

## Orange Country Partnership to End Homelessness Support Circles Program

### What are Support Circles?

Support Circle Teams comprise 8-10 volunteers that partner with individuals and families who are experiencing - or at risk of - homelessness and who are transitioning into permanent housing. Teams provide Partners assistance with:

- **Material support** such as furniture and other household goods (often gathered from congregations and family)
- **Practical support** including taking partners grocery shopping or to appointments, helping them work out budgets, tutoring them for GED classes or other assistance their partners may need
- **Financial support:** each team contributes \$2,500; \$2,000 goes for their Partner's needs associated with moving in to permanent housing such as security deposit, furnishings, etc., \$100 goes toward program administration, and \$400 is escrowed to pay for a future coordinator
- **Relational support:** most importantly, team members meet regularly with the individual or family they're partnered with to share information, build relationships, and function as a support system for their Partners.

### Who are the Support Circle Partners?

Support Circle "Partners" are individuals or families living in shelters or transitional housing programs or are receiving homelessness case management services from Orange County DSS or other homeless service providers. Clients apply to the Support Circles Program with assistance from their case manager.

### What is the time commitment?

Support Circles make a 12- month commitment (which can be extended), meeting at least once per month with their Partners (often considerably more). Phone calls and emails are encouraged; each team member is encouraged to meet with their Partner a minimum of 4 times. All the Support Circle Teams in the program meet together once per month to share successes and challenges and to lend each other advice.

### How are Support Circle Teams formed and matched with partners?

Teams can be from one or more faith-based group or be groups of friends and are matched with their partners after considering their respective needs and qualities. Partners and Support Circle Teams sign a contract or covenant at the beginning of their partnership laying out their mutual commitments and obligations.

### What do Support Circles do with their partners?

Support Circle Teams and their Partners get to know each other and talk about what support the Partners may need and their activities together vary based on these needs and the relationships that form. Support Circles may gather household items and help partners move, help fill out and submit job applications, provide transportation, tutor, work out a budget, etc. Relationally teams model healthy lifestyles, listen and care, and empower their Partner.

### Do Support Circles receive training?

Support Circle Team members receive training so that they have a clear understanding of their role and to learn skills and information that will help them become effective partners. Topics included in the training include life skills, budgeting and finances, parenting, nutrition, time management, goal-setting, stress management, etc. Support Circles will also learn about available resources such as social services, housing, employment, health care, child care, etc.

### I want to use this as an opportunity to share my faith – is that okay?

A Support Circle is an opportunity to live out one's faith rather than share it with your partner. You're free to share your life with your partner which may include sharing your faith, but it is not the place for conversion or recruiting new members for your congregation.