Identify the person who will take the minutes of the meeting;
- Complete the Hopes and Dreams MAP;
- Generate goals the focus person and the Circle of Support will work on;
- Set up the date and time for the next meeting.

<u>**Meeting Agenda**</u>

1. **Check-in**. Before the meeting, speak with the focus person and review what will happen during the first Circle of Support meeting. Ask the focus person what he or she would like to address at this meeting. Also, be sure the MAPs completed during any prior sessions are displayed at the meeting site and you review with the focus person the summary statements. It may also be helpful to have the goals of the meeting written somewhere visible to all members.

2. **Introduce Circle Members**. To the extent possible and desired, the focus person should take the lead in welcoming people and thanking them for coming.

   - In the meeting, ask everyone to introduce him/herself. Introduce the concept of Circles of Support and expectations. You or the focus person can refer back to the definition of Circles of Support provided in Chapter 1.

   - You and the focus person should also discuss the role of the focus person, the facilitator and the members. Again, you may consult these descriptions provided in Chapter 1.

   - During this introduction, you and the focus person should encourage questions and be prepared and encouraged to answer any questions members have about the goal of the Circle meeting, their role and the roles of others, each person's responsibilities, etc.

   - An additional task of the introduction is to help the Circle identify someone to take minutes at this meeting and a process for choosing a minute taker at subsequent meetings (e.g. alphabetical order).

   - Assist the focus person in reviewing the Relationship MAP and the History MAP or, if preferred by the focus person, review the MAPs yourself. Explain the purpose of using MAPs and mention some of the MAPs that may be developed by the group. Invite questions and comments. Answer questions.

3. **Review the overall goals of the Circle of Support:** These will be determined based on what the focus person has identified as his or her desirable future. The action steps that will be generated to achieve goals can be summarized at this point in the session and feedback from the group should be solicited.

4. **Introduce the Hopes and Dreams MAP**. Complete this MAP with the focus person and the Circle members.

Helpful Hint: The second meeting could include the Hopes and Dreams MAP and/or the History and/or Places MAPs as well as the Relationship MAP. In other words, the activities must be individualized and can be introduced in any order that makes sense for the focus person and their goal. Additionally, there are countless types of MAPs that could be created. You can create and utilize any MAP that is relevant to what the Circle is trying to accomplish.

5. **Generate goals for the group to work on and identify the date and time for the next meeting.** The facilitator, the focus person, and the Circle members should decide which action plans require follow-up at the next meeting. In addition, the Circle members should be encouraged to volunteer to identify which action plans they can assist with and what they will do prior to the next meeting. Ask the group when the next meeting should be scheduled and where it should take place.

6. **Check in with the focus person after the Circle meeting.** Have a discussion with the focus person about his or her reaction to the Circle meeting, points that he or she wants to make at the next meeting, and strategies for completion of tasks assigned during the meeting.

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Chapter 4: Continuing to Make Progress

<u>**Session 3:**</u> **Reviewing Goals and Action Plans**

By now, the Circle of Support has met at least one time and several MAPs should have been developed and reviewed. In addition, the group members may have been assigned action steps to aid in the assistance of the focus person's goal attainment. In addition to checking in with Circle members, Session 3 should be used as an opportunity to evaluate the progress that has been made and the future action plans that need to be developed. Therefore, the following activities should be completed during Session 3: review the focus person's goals, the tasks completed thus far, and the obstacles that have hindered goal attainment in the past as well as strategies for overcoming them.

Goals of the Meeting: The following activities should be done during Session 3:

- Discuss the goals identified by the focus person and the Circle of Support in the prior meeting;
- Review the tasks completed by all Circle members since the last meeting;
- Problem-solve any obstacles the focus person may have had in the past with employment;
- Set up the next meeting.

Individuals Present:

- Focus Person
- Facilitator
- Circle of Support Members

<u>**Meeting Agenda**</u>

1. **Check-in**. Before the meeting, find out how things have gone for the focus person since the last meeting. You may start this discussion by asking the focus person,   "*What has happened since our last meeting?*"

2. **Review the goals generated in the second meeting**. The members should discuss both the goals identified and the action steps taken since the last meeting.

