



Strategic Plan 2009-2012

Executive Summary

Introduction

Circle of Parents® is a national network of parent leaders and statewide and regional non-profit organizations dedicated to using the mutual self-help support group model to support its mission of preventing child abuse and neglect and strengthening families. It was incorporated as a non-profit 501 (c) (3) organization in April 2004 as it neared the completion of a four-year project to develop a national network of mutual support and self-help parent support programs. That project, funded by the Office on Child Abuse and Neglect of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, was a successful collaboration of the National Family Support Roundtable and Prevent Child Abuse America from October 2000 to September 2004.

Circle of Parents is currently supported by membership fees, cash and in-kind contributions and two federal grants. The Office of Family Assistance of the Administration for Children and Families supports the implementation of responsible fatherhood programs in partnership with Circle of Parents state network organizations and local home visiting programs for new and expectant parents. Geared to fathers of children prenatal-12 months, the goals of the project include creating father-friendly programs, organizations and systems; while also preparing fathers to be actively involved in the healthy development of their children. In addition, Circle of Parents serves as a national resource partner for the FRIENDS National Resource Center, which is led by the Chapel Hill Training Outreach Project. FRIENDS supports state-operated, community—based child abuse prevention networks in all fifty states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. Circle of Parents contributes its expertise in parent leadership by providing training and technical assistance to improve the capacity of these networks to engage parents as partners with professionals and organizations. The goal of the training is to enhance parent involvement in the development, implementation and evaluation of child abuse prevention and family support services, while also becoming stronger advocates for their own families and communities. FRIENDS is funded by the Office on Child Abuse and Neglect/Children's Bureau of the Administration for Children and Families.

Circle of Parents national staff and members practice principles of mutual respect, equal contribution and shared leadership, pooling resources, expertise and in-kind contributions of time to carry out its activities. Members represent a diversity of cultures, experiences, geographies and backgrounds and include parent leaders, organization administrators, community organizers, management and program services staff and a variety of human services professionals. The national staff consists of a Chief Executive Officer, Training and Technical Assistance Manager, Training and Technical Assistance Coordinator, Executive Assistant and Staff Accountant. The organization is governed by a seven-member board of directors, two of whom are parent leaders.

The partnership agreement of staff, member organizations and parent leader members espouses the full participation of everyone in the work of Circle of Parents. Such participation includes:

- Active involvement on at least one of the standing committees and in membership meetings of Circle of Parents;
- Willingness to share resources with other members and the national office;
- Substantial contribution to strategic planning, problem solving, implementation and evaluation of Circle of Parents' activities and projects;
- Commitment to the growth and development of Circle of Parents through membership fees, involvement in special projects, sharing data, sharing information about program outcomes, and participating in collaborative ventures with other national family support organizations;
- Engagement in advocacy and development efforts to promote and support the work of Circle of Parents; and
- Agreement to share equal responsibility for the success of Circle of Parents;

Strategic Planning Process

In September 2008, the board of directors authorized the review of the 2004 to 2008 strategic plan in preparation for the development of newly focused strategic direction for the years 2009-2012. A decision was made to maintain three (3) major priority areas, pending consensus from the membership organizations and parent leaders, and to convene a Strategic Planning Committee to devise goals, objectives, major actions and timelines. Committee members were selected to be representative of the board, member organizations and parent leaders. The Chief Executive Officer served as the convener; while the Vice-Chair of the Board served as the committee chairperson. With input from the membership during a variety of committee meetings, membership meetings and through email communications, the committee prepared a plan within the following strategic areas of focus

- **Network Development:** Increase the capacity of state and regional network members to provide quality self-help parent support programs throughout the

communities they serve, expand programs where needed and enhance the capacity of the national office to provide leadership, resources and support.

- **Board Development:** Increase the capacity of state and regional network members to provide quality self-help parent support programs throughout the communities they serve, expand programs where needed and enhance the capacity of the national office to provide leadership, resources and support.
- **Fund Development:** Create a reliable donor base and increased visibility as a national organization in order to achieve fiscal solvency and sustainability of the national office and its members.

A final draft of the strategic plan was presented to the membership during its quarterly meeting on July 15, 2009. After much discussion, the 2009-2012 Strategic Plan was approved. The final plan was reviewed and approved by the board of directors at its annual meeting on July 28, 2009. A one page list of the goals and objectives is provided at the end of this executive summary.

Circle of Parents is now prepared to implement its new strategic plan. The next steps include the development of work plans for the first year of the strategic plan by the board, staff and network committees. The development of these plans should take place by the end of December 2009 and be approved by the board and membership, as appropriate, in January 2010.

Circle of Parents would like to thank the staff of its member organizations, our parent leaders and its board of directors for their contribution to the 2009-2012 Strategic Plan. Specifically, we acknowledge the following persons for taking the leadership on this important task:

Kevin Kirkpatrick, Committee Chairperson, Illinois (Vice-Chair, Board of Directors)
Meri Pohutsky, Michigan (Secretary, Board of Directors)
Jennifer Richardson, Colorado (Member Organization)
Earl Kloppman, Illinois (Member Organization)
Kathie Kinder-Goble, Minnesota (Parent Leader)
Karen Schrader, Training and Technical Assistance Manager
Cynthia Savage, Chief Executive Officer

Network Development:

1. Increase the capacity of the national office and its member network to better support existing and new state networks.
2. Increase the capacity of state / regional networks to strengthen and expand Circle of Parents programs by 10 percent annually.
3. Expand network membership by no more than three new programs/networks per year.
4. Strengthen the use of best practices in network operations and program services among member organizations of the national network.
5. Expand the capacity of the state networks to develop a parent leadership plan and identify at least one parent leader from each state.

Board Development:

1. Establish a diverse board of directors representing a diversity of background, life experiences and roles, both professional and parenting, including those with affluence and influence.
2. Ensure board accountability and continual improvement through training, goal-setting and self-evaluation.
3. Establish a sound governance structure, including board policies and systems.

Fund Development

1. Acquire the funding for a resource development person who will lead the creation of a fundraising committee and a comprehensive multi-year plan to increase general operating funds.
2. Develop and implement a system for donor tracking and reporting.
3. Increase name recognition with key constituencies including: family support practitioners; child abuse & neglect prevention specialists; key federal government officials; and leading researchers in early brain development, early education, school readiness, parent education and parent leadership.