

GRACE CIRCLES

Youth and Family Stabilization Initiative

Program Charter

Article I: Name, Authority, and Foundational Identity

Section 1.1 Name

This program shall operate under the name “Grace Circles,” a structured initiative of Black Sheep Ministries.

Section 1.2 Authority

Grace Circles is established under the authority and governance of Black Sheep Ministries and shall operate in alignment with the organization’s mission, bylaws, and applicable federal, state, and local laws.

The program shall function as a community based, faith rooted, youth and family stabilization initiative serving at risk populations within the Tarentum and Brackenridge corridor and surrounding communities, with future expansion subject to board approval.

Section 1.3 Foundational Identity

Grace Circles is grounded in biblical principles including dignity of the individual, restoration, accountability, responsibility, and relational continuity. These principles inform leadership philosophy, program design, and operational standards.

Participation in Grace Circles shall not require affirmation of any specific faith, religious doctrine, or spiritual declaration.

No participant shall be denied access to programming based upon religious belief, lack of religious belief, background, family history, or personal circumstances.

Faith serves as the internal foundation guiding leadership conduct and program values, but participation remains open and non-coercive.

Section 1.4 Program Classification

Grace Circles shall operate as:

- A youth and family stabilization initiative
- A prevention and resiliency platform
- A community support ecosystem

Grace Circles shall not operate as:

- A licensed clinical treatment provider
- A mental health diagnostic entity
- A probationary supervision authority
- A replacement for court ordered services
- A substitute for licensed addiction treatment

Where clinical intervention, crisis services, or therapeutic treatment are necessary, Grace Circles shall refer participants to appropriate licensed professionals or agencies.

Article II: Purpose, Scope, and Target Population

Section 2.1 Purpose

The purpose of Grace Circles is to interrupt generational cycles of addiction, instability, and system entrenchment by providing structured academic support, emotional regulation development, relational accountability, and family stabilization programming within substance impacted communities.

Grace Circles exists to strengthen protective factors in youth and families before chronic involvement in the juvenile justice system, child welfare system, or substance dependency systems becomes entrenched.

The program is designed to operate as a stabilization and prevention platform rooted in structure, accountability, dignity, and relational continuity.

Section 2.2 Core Objectives

Grace Circles shall pursue the following core objectives:

1. Strengthen academic engagement through structured tutoring and educational support.
2. Develop emotional regulation, coping skills, and decision making capacity in at risk youth.
3. Provide structured peer circles that cultivate accountability, responsibility, and identity formation.
4. Support families impacted by addiction through educational workshops and recovery aligned partnerships.
5. Provide a structured environment for court referred and foster youth that supports compliance, stabilization, and constructive development.
6. Maintain long term relational continuity beyond the expiration of court involvement, probation, or state services when appropriate.

Section 2.3 Scope of Services

Grace Circles shall operate through the following structured program components:

- A. After School Tutoring and Academic Stabilization
- B. Youth Resilience Circles
- C. Family Stabilization Circles
- D. Structured Court and Foster Referral Track

Each component shall operate within defined policies, enrollment procedures, attendance expectations, and safety protocols as outlined within this Charter and supporting operational manuals.

Grace Circles shall not expand beyond these defined program arms during Phase One through Phase Three without formal review and approval by the governing board.

Section 2.4 Target Population

Grace Circles shall primarily serve:

1. At risk youth residing in high substance exposure communities.
2. Youth from homes impacted by addiction, instability, or trauma.
3. Court referred youth.
4. Foster and kinship youth.
5. Young adults transitioning out of placement or system involvement.
6. Families seeking stabilization support within substance impacted environments.

Age cohorts shall be structured and separated as follows:

Ages 10 to 12

Ages 13 to 17

Ages 18 to 21 transitional

Programming shall not combine age groups in ways that compromise developmental appropriateness or participant safety.

Section 2.5 Geographic Focus

The pilot program shall operate in the Tarentum and Brackenridge corridor, serving communities along the Allegheny and Westmoreland County border.