Helpful Hint: You may want to write the goals somewhere that all members can see them and leave space to record the progress made toward each step.

3. **Problem-solve obstacles in relation to achieving those goals**. Assign responsibility to solve these obstacles.

4. **Utilize MAPs as needed to assist with problem solving and moving forward with the focus person's goal.**

5. **Decide upon a time and place for the next meeting.**

6. **Check in with the focus person after the Circle meeting.** Make sure to discuss the focus person's feelings about the second meeting.

Chapter 5: Session 4 and the Following Sessions

The same guidelines apply as the previous sessions. Depending on the focus person's goal as well as the composition of the Circle, objectives and action steps will be altered or identified as completed. New goals and objectives may be designed to reflect changes in the focus person's employment status and/or personal vision for the future.

Termination Session

Ending the Circle

Many Circles of Support continue indefinitely even though members join and leave at different points. Sometimes, however, the focus person decides that the Circle is no longer necessary. In this case it is important to bring the Circle to closure and acknowledge the good work that was done.

Goals:

- To thank everyone for participating in the Circle of Support process;
- To say goodbye to the group;
- To encourage continuation of support on a more individual level among the Circe members and the focus person.

Individuals Present:

- Focus Person
- Facilitator
- Circle of Support members

<u>**Meeting Agenda**</u>

1. **Check-in**. Find out how things have gone for the client since the last meeting: "*How have things been going?*" In addition, you may want to discuss how the focus person is feeling in terms of the Circle of Support meetings ending.

2. **Review the goals accomplished in the previous meetings.**
   Review the Hopes and Dreams MAP. Compare it to the focus person's current circumstances. Identify and celebrate the accomplishments made. Ask each Circle member (yourself included) to say a few words about the experience of being a part of the Circle. Invite the focus person to say a few words about the Circle.

3. **Identify strategies to encourage continued support for the focus person.**

4. **Say goodbye.**

NOTES

Chapter 6: From Our Experience

Developing and facilitating effective Circles of Support are not simple tasks. There are many potential pitfalls or at least obstacles to overcome. From our experience facilitating Circles, we offer the following thoughts on areas to be aware of.

Focus person – facilitator relationship

Getting to know someone well enough for him or her to be willing to share thoughts and dreams takes time. The focus person may be guarded with personal information, hopes, experiences, or even aspirations until a trusting relationship has been developed. This may be especially true if the focus person and facilitator are meeting for the first time. Don't shortchange the MAPs. Mapping is designed to encourage exploration, discussion, and relationship building.

Identifying/Developing Supporters

Circles of Support should be effective whether the focus person has many supporters or very few. For the individual with many supporters, the Circle serves the purpose of organizing and mobilizing the support available. For individuals with few supports, the Circle can be used to identify support needs and develop supporters in those areas. It's common to think first of family and friends in identifying potential supporters, however, keep in mind that the focus person may not have a good relationship with family members, may not want to disclose to friends, may feel overwhelmed by the number of support needs identified, and/or may be discouraged by the absence of supporters. Take the time to prioritize support needs. Work first on one or a few that either are urgent or can be easily resolved. Bring supporters into the Circle slowly and allow time for the focus person to develop comfort with that person.

Rebuilding Bridges

Sometimes the focus person is estranged from family members. If he or she wants to invite those family members into the Circle, the facilitator may need to help rebuild those connections. Listen carefully to the focus persons' description of the relationship and what the problems have been in the past. Help the focus person describe what is different now and why the relationship can be better. With the focus person, develop an invitation (spoken or written) that clearly and concisely explains these differences and invites the family member to participate. In some cases the facilitator will need to extend the invitation on behalf of the focus person. Listen to whatever the family member wants to say about the relationship problems from the past. Acknowledge the family member's feelings and assure him or her that the focus person wants them involved and that you will do what you can to make the involvement a positive experience.

