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Report on Focus Group Data Collected for Circle of Security Parenting in North Carolina

BACKGROUND

Circle of Security Parenting (COSP) is an 8-week, research-based program that supports secure attachment in young children. The program optimizes the reflective capacities and emotional responsiveness of a child's parents and caregivers, including professional staff who provide diverse caregiving to the family. The program works equally well for increasing childcare providers' awareness of attachment and is used in classroom settings to foster stronger teacher-child relationships.

COSP offers adults simple visual graphics, a roadmap, and a common language to make sense of attachment. A trained facilitator utilizes video content, invites reflection, and promotes group discussion to help parents and caregivers learn to read and meet their children's emotional needs. This is notably different from teaching techniques for managing child behaviors. When infants, toddlers, and preschoolers get their basic emotional needs met most of the time and consistently experience their parents and caregivers as a secure base and a safe haven, increased self esteem, emotional regulation, and abiding healthy connections bloom. These are protective factors that support lifelong resilience and well-being.

In August 2020, the Lucy Daniels Center approached Partners for Impact about an evaluation to better inform their processes and outcomes in implementing the Circle of Security Parenting curriculum. The evaluation team and Lucy Daniels staff agreed that Partners for Impact would support the development of a statewide vision of implementing Circle of Security Parenting. This includes working with both the Lucy Daniels Center and Resources for Resilience in the western part of North Carolina. **A project team consisting of staff from the Lucy Daniels Center, Resources for Resilience, and the evaluation consultants from Partners for Impact meet regularly to ensure progress is being made on the project and to set priorities for the coming month.**

This report is the third deliverable for the contract between Partners for Impact and the Lucy Daniels Center. It discusses the findings associated with exploring the data that have been collected from three focus groups with individuals who have used the Circle of Security curriculum in different ways. We discuss the methods we used, a summary of some of the key results, and recommendations for moving forward.

METHODS

In December 2020 and January 2021, Partners for Impact facilitated three focus groups of individuals with experience with the Circle of Security curriculum. The first group comprised home visitors from Telamon Corporation using the Circle of Security Parenting curriculum with individual families in Sampson and Caswell counties. The second group, brought together by Resources for Resilience, included individuals with experience facilitating the Circle of Security Parenting curriculum with a variety of different groups, including staff of service agencies, and child protective services-involved families. The third focus group included Early Head Start teachers from Chatham, Caswell and Sampson counties who had completed the Circle of Security Classroom program and were being coached by a Lucy Daniels staff member on utilizing the concepts and skills in their work with children and families.

Each focus group was conducted virtually, recorded, and transcribed. The findings in this report are derived from a qualitative analysis of the transcripts.

RESULTS OF QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF FOCUS GROUP DATA

To evaluate the impact of this program and make sense of the data collected, the evaluation team is using a modified social-ecological model to help organize the multiple levels at which change and impact are occurring.¹ This model presents a framework for analyzing and presenting data at the individual, organizational, systems, and community levels. In this modified version, the innermost level represents the individual providers facilitating the Circle of Security curriculum as well as the teachers who have completed that program and are using it in their work with children and families. The organizational level includes the agencies employing or contracting the facilitators and the organizations employing the teachers and staff who have completed the program. The systems piece represents those larger entities and interrelated networks in which the organizations operate that affect how and to whom they provide services. Finally, the community level in this model represents those impacted by the intervention. In this evaluation, the community is the children and families who benefit from increased attachment.



Individual Level Changes and Impact

In the three focus groups, the evaluation team collected data from individuals interacting with the Circle of Security curriculum in different ways. Individual experiences varied but several common themes emerged about the effects of the program on the people interviewed. Adding “facilitators” to “caregivers” in the model, these themes correspond to the immediate and intermediate outcomes in the Circle of Security Theory of Change (Appendix A) that was shared with the evaluation team. The information gathered from the facilitators illustrates the theory of change at levels beyond the primary caregivers.

¹ McLeroy, K. R., Steckler, A. and Bibeau, D. (Eds.) (1988). The social ecology of health promotion interventions. *Health Education Quarterly*, 15(4):351-377.

Increased Secure Base

The importance of a “secure base” was a recurring theme throughout the focus groups and appeared in multiple dimensions. The Circle of Security curriculum teaches caregivers about being a secure base for children - a safe place/person from which the child can move away to explore and return for reassurance. While this is an important component of the curriculum for primary caregivers, the role of facilitators, teachers, coaches, and managers as a secure base for caregivers was mentioned repeatedly in the focus groups. Many of the facilitators talked about serving as a secure base for the participants as they learn and explore new ways of caregiving presented in the program. The facilitators use the concepts of COSP, such as “being with,” “organizing feelings,” and “recognizing needs” with the participants, modeling what they are teaching while providing a supportive environment for the participants.

