



Circle Leader Overview

Circle Leaders are participants who are on a path to leading themselves out of poverty. CIRCLES® USA describes Circle Leaders as “hardworking and motivated, but often overwhelmed by the daily struggle to make ends meet. Circle Leaders commit to completing training, setting goals for themselves, and attending weekly Circles meetings. Circle Leaders educate their middle-income and upper-income Allies about poverty, and they lean on their Allies for advice and encouragement,” (“What Is CIRCLES®,” 2020).

Potential Circle Leaders meet with CIRCLES® Lexington County Staff to go over all requirements, expectations, and benefits in more detail prior to joining a Cohort, a group of Circle Leaders and Volunteers that begin their participation at the same time. Below is an overview and a step-by-step guide to becoming a Circle Leader.

REQUIREMENTS

Primary criteria for becoming a Circle Leader:

- Live at or below 185% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines (see page 3)
- At least 18 years old
- Speak and read English
- Able to faithfully attend weekly meetings, attending at least 75% of all required weeks
- Relatively stable (not currently homeless or dealing with domestic abuse)
- If history of alcohol or other addiction, has been in recovery for at least the past 6 months

EXPECTATIONS

Commitment made by Circle Leaders:

- Complete a Circle Leader Orientation
- Complete 12-week Circle Leader Training
- Participating in Matched Circles for a minimum of 18 months (this starts after Circle Leader Training is complete)
- Attend weekly meetings, 75%/quarter
- Identify ways to contribute to CIRCLES® by joining a Resource Team
- Complete a Progress Report with a CLC Staff member once every six months

Additional commitments made by ALL Circle Leaders and Volunteers:

- Willingness to learn and apply new ideas
- Build intentional relationships across class and cultural lines
- Make progress towards specific goals
- Sign and adhere to a Confidentiality Agreement and Code of Conduct set forth by CIRCLES® Lexington County

BENEFITS

Support Circle Leaders receive:

- Tools that help with managing money and time more effectively
- Training in communication skills for effective relationships
- Caring Allies and Resource Teams to join the journey towards self-sufficiency
- Weekly meetings in which meals and children's programming are provided
- Trained staff available to answer questions and provide mentoring
- Commitment of confidentiality for personal and financial information

STEPS TO BECOMING A CIRCLE LEADER

Use this guide to help stay on track towards becoming a Circle Leader. All documents that require you to review and sign are *italicized* below and can be found by contacting CIRCLES® Lexington County staff at circleslexingtoncounty@mthorebumc.com.

STEP ONE

- Review the CIRCLES® brochure and this Circle Leader Overview
- Submit a *Circle Leader Application*
- Have an adult from outside of your immediate family submit the *Circle Leader Referral Form*

STEP TWO

- Meet with CIRCLES® Lexington County staff
A staff member from CLC will contact you to set up a time to discuss program requirements, expectations, and benefits of participation in greater detail than what is listed here.

STEP THREE

- Attend Circle Leader Orientation
Once your application has been reviewed and a staff member has asked you to join a Cohort, you will receive information on your Circle Leader Orientation date.
- Submit the following documents:
 - ✓ *Agreements and Permissions Form*
 - ✓ *Family Information Card*
 - ✓ *Circle Leader Training Course Graduation Requirements*

STEP FOUR

- Complete the 12-week Circle Leader Training Course as a "Circle Leader in Training".
All work associated with each module must be completed.
No more than 2 absences are permitted during Circle Leader Training and all work from any missed meetings will have to be completed outside of normal meeting times with the CIRCLES® Lexington County staff.
- Submit a fully completed and typed portfolio (you will work on this during training).

Once a potential Circle Leader has completed these steps prior to the Circle Leader Graduation Ceremony, the participant can graduate the training course and officially become a Circle Leader.

At this same time, potential Volunteers are going through a similar process of application, orientation, and training course.

The process of Matched Circles begins after Graduation, where Allies are matched with Circle Leaders.

Federal Poverty Level (FPL) 2021

A measure of income issued every year by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Federal poverty levels are used to determine your eligibility for certain programs and benefits, including savings on Marketplace health insurance, and Medicaid and CHIP coverage.

- \$12,880 for individuals
- \$17,240 for a family of 2
- \$21,960 for a family of 3
- \$26,500 for a family of 4
- \$31,040 for a family of 5
- \$35,580 for a family of 6
- \$40,120 for a family of 7
- \$44,660 for a family of 8

CIRCLES® Lexington County
1205 Old Cherokee Rd.
Lexington, SC 29072

circleslexingtoncounty@mthorebumc.com