When the Answer is No

Sometimes a person invited to participate in a Circle of Support says no and this is often hurtful to the focus person. In some cases a person says no because he or she harbors bad feelings from the past. However, there are many other reasons why someone may not be able to participate. People may be very busy, live long distances away, or feel overwhelmed by their own struggles. Whatever the reason, the facilitator should listen to the focus persons' feelings about having been turned down. Help him or her to understand what the reasons may be. Usually "I can't participate" means "I'm too busy" rather than "I don't care about you."

Goals and Future Plans

Circles of Support are designed to help individuals describe and achieve a desirable future (i.e., goals and future plans). However, often the day to day struggles with issues related to the psychiatric disability, inadequate resources, or others get in the way. It's just as important for Circle members to provide supports to the focus person in dealing with these day to day struggles as it is to engage in future planning.

Focus Person in the Spotlight

For most of us the thought of people coming together for the sole purpose of helping us to achieve our goals seems wonderful. However, many people are uncomfortable in the center of attention. Some people prefer not to disclose much information in a group even if the group is made up of friends and family. Sometimes the focus person feels obliged to articulate a goal even if unsure of the goal, to agree with Circle members, or to say what they think Circle members want to hear. It's important for the facilitator to advocate on behalf of the focus person in these circumstances, to slow the pace if needed, to offer a different perspective, or to model constructive disagreement.

Change/Loss of Supporters

There are times during the life of a Circle of Support when certain members of the Circle leave. Sometimes the individual was invited in for a specific support need and leaves when that need has been satisfied. Other times, however, the departure of a Circle member is a loss to the focus person. Such a departure may occur for many reasons including that the focus person's counselor/case manager changes jobs, a friend moves away, or a co-worker becomes too busy. Maintaining commitment to the work of the Circle is an important facilitator role. Make certain that meetings are productive and not a waste of time. Balance Circle members' need to contribute meaningfully with the need not to feel overwhelmed. Check in with Circle members to find out how they think the Circle is going. Don't schedule meetings more often then is needed to accomplish the task. This may mean meeting monthly at times and then less frequently at other times. When a Circle member leaves, acknowledge that this is a loss and allow the focus person and Circle members to express feelings about it. Then, if needed, begin to identify someone else to join the Circle.

NOTES

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Circle of Support Demonstration

Training Points

These training points are to be used by trainers who are teaching others how to facilitate a Circle of Support. Trainers should show the video and provide the following training points to facilitate discussion of the techniques observed. The training points consist of actual comments you should make (in italics) as well as questions you ask to encourage group discussion. If you find that the trainees do not completely answer the questions you ask, it is important to reiterate the points below the questions (Make the Points).

1. Introduction to the video:
"What you are about to see is the demonstration of an initial Circle of Support video. This meeting is facilitated by Melissa Roberts, the Director of the Integrated Employment Institute. The focus person in this video is a consumer of mental health services who agreed to be part of this training exercise. The discussion he has with each member of the Circle regarding his vision of an ideal future is genuine. The role of his wife is played by a faculty member of the Department of Psychiatric Rehabilitation at UMDNJ who has known Harry for several years. The part of Harry's brother is played by his actual brother. In addition, Francine Bates, a faculty member of the Department of Psychiatric Rehabilitation and Employment Specialist with the Integrated Employment Institute is serving as the focus person's job coach."

"Prior to this initial Circle meeting, the focus person and the Circle facilitator met to develop two MAPs. The Relationship MAP was completed to identify individuals in the focus person's life who would be invited to the first meeting and/or called upon for involvement in future meetings. In addition, a History MAP was completed to determine what past experiences, both in the area of employment and other living domains were important to the development of an ideal future plan."

   Make the Point: Both of these MAP techniques could be developed to identify important information in any of the life domains: living, learning, working and social. The focus person in this demonstration chose to look at the employment domain which will most likely be the area you will focus on with the consumers enrolled in the study.

2. Show Part I of the video

3. Break

4. Group Discussion of Part I:
After the break that is built in to the video, trainees should focus on the following points:

Identify the Purpose of the Circle: "*This Circle meeting was held in order to identify goals and develop action steps for reaching those goals. In addition, the members of the Circle discussed what each of their roles was in helping the focus person to obtain his/her ideal future.*"

Question: *"Based on the video, what do you think the purpose of using MAPs is?"*

Purpose of the MAPs:

Make the Point: Different types of MAPs serve different purposes. However, MAPs should be used to mobilize supports and identify action plans. In addition, completed MAPs should also be used in subsequent meetings to reflect back on important information, people, and experiences.