Expansion beyond the pilot region shall require:

Documented operational stability
Volunteer capacity growth
Financial sustainability
Board approval

Article III: Program Structure, Enrollment, and Intake Framework

Section 3.1 Program Structure

Grace Circles shall operate through four distinct but coordinated program components:

1. After School Tutoring and Academic Stabilization
2. Youth Resilience Circles
3. Family Stabilization Circles
4. Structured Court and Foster Referral Track

Each component shall maintain defined policies regarding enrollment, attendance expectations, documentation standards, and safety procedures.

Section 3.2 After School Tutoring and Academic Stabilization

The After School Tutoring and Academic Stabilization Program shall operate as an open access service and shall not require enrollment in any other Grace Circles program component.

Participation shall require:

Parental or guardian consent for minors
Sign in and attendance documentation
Adherence to program behavioral standards

Tutoring shall operate in a designated space separate from Youth Resilience Circles and shall focus on:

Academic support
Homework assistance
Study skill development
Structured learning environment

Grace Circles may incorporate rotating educational workshops within the tutoring block, including but not limited to:

Financial literacy fundamentals
Conflict resolution skills

Civic responsibility
Volunteer service planning

Participation in tutoring shall not require enrollment in Youth Resilience Circles.

Enrollment in Youth Resilience Circles shall not require participation in tutoring.

Section 3.3 Youth Resilience Circles Enrollment

Enrollment shall be required for participation in Youth Resilience Circles.

Each enrolled youth shall complete:

A formal intake process
A participation agreement
Parental or guardian consent when required

Enrolled youth shall be assigned to a developmentally appropriate cohort.

Youth Resilience Circles shall meet once per week per cohort.

Each enrolled youth shall attend at least one offering per week or notify program leadership and schedule a check in session in advance of absence.

Repeated unexcused absences may trigger follow up communication and restorative review.

Section 3.4 Intake and Screening Process

All enrolled youth shall undergo a structured intake facilitated by a designated Guidance Counselor.

The Guidance Counselor shall be:

A member of program leadership
Or
A screened and trained qualified volunteer

The intake process shall include:

Demographic and household overview
Educational status review
Court or agency involvement disclosure when applicable
Behavioral history overview
Substance exposure screening
Self-reported stress and coping assessment

Identification of risk factors
Identification of protective factors

The intake process shall not constitute a clinical diagnosis or therapeutic evaluation.

Its purpose is to establish baseline stabilization needs, identify support priorities, and document protective and vulnerability factors.

Section 3.5 Individual Development Profile

Upon completion of intake, each enrolled youth shall receive an Individual Development Profile.

The Individual Development Profile shall include:

Academic engagement goals
Emotional regulation development objectives
Attendance commitment
Behavioral expectations
Assigned mentorship support when applicable

The Individual Development Profile shall be reviewed periodically and updated as needed.

Section 3.6 Enhanced Stabilization Plans for Court and Agency Referrals

Youth referred by courts, probation officers, child welfare agencies, or related entities shall receive an Enhanced Stabilization Plan.

The Enhanced Stabilization Plan shall include:

Attendance documentation structure
Behavioral compliance expectations
Court aligned reporting requirements when requested
Structured progress review timeline

Grace Circles shall not assume probationary authority or conduct drug testing.

Grace Circles shall operate as a supportive stabilization partner while maintaining appropriate boundaries from judicial supervision.

Section 3.7 Documentation and Confidentiality

Grace Circles shall maintain secure and confidential records for all enrolled participants.

Access to participant records shall be restricted to authorized leadership personnel.

The program shall maintain:

Attendance logs
Incident reports
Mandated reporting documentation
Progress summaries when applicable
Quarterly internal review documentation

All records shall be stored in accordance with applicable HIPAA privacy and child protection laws.

