

La Crosse Jail Ministry Circles of Support

Roles and Goals for Volunteers and Core Members

Program Mission

The La Crosse Circles of Support program seeks to assist in the reintegration of people into the community as they transition out of incarceration, to offer people a path toward health and stability, and to foster transformative relationships between all Circle members.

Expectations of Volunteers

1. A volunteer commits to meeting with the Circle weekly for six months, while understanding that the frequency of meetings could change depending on the needs of the core member.
2. When a volunteer will not be able to attend a meeting, he or she tells another Circle member as early as possible before that meeting.
3. Respect for the Circle, and for each member of the circle, is essential. When different perspectives arise, members should listen without interrupting before offering their perspective. When we have respect, it is not necessary to agree on everything.
4. A Circle functions best when each member's voice is heard. A volunteer should not dominate a conversation. No one person will have all the answers. Listening is key.
5. It is not a volunteer's role to provide material support for a core member, but to help the core member find that support at local organizations. During a meeting food or drink may be provided.
6. A volunteer offers his or her presence as the most valuable way of supporting the core member. The Circle will not be able to solve all problems or questions that arise. But by walking with the core members and each other, the Circle becomes a foundational web of support that can provide strong human relationships necessary to healthy living.
7. This is a Circle of equals. It is expected that volunteers will receive much through giving their time and energy. Conversations do not need to solely focus on the core member, and volunteers should be willing to check in and share parts of their own story as well.
8. Some Circles will contain a mixture of people of different faith or non-faith backgrounds. Spirituality is an acceptable component of conversations, but these meetings are not for the purpose of religious teaching. Core members seeking a faith community will be assisted to connect with their chosen faith community. Respect for all beliefs will be given. If the Circle is made up of members from one faith community and the core member is interested in pursuing that faith, then faith can be a component of the meeting. If the core member decides at some point to no longer pursue the faith of the group, their decision will be respected.
9. Ideally, a volunteer does not meet with a core member one-on-one. When meetings happen without the full group, those present should inform the others.
10. If an issue arises that a volunteer does not wish to bring up during the Circle

meeting, they talk to the Circles coordinator or a planning member outside the meeting time.

11. A high value is placed on listening. By listening to a core member's story and sharing their own, volunteers open space for relationships to happen. Listening might also involve considering critiques about how one's behavior at meetings is or is not helping the core member.
12. Volunteers work with core members to determine goals that will bring stability to the life of the core member.

Expectations of Core Members

1. A core member will attend weekly meetings with the circle for six months. If a scheduling conflict arises, the core member relays this to one or more Circle volunteers as soon as possible. If the core member habitually misses meetings, the Circle may decide to choose a new core member.
2. Like the volunteers, the core member respects all Circle members. When different or opposing perspectives arise, the core member listens and responds with respect.
3. A core member works with the Circle to determine personal goals, both short term and long-term and they are reviewed and revised regularly.
4. A core member is solely responsible for finding stability and reaching his or her goals. Volunteers are present to assist, but the core member will always be doing the most work in reaching goals.
5. If an issue arises that the core member does not wish to bring up during the Circle meeting, he or she talks to the Circles coordinator or a subcommittee member outside the meeting time.
6. Volunteers are not expected to provide material support, but to assist the core member in finding that support at community organizations.
7. The core member understands that anything he or she shares with a volunteer can be shared with the other volunteers within that Circle or within the Circles of Support program.
8. A core member should be ready to grow and to work toward finding health and stability in his or her life. The Circle is there to support the core member in this effort.
9. If there is a circle from a particular faith community open and the core member is interested in pursuing that faith, they will be connected. If the core member decides to no longer pursue that faith, they can continue with the group knowing their choice will be respected.