NORTH CAROLINA IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES
CIRCLE OF PARENTS PROGRAM

SUPPORTING PROGRAM FIDELITY
Prevent Child Abuse North Carolina (PCANC) is dedicated to providing support for quality implementation of Circle of Parents. Research indicates that program outcomes improve when practitioners receive ongoing support, including technical assistance prior to, during, and after implementation. These guidelines reflect the components necessary for effective implementation with program fidelity.

TARGET POPULATION FOR CIRCLE OF PARENTS
Circle of Parents is a parent-led, mutual self-help support group for parents and caregivers. In North Carolina, Circle of Parents groups strive to address the five protective factors which include: parental resilience, social connections, concrete support in times of need, knowledge of parenting and child development, and social and emotional competence of children. It is often beneficial in recruitment and retention for Circle of Parents groups to have an identified focus i.e. single parents, grandparents raising grandchildren, etc. Groups are free, confidential, and strengths-based according to the national Circle of Parents model.

In North Carolina, Circle of Parents is implemented as a prevention program. When recruiting and enrolling parents, please consider the North Carolina Division of Social Services definitions/language below regarding appropriate participants:

- In Investigative Assessments, cases are “substantiated” or “unsubstantiated.” Families with an unsubstantiated case are appropriate for Circle of Parents, but families with substantiated cases need more intensive services and should not be served in Circle of Parents.
- In Family Assessments, cases are “services needed,” “services recommended,” or “no services needed.” Families with cases deemed “services recommended” or “no services needed” are appropriate for Circle of Parents, but families with cases deemed “services needed” need more intensive services and should not be served in Circle of Parents.

PROGRAM EVALUATION
Network agencies participate in statewide evaluation, including evaluation training, administration of the Protective Factors Survey (PFS) and submission of data for agency and statewide reports. Network agencies also participate in data collection and entry for the national network.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION: “NUTS AND BOLTS”

FACILITATORS AND PARENT LEADERS
- Attend the NC Circle of Parents Core Training prior to implementation.
- Each group requires one trained facilitator and one main parent leader. Whenever possible, parent leaders are also encouraged to attend Core Training.
- It is an ongoing goal to identify, develop, and support parent leaders.
- In addition to the main parent leader, other parents are encouraged to take on helping roles in the group based on their strengths and interests.
- Facilitators will be invited to participate in implementation support/coaching.
- Facilitators support parents in using positive discipline strategies.
SUPERVISORS

- Implementation science encourages regular, ongoing one-on-one supervision between a supervisor and a facilitator.
- Organize monthly meetings with group facilitators, parent leaders, and children’s program staff to plan for upcoming Circle of Parents groups and to discuss successes and challenges.
- Support facilitators in the implementation of Circle of Parents as well as continual development of parent leaders.
- Supervisors encourage facilitators and parent leaders to plan for the logistics of their groups on a weekly basis.

GROUP DURATION AND DOSAGE

- Best practice implementation is weekly group meetings that are parent-driven.
- Weekly discussion topics and activities are identified by the group members.
- Groups are structured with opening and closing statements, group rules, and agendas defined by participating parents.
- Attention should be given to activities that relate to the five protective factors.
- Groups are open, free, and ongoing, and typically last from 1 ½ to 2 hours.

CHILDREN’S PROGRAM OR QUALITY CHILDCARE

- For best practice implementation, it is recommended that every parent group have, or be working towards, a free, parallel children’s group.
- At a minimum, quality childcare is acceptable if a structured program is not possible.
- The goal of the children’s program is to provide developmentally appropriate, skill-building activities that will increase children’s confidence and self-worth while providing fun and enjoyment.
- Children’s group facilitators/staff should be knowledgeable of child development (typical and atypical) and utilize positive behavior management practices.

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

- Recruitment is ongoing, intentional, and target population-driven.
- Participants are informed about group logistics, including any meals, childcare, and transportation that may be provided.
- Incentive-use is encouraged to enhance participant retention.

GROUP SIZE AND LOCATION

- Groups should be held in a meeting site that is safe, convenient, comfortable, and secured for at least a year.
- Group size should be continually assessed to determine if there are too few or too many participants to adequately engage in the mutual self-help group model.
- Each agency is encouraged to adhere to their funders’ requirements for group size.
- Agencies will continually assess appropriate childcare ratios to ensure staff availability.