Article IV: Safety, Behavioral Standards, and Risk Management

Section 4.1 Commitment to Safety

Grace Circles is committed to maintaining a physically, emotionally, and relationally safe environment for all participants, volunteers, and staff.

Safety shall be prioritized over program continuity in any situation involving credible risk.

All leadership personnel and volunteers shall be trained in de-escalation practices, mandated reporting requirements, and internal incident documentation procedures.

Section 4.2 Security Coordination

Grace Circles shall implement layered safety measures appropriate to the community context.

These measures shall include:

Notification of local law enforcement regarding regular meeting days and times.
Request for increased patrol presence during program hours.
Clear communication of zero tolerance safety standards to all participants.

As financial capacity allows, Grace Circles may implement on site security personnel.

Section 4.3 Entry Protocol

Participants shall be required to place personal bags and belongings in designated cubby storage areas prior to entering meeting or circle spaces.

Grace Circles shall not initially implement bag search procedures unless risk trends indicate necessity.

Signage shall clearly communicate prohibited items and behavioral standards.

Section 4.4 Zero Tolerance Policy

Grace Circles shall enforce zero tolerance for the following within program facilities or activities:

- Weapons of any kind
- Illegal drugs
- Drug paraphernalia
- Active intoxication

Any participant found in possession of prohibited items or appearing to be under the influence of substances shall be immediately removed from the session.

Reentry into programming shall require a structured reintegration meeting with a Guidance Counselor or designated leadership member.

Repeated violations may result in suspension or permanent removal as outlined in Section 4.7.

Section 4.5 Mandated Reporting

All leadership personnel and volunteers shall receive training in mandated reporting laws and obligations.

Any disclosure or reasonable suspicion of abuse, neglect, or imminent harm shall be reported in accordance with state law.

Internal documentation shall be completed following any mandated report.

Grace Circles shall not interfere with or delay mandated reporting processes.

Section 4.6 Behavioral Expectations

All participants shall agree to adhere to behavioral standards including:

- Respect for peers and leadership
- Nonviolent communication
- Compliance with safety directives
- Protection of facility property
- Adherence to attendance expectations

Behavioral standards shall be clearly communicated during intake and reinforced within program settings.

Section 4.7 Behavioral Escalation Model

Grace Circles shall utilize a tiered behavioral response model designed to preserve dignity while maintaining safety and order.

Level One

Verbal redirection and corrective guidance within the session.

Level Two

Temporary removal from the session for cooling off and discussion with leadership.

Level Three

Restorative meeting involving the participant and a Guidance Counselor to address recurring behavior and develop corrective action steps.

Level Four

Short term suspension with a documented reintegration plan outlining expectations for return.

Permanent removal shall occur only in cases of repeated serious safety violations, credible threats of violence, possession of weapons, or persistent behavior that jeopardizes the safety of others.

Permanent removal decisions shall require review by program leadership and documentation of prior interventions.

Section 4.8 Crisis Response

In the event of:

Credible threats

Violence

Medical emergency

Severe behavioral escalation

Program leadership shall contact appropriate emergency services immediately.

Grace Circles shall maintain written crisis response procedures and ensure leadership familiarity with response protocols.

Article V: Governance, Leadership Structure, and Volunteer Standards

Section 5.1 Program Oversight

Grace Circles shall operate under the authority and governance of Black Sheep Ministries and its Board of Directors.

The Board shall retain ultimate fiduciary and structural oversight of the program, including:

Approval of program expansion
Approval of annual budget
Oversight of facility use and lease arrangements
Review of annual program evaluation reports
Approval of material structural modifications to this Charter

Operational authority shall be delegated to the Program Director as outlined below.

Section 5.2 Program Director

Grace Circles shall designate a Program Director responsible for day to day operational leadership, program execution, volunteer supervision, and compliance oversight.