"The Relationship MAP that was completed prior to the first Circle helps identify the important people in the focus person's life. It is comprised of family and friends, co-workers and colleagues, paid supports, and acquaintances. In addition to listing these individuals, the video highlighted the importance of providing a summary statement. The summary statement helps to outline the important information gained through the MAP development but also prompts the focus person to add any other information he/she believes is relevant."

Make the Point: Notice that Harry added a brief commentary on individuals in his Circle that he at first did not detail. The summary statement Melissa provided prompted him to clarify further.

Question: *"Why might it be important to encourage further discussion or clarification?"*

"The History MAP details all important life experiences since high school. It identifies events in the academic, employment, social, and illness areas. The History MAP follows the course of the individual's illness including the onset, role of psychiatrist, and effects of medication on his recovery."

Question: *"What did you notice about the way the MAPs appeared, use of colors, etc.?"*

Make the Point: Notice that in the video, the facilitator has purposely used green to highlight positive experiences and red to highlight negative experiences. The facilitator also points out that although there are several negative experiences depicted on the MAP, those experiences ultimately led to information seeking and personal knowledge that have been instrumental in the person's recovery. In addition, the facilitator makes a summary statement that prompts the focus person to reflect on his experiences and add commentary on his optimistic view on his personal journey and positive comments on his understanding of his progress as well as his illness. This MAP helped the focus person and facilitator identify particular values that may transfer into work preferences. Francine also commented that she has learned a lot more about Harry just in reviewing the MAP.

"This Desirable Futures MAP was completed during the training video you have just viewed. This MAP describes, in the ideal sense, what is desirable to the individual in the areas of family and home, education, employment and leisure. This particular session focused on the employment area. The MAP developed helps to flesh out important details of the focus person's ideal employment future and will later be used to identify skills, talents and resources that are already in place as well as barriers to problem solve and seek support for."

5. Show Part II of Video

6. Discussion of Part II

Question: "*What role did the Employment Specialist play in the meeting?*"

Question: "*What concerns did the members voice that you expected them to during a first meeting of a Circle?*"

Role of the Employment Specialist (ES): "*Francine discussed with the focus person certain employment decisions and how they would actually look in the real world. The focus person and the ES reviewed work values that were identified as important. In addition, the focus person described the elements of his desirable future employment as: opportunities for advanced/further training and licensure; employment that involves working with individuals with mental illness; training to work with adolescents; flexible but stable work hours; contributing to other's lives.*"

Question: "*What important details did the Employment Specialist raise during the meeting?*"

   Make the Point: Francine points out several times how the focus person's desirable future reflects many of the values he outlined in the History MAP.

Question: "*What role did the wife play in the meeting?*"

Role of the Wife: "*The focus person's wife had the opportunity to discuss her concerns about the focus person's ability to maintain full time employment. She had questions regarding the types of support he would require of her in order to be successful in a full-time job. This type of questioning led to a good discussion of what the focus person thought was reasonable for him.*"

Question: "*What concerns did the wife raise during the meeting that are helpful in identifying work-related barriers?*"

Make the Point: Based on the discussion between the members of the Circle, the wife was able to express her concerns, determine what her role would be as a supporter, and tell the group how glad she was to have participated in this type of meeting.

 Make the Point: The discussion of the focus person's full time versus part-time work status also prompted the facilitator to remind the group that one purpose of this type of MAP activity is to reflect back on the discussion and revisit the issues raised as life circumstances change.

Make the Point: You may have noticed that when the focus person's wife wanted a definite plan for full time work the facilitator turned the discussion back to the focus person to decide what his goal is. This demonstrated the importance of keeping the focus on the individual.

