

GRACE CIRCLES

Youth and Family Stabilization Initiative
Executive Summary

Overview

Grace Circles is a faith rooted, trauma informed youth and family stabilization initiative operating under Black Sheep Ministries in the Tarentum and Brackenridge corridor along the Allegheny and Westmoreland County border.

The program is designed to interrupt generational cycles of addiction, instability, and system entrenchment within communities heavily impacted by substance exposure.

Grace Circles operates as a structured prevention and stabilization platform focused on strengthening protective factors in at risk youth and families before long term involvement in the juvenile justice system, child welfare system, or substance dependency systems becomes entrenched.

Participation is open to all eligible youth regardless of religious belief. While leadership philosophy is grounded in biblical principles of dignity, accountability, and restoration, no participant is required to affirm any specific faith commitment.

Community Context

The Tarentum and Brackenridge corridor represents a region disproportionately impacted by drug activity and intergenerational instability. Youth within this environment face elevated exposure to substance use, inconsistent home structures, and early justice system contact.

Research consistently demonstrates that protective factors such as academic engagement, structured peer environments, adult mentorship, and caregiver stabilization significantly reduce substance initiation risk and recidivism.

Grace Circles is designed to strengthen those protective factors through structured programming rather than reactive intervention.

Program Structure

Grace Circles operates through four coordinated program components:

1. After School Tutoring and Academic Stabilization

An open access tutoring program providing structured academic support, homework assistance, and supervised study space. Monthly workshops integrate financial literacy, conflict resolution, and civic responsibility.

Tutoring services are provided at no cost and operate independently from other program enrollment tracks.

2. Youth Resilience Circles

Structured weekly cohorts divided by age:

Ages 10 to 12

Ages 13 to 17

Ages 18 to 21 transitional

Each cohort engages in guided peer discussions focused on emotional regulation, decision making, identity formation, healthy relationships, and personal accountability.

Enrollment includes a formal intake and Individual Development Profile to track progress and stabilization goals.

3. Family Stabilization Circles

Periodic support sessions for families impacted by addiction and instability, including partnerships with recovery aligned organizations such as Al-Anon Family Groups and Nar-Anon.

These sessions provide addiction literacy, trauma informed communication strategies, and home stabilization support.

4. Structured Court and Foster Referral Track

Grace Circles accepts court referred and foster youth.

Each referred participant receives:

Formal intake

Enhanced Stabilization Plan

Attendance tracking

Progress summaries when requested

The program does not conduct drug testing or serve as probation supervision but operates as a structured stabilization partner supporting compliance and constructive development.

Intake and Accountability

All enrolled youth undergo a structured intake facilitated by trained Guidance Counselors.

The intake process identifies risk factors, protective factors, academic status, and stabilization priorities. Each participant receives an Individual Development Profile outlining attendance expectations and developmental goals.

Attendance is required at least once per week for enrolled youth or through scheduled check in sessions.

Behavioral standards are enforced through a tiered response model prioritizing safety and dignity.

Zero tolerance policies apply to weapons, illegal drugs, drug paraphernalia, and active intoxication.

All leadership personnel are trained in mandated reporting and child protection compliance.

Leadership and Governance

Grace Circles operates under the governance of Black Sheep Ministries and is led by a designated Program Director with expertise in youth development and trauma informed engagement.

The founding leadership includes advanced education in developmental psychology and business administration, along with extensive experience directing at risk youth programs, collaborating with judges and probation officers, providing court testimony, and operating within school districts and nonprofit environments.

Within five years, the program intends to obtain licensure for the Program Director or hire a Licensed Program Director credentialed in Social Work or Psychology with a focus on trauma informed practice.

Facility and Sustainability

Grace Circles operates within a large community facility positioned to serve as a stabilization hub for the corridor.

Services are provided at no cost to participants.

Funding sources include:

Private donations

Corporate sponsorships

Foundation grants

County grants

Charitable contributions

The program operates within approved budgets and maintains Board level financial oversight.

Measurable Outcomes and Transparency

Grace Circles maintains structured documentation and publishes an Annual Public Transparency Report summarizing:

Total youth served

Enrollment metrics

Attendance retention

Court referral volume

Aggregate outcome indicators

Financial summary

Narrative impact overview

Participant confidentiality is strictly maintained.

The program conducts annual internal reviews to assess effectiveness, sustainability, and community alignment. If components are found ineffective or misaligned, they may be revised or suspended in the interest of responsible stewardship.

Strategic Vision

Grace Circles is not a recreational youth program or short term intervention.

It is designed to become a structured stabilization backbone within a substance impacted community.

The long term objective is to:

Reduce youth recidivism

Strengthen academic engagement

Support family stabilization

Maintain relational continuity beyond formal system involvement

By investing early in structured engagement, accountability, and skill development, Grace Circles aims to prevent deeper system entrenchment and foster durable resilience in youth and families.