The Program Director shall:

Oversee intake and enrollment processes
Supervise Guidance Counselors and volunteer facilitators
Ensure adherence to safety protocols
Oversee documentation and data management
Coordinate with courts and referring agencies when applicable
Provide quarterly program review summaries to the Board

The Program Director shall demonstrate expertise in youth development, trauma informed engagement, and structured program leadership appropriate to at risk populations.

The Charter shall not assign the Program Director role to any named individual.

Section 5.3 Licensed Leadership Objective

Grace Circles recognizes the long term value of licensed professional oversight in trauma informed youth stabilization programming.

Within five years of program launch, Grace Circles shall pursue one of the following:

Obtain appropriate professional licensure for the Program Director
Or
Hire a Licensed Program Director

Licensure shall be in Social Work or Psychology with a focus on trauma informed practice or trauma therapy.

The presence of licensed leadership shall not convert Grace Circles into a clinical treatment provider unless the Board formally amends this Charter and pursues appropriate regulatory compliance.

Until such time, Grace Circles shall operate as a non-clinical stabilization initiative.

Section 5.4 Guidance Counselors

Guidance Counselors shall be designated members of leadership or screened and trained qualified volunteers responsible for:

- Conducting intake assessments
- Developing Individual Development Profiles
- Facilitating restorative meetings
- Maintaining participant documentation
- Supporting stabilization plans

Guidance Counselors shall operate under the supervision of the Program Director.

Section 5.5 Volunteer Screening Requirements

All volunteers participating in youth programming shall complete:

- State criminal background check
- Child abuse clearance
- Federal fingerprint based background check
- Mandated reporter certification
- Orientation and safety training

No individual shall engage in youth facing programming without completion of required clearances and documented approval by program leadership.

Volunteers shall adhere to:

- Two adult presence policy during youth engagement
- No private closed door one on one meetings
- No unsupervised electronic communication with minors
- Adherence to incident documentation procedures

Violation of volunteer conduct policies may result in immediate suspension pending review.

Section 5.6 Conflict of Interest and Governance Integrity

Where Grace Circles operates within a facility owned by Black Sheep Ministries and generates revenue through commercial leasing on portions of the property, the following shall apply:

Separate accounting shall be maintained for nonprofit operations and commercial lease income.

Any lease arrangements involving related entities shall be documented in writing and approved by the Board.

The Board shall maintain conflict of interest policies consistent with nonprofit governance standards.

Transparency shall be maintained in financial reporting and grant documentation.

Article VI: Data Collection, Evaluation, and Public Transparency

Section 6.1 Commitment to Measurable Impact

Grace Circles shall operate as a structured and accountable stabilization initiative and shall maintain measurable evaluation standards appropriate to its mission and scope.

The program shall collect data sufficient to evaluate effectiveness, identify areas for improvement, and demonstrate responsible stewardship of resources.

Data collection shall be proportional to program capacity and shall not transform Grace Circles into a clinical treatment provider.

Section 6.2 Participant Data Collection

For enrolled youth, Grace Circles shall maintain internal documentation including:

- Attendance records
- Intake summaries
- Individual Development Profiles
- Behavioral incident reports when applicable
- Progress summaries for court or agency referred youth when required

Data shall be collected to establish baseline indicators and track developmental progression in areas such as:

- Attendance consistency
- Academic engagement
- Emotional regulation development
- Behavioral stability
- Compliance with referral expectations

Grace Circles shall not publish personally identifiable participant information without lawful authorization.

Section 6.3 Outcome Metrics

Grace Circles shall track aggregate program level indicators, which may include:

- Enrollment volume
- Attendance retention rates
- Program completion trends
- Recidivism reduction indicators among court referred youth when measurable
- Self reported resilience and coping improvements
- Academic engagement trends where available

Outcome categories shall remain broadly defined to allow program refinement without requiring Charter amendment.

Section 6.4 Annual Public Transparency Report

Grace Circles shall publish an Annual Public Transparency Report.