Question: *"What role did the facilitator play in the meeting?"*

Role of the Facilitator: *"The facilitator in this demonstration paid particular attention to the flow of the meeting; meaning she continued to use reflective responding and paraphrasing techniques throughout the meeting to keep the members focused and on topic. She also made sure to provide summary statements in order to summarize what information had been gathered and encourage further discussion if needed. The summary statement she provided at the end of the MAP activity was reflective on the entire process but very specific to the focus person's desirable future: Employment that combines the focus person's education, skills and personal experience as a consumer to impart better services to others."*

Question: *"What issues did Melissa target that seemed of particular interest to you as a future Circle of Support meeting facilitator?"*

Make the Point: Notice that the facilitator encouraged the focus person to be "grandiose" since the purpose of the activity was to describe the ideal employment experience.

Wrap-Up
Plans for the Next Circle Meeting:
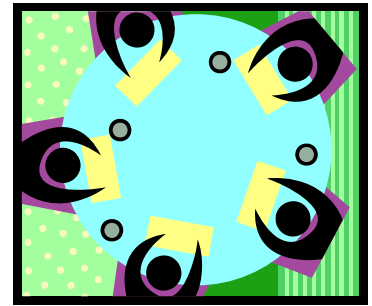Identify the positive attributes of the focus person that are linked to achieving the desirable future.
Identification of barriers.
Thank the members for their participation.
 Invite them back.

Circles of Support

COULD YOU USE SUPPORT TO HELP YOU FIND A JOB, KEEP YOUR JOB, OR GO BACK TO SCHOOL?

CIRCLES OF SUPPORT COULD BE THE ANSWER!

WHAT IF I DON'T HAVE SUPPORTS IN MY LIFE?

If you don't currently have people in your life who provide you with support, or if you are interested in having more people who can support you—Circles of Support can help you develop supportive relationships.

If you are interested in speaking with someone more about having a Circle of Support...

Contact your local Supported Employment Office

or

University of Medicine and Dentistry of NJ

908-889-2430

A CIRCLE OF SUPPORT CAN HELP YOU BY:

-Offering you support.

-Helping you network with professionals in your community.

-Problem solving ways to overcome challenges.

-Helping you clarify your future goals.

-Identifying additional supports in your life.

-Exploring career options.
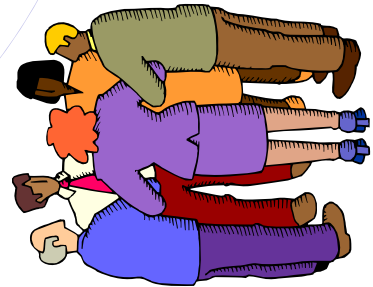
Circles of support

WHY DO I NEED SUPPORT?

All people need support to help them cope with things that happen in their lives. Often people need support especially when they are looking for work, when they have just gotten a job, and to maintain a job they have. Supported Employment is a service that helps people find and keep jobs. Sometimes in addition to the support you get from Supported Employment you may also want to involve other people to help support you.
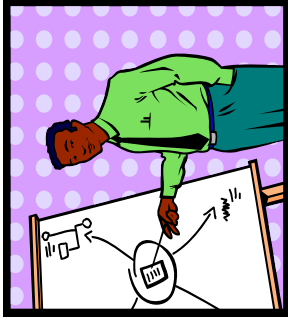
WHAT IS A CIRCLE OF SUPPORT?

A Circle of Support is a group of people who have agreed to work together on your behalf to help you achieve your dreams for the future. The members of a Circle of Support can consist of family members, friends, neighbors, co-workers, people at a house of worship, people from your community and sometimes service providers. The Circle of Support meets on a regular basis as often as you think is necessary.

WHAT DOES A CIRCLE OF SUPPORT DO?

A Circle of Support can help you develop your vision of a desirable future. The Circle will take action to support you in achieving the goals that you set for yourself. Each person in the Circle will identify things that he or she can do to help you overcome barriers and use your strengths to meet your goals.

HOW CAN I DEVELOP A CIRCLE?