One facilitator spoke of her experience with a parent:

My parents are referred from CPS ... the mom was very reluctant. And being that we are doing it over Zoom, she had some technical issues. So she was really irritated about the technical issues. And the first time we tried she wasn't able to get on ... instead of just continuing to aggravate her, I just cancelled the class and told her, “It's okay. We can try this again.” ... Because it was a CPS situation, her back was already raised and she already felt confrontational coming in. So I really wanted to create that safe space and remove that stigma to let her know you can come and show up as you are and I will show up as I am. And we can coexist and share this information ... I can see her relax and really be able to open up and receive the information. ... she even laughed and she could identify where she was on the circle, but also where her children were on the circle as well.

Focus group participants who had facilitated COSP-Classroom with teachers shared stories about providing support as these teachers worked with children in their classrooms. The support included guidance on recognizing the cues that children were giving about their needs, recommendations for finding ways to connect and engage with children, and reminders that children often need attention more than answers.

One of the other things that the couple of teachers I've worked with, and, and brought in Circle of Security was they feel like when they're being with a child, and somebody were to walk by their classroom or see them on the playground, and they're just sitting there, they're not doing anything. Right. And so that brings up a lot of emotions within the teachers as well. But I tell them all the time, “But you are doing! You're doing the work by being close and staying calm.” ... And, being with the children, that is the work.

In a similar way but using different language, teachers discussed their increased understanding of being a support system and secure base for the caregivers of the children with whom they are working. Teachers shared that learning Circle of Security was changing the way that they worked with children, but also giving them new tools to help the children’s families.

For the Home Visitors from Telamon Corporation, the weekly group meetings with their manager clearly provided the same type of support and secure base where they could process what they were experiencing as facilitators. The coach provided by Lucy Daniels Center to the teachers is also serving a very important support role as well, modeling and reinforcing the concepts that teachers are being encouraged to use with children by allowing them to experience the concepts themselves.

Increased Reflection and Awareness of Needs

While the facilitators are trained to provide COSP to caregivers, the effect that the program had on their own lives was a common theme. The facilitators told stories of changing the way they interact with their own children, families, and colleagues because of their experience with COSP. One facilitator told a story of showing affection to her own daughters that she did not receive from her parent:

I learned a lot, because I grow up only with my dad. My mom died when I have 10 years old. And this was very, very hard for me. And my dad all the time was working. And he never almost hug me and kiss me because all the time is working ... Now I think that I'm different with my family and my daughters and my husband, because all the time I say, I love you to my daughter, and all the time, I'm kissing her. And my little daughter said, and I said, I love you all the time, all the time, because I almost never had that. It was hard for me. In my life this is the impact.

Other facilitators spoke of moments that they recognized that they were using COSP concepts in their own lives. Several shared about moving from feeling the need to fix problems to recognizing the value of just “being with” a person. One shared,

The “aha” moment that I've had was [when] I stopped trying to fix the situation. And was just in the situation with the child or with a coworker, or with a parent, or even with people in my personal life, right like I do. The aha shift came from just being like, kind of giving in to the fact that like, I can't fix this. Right? The situation is the situation. So what I can do is just be with that person, that child, that coworker.

Another facilitator said,

My aha moment was when I realized that you have to listen to their cues, and they will tell you what they need ... Anytime my siblings or my son comes to me, it is automatically, ‘Okay, what do we need to do? And how do we need to do this?’ Now I listen. If they come to me and they say, ‘I want you to listen to what I'm going to tell you.’ Or, ‘I want you to give me your advice.’ Because most times, I will give advice when they did not ask me for advice. It was just an automatic because I need to fix your problems. But now I listen to what they're asking me for. And then I give them what they need.

Another facilitator who is also a teacher shared a story of “being with” a parent and meeting her needs rather than trying to fix a problem or have all the answers:

I got in the car ... And then mom just started spewing out, I mean, she was going and going. And I was kind of like in a freeze mode. But I knew ... she just kind of needed to get it off her chest. And so I just sat in that moment ... I sat with mom. ... She started crying, and I didn't say a word, I just sat there. When it was over, I realized that she was so concerned. And she was fearful that I heard the fear. So it gave me more empathy, to be able to be with her and kind of understand like, right at this moment. I could have said, ‘You know, we shouldn't do this in front of the kid.’ I just allowed her to kind of get it out of her system. And she calmed down, she was able to get what she needed.

Decreased Negative Attributions about Self

Other facilitators spoke of realizing they are good enough, in the same way they tell caregivers that they do not need to be perfect 100% of the time. One facilitator provided this example,

I learned to explore my feelings more, and to share my mistakes because that was one of the things that I couldn't do before the Circle of Security. Like the insecurity in myself, to feel that I'm guilty or like the worst mom in the world. I was ashamed to share these things with other parents. But having those two groups really opened my eyes and I said, 'This is worth sharing.' And I don't have to worry about the mistakes. Everybody, everybody makes mistakes. And there's mistakes every day, and there's days we're not gonna be mistake-free.