The report shall include:

- Total number of youth served
- Number of enrolled participants
- Number of court or agency referrals
- Program attendance metrics
- Summary of documented success indicators
- Financial summary of program operations
- Narrative summary of program impact

The Annual Public Transparency Report shall protect participant confidentiality while demonstrating measurable impact.

Section 6.5 Program Review and Adaptive Modification

Grace Circles shall conduct internal program reviews at least annually.

Reviews shall evaluate:

- Operational stability
- Volunteer capacity
- Safety incident trends
- Participant retention
- Financial sustainability
- Community partnership effectiveness

If program elements are determined to be ineffective, unsustainable, or misaligned with mission, the Board may revise, suspend, or restructure components of Grace Circles to maintain maximum impact and organizational integrity.

Article VII: Financial Structure and Sustainability

Section 7.1 Commitment to Accessibility

Grace Circles shall provide all program services at no cost to participants.

No enrolled youth, family member, or court referred participant shall be charged fees for participation in tutoring, circles, intake processes, or stabilization services.

Grace Circles exists to remove financial barriers to structured support within substance impacted communities.

Section 7.2 Funding Sources

Grace Circles shall be sustained through:

- Private donations
- Individual and corporate sponsorships
- Foundation grants
- County or public funding
- Other lawful charitable funding sources

Grace Circles shall not bill insurance providers or individual participants for services unless the Board formally amends this Charter and secures appropriate licensure and regulatory compliance.

Section 7.3 Financial Oversight

All funds designated for Grace Circles shall be administered in accordance with the financial policies and fiduciary standards of Black Sheep Ministries.

Financial oversight shall include:

- Board level review
- Budget approval
- Periodic financial reporting
- Grant compliance reporting when applicable

Section 7.4 Sustainability and Growth

Grace Circles shall pursue sustainable growth strategies consistent with:

Volunteer capacity
Leadership stability
Financial viability
Program outcome data
Community need

Expansion beyond the pilot region or significant program enlargement shall require documented operational stability and Board approval.

Article VIII: Amendments, Suspension, and Program Integrity

Section 8.1 Commitment to Alignment and Effectiveness

Grace Circles is committed to operating in alignment with the mission of Black Sheep Ministries and in coordination, where appropriate, with community partners, courts, agencies, and educational institutions.

The program shall remain adaptive and responsive to documented outcomes, community feedback, and evolving best practices in youth stabilization and trauma informed engagement.

Section 8.2 Program Evaluation and Modification

If Grace Circles determines through documented evaluation, outcome metrics, or Board review that any component of the program:

Is ineffective
Is unsustainable
Is misaligned with community needs
Creates unintended harm
Or fails to meet defined objectives

The Board may revise, restructure, suspend, or replace program components in order to restore alignment and maximize impact.

Section 8.3 Temporary Suspension

Should Grace Circles determine that continued operation of any program component presents safety risks, financial instability, or misalignment with mission, the Board may enact temporary suspension of that component pending review and restructuring.

Suspension shall not be considered program failure but a responsible act of stewardship and recalibration.

Section 8.4 Commitment to Long Term Relational Continuity

Grace Circles affirms its commitment to remain a relational resource for youth and families beyond the expiration of court involvement, probation supervision, or agency case closure, when appropriate and sustainable.

Where state or county services conclude, Grace Circles may continue to provide structured support, accountability, and community engagement in order to reduce relapse into instability or system reentry.

This principle of remaining present after formal services conclude is foundational to the program's identity.

Section 8.5 Amendments

This Charter may be amended by formal vote of the governing Board of Black Sheep Ministries.

Amendments shall reflect documented evaluation, strategic planning, legal compliance requirements, or expansion of program capacity.

All amendments shall be recorded in official meeting minutes.

Closing Adoption Statement

This Charter is hereby adopted as the governing framework for Grace Circles under Black Sheep Ministries.

Grace Circles shall operate in accordance with the Articles contained herein and in compliance with all applicable laws and governance standards.

Grace Circles shall operate within approved annual budgets and shall not expand programming beyond sustainable financial capacity.