If you are interested in starting a Circle of Support you can speak with your Supported Employment specialist and let him or her know that you would like to have a Circle of Support. The first thing you and your Supported Employment specialist will need to do is identify people in your life that are important to you and others that you may want to ask for support. Then you and your Supported Employment specialist will need to contact these people to see if they are interested in participating. The next step is to schedule the first Circle meeting. You and your Supported Employment coach will discuss prior to the first Circle meeting what should happen. You will be in charge of deciding who will attend the Circle meetings and what will be talked about there.

APPENDIX C

RELATIONSHIP MAP WORKSHEET

RELATIONSHIP MAP

FRIENDS & ASSOCIATES

FAMILY MEMBERS
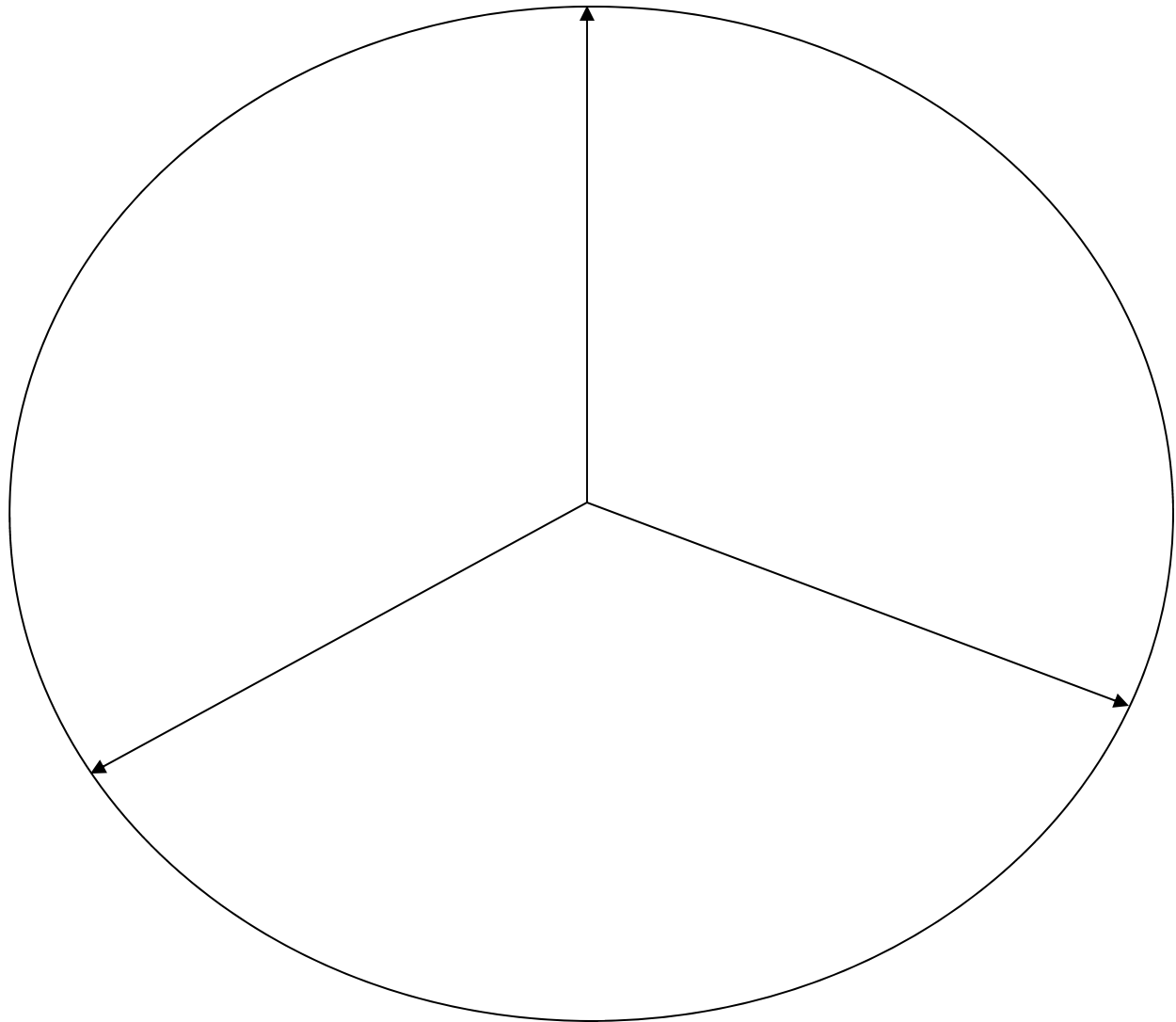
PAID STAFF

APPENDIX D

JILL'S STORY

Jill's Story

Jill is a 26 year old, single, white female who resides in a supported apartment with one roommate. Jill is a high school graduate and completed a two year business administration course. Jill has been hospitalized several times since the onset of her illness at age 19. Jill works part-time as a receptionist for a dentist. Jill has problems concentrating, prioritizing tasks, and asking the appropriate person for help or directions at her job. She also finds it difficult to get to work on time due to the side effects of the medication she uses. Jill complains to her job coach that she has not "connected" with people at her job even though she has been there for 8 months. Jill does talk to one of the other office workers and they sometimes take breaks together to get coffee. They do not spend time talking about issues outside of work but they do talk about job related issues.

Jill's only other job was at a concession stand at the local community pool. She had that job for 2 years but quit over a disagreement with her supervisor regarding her lateness. The boss told Jill several times that she was in danger of losing her position but Jill could not bring herself to tell him she was suffering from side effects of her meds that made it very difficult to get to work at 8 am. When the boss approached her the final time regarding her lateness, Jill blew up and said, "Don't you know I'm sick? If you took the meds I did, you would be late too!" She then walked off the job and never returned.

Jill does not have a license and depends on the bus to get around. Using the bus is difficult because she suffers from panic attacks and severe anxiety. The crowded bus and many stops make Jill very uncomfortable. Jill has an older brother who visits her often and takes her to his shore house one weekend a month. He also calls her regularly and tells her how his 3 year old daughter is doing. She has watched her niece in the past and has a very strong bond with the little girl. She really enjoys spending time at her brother's beach house because it is calming to her. The ocean is one of Jill's favorite places and the quiet neighborhood helps Jill feel relaxed.

