



SOCIAL AND HEALTH SERVICES DIVISION

REPORT TO:	WARDEN & LAMBTON COUNTY COUNCIL
PREPARED BY:	Doug Ball, Manager, Social Planning & Program Support
DEPARTMENT:	SOCIAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT
MEETING DATE:	September 17, 2008
SUBJECT:	Circles™ Implementation Plan

BACKGROUND

In 2007 Council commissioned the creation of a poverty task force and approved their terms of reference with the following motions:

“That a task force be struck to develop a report for Council that focuses on reducing the number of children living in poverty in the County of Lambton” (November, 2006)

“That the proposed Terms of Reference be adopted and that the co-chairs be authorized to assemble the task force and staff working group as described within the terms of reference.” (February 2007)

At the April 16, 2008 meeting of Council, the Poverty Task Force reported and recommended the County adopt the Circles™ model of poverty reduction as the community based model that focuses on reducing the number of children living in poverty in the County of Lambton. In their presentation the Poverty Task Force also recommended that Council direct staff develop an implementation and funding strategy for the Circles™ model.

Council tabled the task force’s report and requested a staff information report on the process of how the task force came to its decision about choosing the Circles™ model over any other model.

At the May 17, 2008 meeting of Council the Poverty Task Force’s recommendation was adopted and staff directed to develop an implementation plan and funding strategy for the Circles™ model for poverty reduction.

DISCUSSION

The Circles™ Model of poverty reduction is best suited to be integrated into the existing Ontario Works program of the County's Social Services Department as described in the attached Circles™ Implementation Plan.

Due to the size and scope of this initiative two staff will be required to be added to Ontario Works. Current support staff along with other staff of the Special Services team will have some duties adjusted in order to support the program.

Due to the scope of this community based project it is proposed that the initiative be phased-in. In the first two years participants will be individuals who are in receipt of Ontario Works (OW) assistance or the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP). To accommodate the integration of Circles™ into Ontario Works, current programming including the F.O.C.U.S. workshop will require minor adjusting to the program schedule. Adjustments to the referral process into the program are described in the attached plan.

The staff structure and integration proposed will allow clients that exit Ontario Works but enter the realm of the "working poor" to continue to have support from the Circles™ staff. Recently, at a Poverty Consultation in the community former clients of social assistance raised the issue that in the past they felt isolated and cutoff from support once they exited social assistance (even though they had not exited poverty). This program and implementation model will address this issue.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The integration of the Circles™ model into the Ontario Works area is projected to cost \$227,000.00 annually. The financing of this cost in 2009 can be realized through County savings of \$976,284.00 due to the uploading of the Ontario Disability Support Program. There is sufficient savings in this area to cover this program and the one-time \$650,000.00 grant provided earlier this year for the creation of an emergency shelter, should alternative funding not be secured. The cumulative savings through 2011 due to the full uploading of ODSP cost of administration and client benefits will be just over 6.5 million dollars to the County. Utilization of a portion of these savings for the Circles™ program would result in no increased impact to the current levy.

Additionally, the Circles™ Campaign once fully implemented has the potential of contributing to its own sustainability within Ontario Works. For every family unit of three (2 parent, 1 child) that exits social assistance there will be a resulting savings of approximately \$12,000.00 (gross) annually. Nineteen families exiting social assistance each year would offset the cost of implementing the program annually.

CONSULTATIONS

In preparing this report consultations were held with the Ontario Works Manager and Supervisors.

STRATEGIC PLAN

The proposed implementation of this program model is consistent with the Mission of the County as a community dedicated to an enhanced quality of life through the provision of responsive and efficient services. This model is also consistent with the County's vision of being a "Caring" as well as "Innovative" community.

CONCLUSION

The proposed plan for implementation of Circles™ in the community and lead by the County involves integrating the program into Ontario Works. A total of two staff are required as well as a Purchase of Service Agreement with Move The Mountain to ensure full development and implementation of Circles™ as the community based model for reducing poverty.

The financing of this cost in 2009 can be realized through County savings of \$976,284 due to the uploading of the Ontario Disability Support Program. Utilization of a portion of these savings for the Circles™ program would result in no increased impact to the current levy. Additionally the Circles™ Campaign, once fully implemented, has the potential of contributing to its own sustainability within Ontario Works.

Recommendation

That the Circles™ Implementation Plan be approved and staff be authorized to begin implementation of the plan; and further,

That staff be authorized to increase the F.T.E. complement by 2 positions in 2009 and finally,

That the implementation of the program be incorporated into the 2009 budget within the Ontario Works area and be financed utilizing savings from the uploading of Ontario Disability Support Program.

Prepared by:

Doug Ball, Manager
Social Planning & Program Support

Reviewed by:

Kenneth C. R. Dick, General Manager
Social & Health Services Division

Reviewed by:

Ronald G. Van Horne
Chief Administrative Officer