

Who We Are

Community Circles, also known as Peacemaking Circles, are a community-directed process most commonly used for addressing issues surrounding local incidents of crime. Circles in Washington County are created in partnership with the justice system, and create a respectful space to support victims, develop sentencing agreements for clients, and empower all interested community members to work toward preventing future occurrences of crime.

Cases brought to the Circles process go through several steps, including an application procedure that has been developed by Washington County volunteers. There can be separate Circles for victims and clients, a Sentencing Circle to develop client sentencing recommendations to be submitted to judges, and follow-up Circles to monitor the progress of clients or to continue to support victims.

Circles derive their strength from community participation, and are facilitated by trained volunteers called Circle Keepers. Keepers pass a talking piece to share speaking time in Circles. Strong community support results in lower recidivism of clients who go through the Circles process.

Washington County Community
Circles, Inc.

7064 S. West Point Douglas Road
Cottage Grove, Minnesota 55016

Washington County Community Circles

A NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION



*Repairing harm to victims,
holding clients accountable and
building a better community.*

651.492.4996

www.peacemakingcircles.org

Our Values

Each Circle is unique and responsive to the needs of its participants. However, in Washington County, all Circles share the following core values:

RESPECT

Respect ensures that every participant experiences acceptance into the Circle, and ensures that everyone is heard with equality.

HUMILITY

Humility means there is inclusiveness in the Circle. Recognition of the humanness of self and others helps to create cooperation between participants.

COMPASSION

A compassionate focus on harm, combined with the flexibility of Circles, allows victims to be involved in the Circles process in whatever ways are comfortable for them. Compassion felt by Circle participants enables the Circle to take positive action to repair those issues, which contributed to the harm done.

SPIRITUALITY

Spirituality celebrates the wholeness of each person and the oneness of the Circle. It allows participants to speak from the heart. Holding a Circle means creating a sacred space where these values are honored.

HONESTY

Two important elements in a Circle, accountability and trust, are based on honesty. People need the support of others to make affirmative changes in their lives, and honesty with oneself and others is the basis for building those strong relationships within communities.

Conflict Resolution

Community Circles have at times served communities by providing a forum for the discussion of difficult community issues, and helped facilitate action plans or dispute resolution. Examples of these include Circles with feuding family members to create understanding. Circles with local church members to resolve internal conflicts, and Circles with married couples to improve their communication or couples with custody/visitation issues with their children.

Circles enhance community health by teaching all participants how to resolve conflicts in a manner where communities develop collective responsibility and assume ownership for making decisions regarding their own issues.

Washington County Community Circles work in a Restorative Practice called Sentencing Circles that customizes the penalty or sentence to repair the harm to victims and to offer clients support to change their behavior.

The Circle is a value-based, victim-driven process that partners with the criminal justice system, police, prosecutors and other social organizations. A Circle offers more support for changed behavior and it builds relationships with fellow community members.

Become a Volunteer

Decisions made in Circles are most meaningful, and have the greatest chance of success, when they reflect a community decision making process. Community members are invited to volunteer and participate in Circles in any of our existing communities.

Please call **(651) 492-4996** or email **contact@peacemakingcircles.org** to volunteer or for more information.

Member Communities

Washington County Community Circles, Inc. currently has three active communities in Cottage Grove, Stillwater, and Woodbury.

Contact Us

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email **contact@peacemakingcircles.org** or visit us on the web at **www.peacemakingcircles.org**