Jill also sees her mother once a week when they go food shopping together. They spend time buying groceries and talking about their week. Jill's mother has always been supportive and attends NAMI family group meetings once a month. Jill has also asked her mother to join her for her psychiatrist visits several times. Jill's psychiatrist often times contacts Jill's mother to share her progress and illicit her support.

Jill has one younger sister, Mary, who attends college away from home. Jill has not spoken to Mary in more than a year. Mary is very angry at Jill for what she "has put the family" through and has told Jill's mother that she wants nothing to do with Jill. She believes that communicating and seeing Jill affects her negatively and she need to concentrate on school.

Jill has no girlfriends and rarely spends time with her roommate who works evenings. Jill's roommate also suffers from a psychiatric disability and used to attend the same self-help center Jill does. Jill and her roommate share the chores on the weekend and cook dinner for each other three times a week. They mostly talk about current events and television shows they both like. They also share CD's since they both enjoy the same types of music.

Lately Jill has been talking to her job coach about her supervisor at work. Jill reports that her supervisor does not like her and tries to get her in trouble by pointing out the mistakes she makes when the dentist is around. Jill has been late 3 times this week alone and was reprimanded by her supervisor. Jill also feels overwhelmed with the amount of office work she is responsible for. She stated to her job coach that she never knows what tasks are the most important and need to be completed first. She complains that it is hard to please everyone and she can never get all of her work done by the time she has to leave for the day. Jill works every morning from 9 until 2 but feels rushed and anxious that she will get in trouble for not finishing everything.

After Jill leaves work, she usually goes home and remains there all night. Jill does not talk to many people on the phone and rarely goes out socially. She sometimes visits a drop in center on the weekends and went on a day trip to Atlantic City last month. Two women at the drop-in center are friendly and Jill spends time chatting with them while she is there. Jill enjoys the center because it is a laid back atmosphere that is organized very well. Most times she visits, it is quiet and clean and people there are very polite to one another.

Jill used to attend a day program in her town three afternoons a week. She participated in pre-employment groups there and had a case manager who connected her to the supportive housing services offered by the agency. When asked why she no longer attends, Jill states that the case manager told her that she was sick and should not work. Jill also claims that when she was not feeling well, the case manager did not "take me seriously" and Jill was admitted to the hospital shortly after.

Summary of Jill's Relationship MAP

As mentioned in Chapter One of this workbook, the purpose of any MAP is to record information. MAPS help to organize that information in a way that both you and the focus person can see and discuss what is presented. The graphics used on a MAP are meant to assist those who assimilate and convey information better through graphics but are not a requirement of a comprehensive MAP. The use of different colors however, is a critical element of any MAP. The colors and graphics on the MAP should help anyone who is looking at it better understand the information contained.

You should have read Jill's story to get a better sense of the information she has shared about her relationships. Now you should look at the sample MAP entitled "Jill's Relationship MAP." When reviewing Jill's MAP, you will note that the people listed are broken up into categories including: Family, Friends, Work, and Paid. Each category has individuals represented by their name or relationship to Jill and are recorded on the MAP using a certain color based on what Jill has told the Circle facilitator. If you recall, you learned in Chapter One that green is for positive experiences, opportunities, places and people; red is for negative experiences, opportunities, places, and people; and blue is for basic information and strategies or facts.

Positive Relationships:

One of the first things that you can notice looking at Jill's MAP is that she has several people in her life that she considers to be supporters (people listed in green). In the family category, her mother, brother, and niece are all considered to be important to her and supportive in some way. Under the Friends category, Jill has listed her roommate but asked that a question mark be added. After reviewing Jill's story, you will have noticed that Jill spends time with her roommate and shares meals and common interests. However, Jill may not be ready to add her to the MAP as a supporter. The roommate should remain a critical part of the conversations the Circle has with Jill about supporters. She may be someone that Jill would like to strengthen her relationship with. Jill has similar feelings about a person listed under the Work category.

Jill's co-worker is listed in green but also has a question mark after the text. This too should be a person who is discussed in subsequent conversations regarding developing supporters. Two people, Jill's psychiatrist and job coach are also listed in green on her MAP. These two paid supporters are individuals that Jill may want to include in her Circle at some point.

Negative Relationships:

The next thing that is apparent on Jill's MAP is that there are a few people that Jill identifies as having a negative or strained relationship with. Her sister, supervisor, and case manager all appear in red on the MAP. Based on the information contained in Jill's story, you can see why they are listed as negative. This is something that should be discussed with Jill regularly. Even though a person may initially appear on a MAP as a negative, the focus person might want to try and re-build or repair the relationship in the future. In addition, after discussing the problems associated with the relationship, the focus person and Circle members may actually have a different opinion of what is going on. So for example, Jill's sister is away at college and has stated that Jill causes her stress and that she needs to focus on school. We have to keep in mind that Jill's sister may have said those things some time ago in an effort to protect herself. She may feel very differently at this point. On the other hand, there may be people in the focus person's life who are listed as negative for very good reasons. Those individuals may impede the focus person's process and should therefore not be included in the Circle. The main point to consider is that the people and relationships recorded on the MAP should be revisited over time and changes should be noted.

Basic Information:

In addition to the negative and positive information contained on a MAP, basic or neutral information is also provided. At work, Jill considers the dentist to be a neutral person. She has neither negative or positive feelings or experiences to report. The women from the self help center may one day be positive to Jill but at this point, they are merely acquaintances she sees when she attends the center. Finally, Jill's past employer may be a supporter one day or, based on what we know about the way Jill left that job, he may not have positive feelings toward her. That is why there is a red question mark next to his title. Again, it is important to note that like some of the individuals represented in red, those who appear in blue may one day serve as helpful supporters for the focus person. Therefore, discuss those relationships with Jill in subsequent meetings.

Summary Statement:

There is a space at the bottom of the MAP for a summary statement. The summary statement should accurately capture the main points from the discussion that occurred developing the MAP. The statement is especially helpful for those Circle members who may not have been in attendance when the MAP was completed. It is also helpful to refer back to the summary statement each time you discuss relationship issues or issues related to the development or maintenance of supporters.