Impact on HeadStart Teachers

The impact of Circle of Security is a stronger, more supportive network of caregivers holding children and families. By sharing Circle of Security with Early Head Start teachers, Lucy Daniels Center is building the capacity of providers who work very closely with children and their primary caregivers. By improving their skills of reflecting on their own feelings, identifying the difficulties that trigger their “shark music,” and learning to recognize children’s needs that need to be met, the teachers are finding better ways to work with children. Again, these outcomes track the Theory of Change and the teachers’ stories illustrate many of the outcomes listed on the model.

The transition to virtual learning due to COVID-19 has brought with it many additional challenges. The support of COSP and Lucy Daniels Center has helped these Early Head Start teachers manage stress as they find new ways to work with children and families remotely. The teachers feel more supported and better able to face the difficulties of working in an unfamiliar environment. They experience less frustration and have developed a support network across their team. One teacher discussed the positive shift in her experience as she learned to focus on making connections with her young student rather than sticking to a rigid plan:

You're more calm, you're more understanding, you're like, I'm not worrying about, he's not doing this, or he's not doing that. You know, as long as he's engaged, he's enjoying himself, and stuff like that. If we don't get anything in as far as what we have in a circle time, as long as he's doing something, and we're talking to him - because we don't get that chance a lot, even just to talk to him, you know. So whatever we get done, you know, we're happy with that. Maybe we didn't get to do this right here. But we did something else.

Multiple teachers shared stories of how using the Circle of Security concepts helped them interact more effectively with their young students, especially during the difficult times of virtual learning. They described ways in which they were learning to recognize the children’s needs in the moment, prioritize meeting those needs over sticking with a set agenda, and make the important connections that led to better engagement. This shift in mindset towards recognizing and meeting needs - including the children’s needs for a secure base - led to less frustration for both children and teachers. Teachers described feelings of increased self-efficacy and decreased stress.

I had to use this because the child did the peekaboo thing. So I use it as a teachable moment... we use it as a countdown, see how many times she could cover her eyes and how many times she can look at us. And then as she tired of that, we just let her know, you just go through it until she tired of it. And what she did, she knew, we were there for her come back to our secure base.

While the teachers are using the Circle of Security concepts in the classroom with the children, they also expressed more confidence in supporting parents and primary caregivers using these same skills. One teacher said,

When you talk about the hands, you know, that's what we are, not only just to the children, but also to the parents. When they get overwhelmed, they can always come back to that secure place in sharing with us, asking us what we do to help the children do what they do in the classroom and also do it as well at home...Whenever the children say I need you, the parents say I need you too ... So it all comes around, back to that secure base with the teachers building that relationship with the parent that they can come to you, when they are in need of help.

Impact of Coaching

For these Early Head Start teachers, the impact of coaching funded by Lucy Daniels Center was profound. All participants spoke of the coach as providing a secure base for them, particularly as they navigated the transition to online services, but also when they were in the classroom. The teachers spoke of specific instances when the coach provided clear guidance to help put the Circle of Security concepts into practice. The ongoing coaching has increased the teachers' ability to recognize the needs of their students and build stronger connections with them. The weekly coaching sessions have embedded the concepts more deeply into the teachers' interactions with the children, families, and their own families and coworkers.

The coach has built significant trust with the teachers, guiding them as they implement the Circle of Security concepts in their work as well as their personal lives. In creating relationships with the teachers, she has strengthened the teachers' reliance on each other, helping them build a network to support each other when she is not with them. The teachers were clear that they valued the coach because the coach valued them, being with them and meeting their needs. In her work with the teachers, the coach directly modeled the concepts she was teaching in the curriculum.

The teachers credited the coach with helping them weather the most difficult times and stay in this challenging profession. One teacher explained it as follows:

I think it is for the simple reason we get burned out. I got the children there. We've got the parents there. We've got other teachers here. They don't realize we're human too, and we get burned out. We need somebody to go to; we need a shoulder to cry on once in a while... and we feel a lot better ... It makes us feel important. It makes us feel like hey, I'm somebody. This is the feeling I get. I want feedback. Tell me. Help me. I'm human too.

Changes and Impact at Organizational Level

In addition to impacting the individual providers, Circle of Security is also changing the way organizations relate to the people they serve. The focus group participants shared ways in which COSP is affecting the way that staff relate to each other within their agencies. When an organization's staff goes through the program, outcomes include shifting culture and the development of a shared language. One facilitator described the experience at her organization,

I did work as the director of an early education program within the context of a larger school that was preschool through high school. So one thing that happened is that I trained all of my staff in this language, and it really impacted the classroom. They were all very good educators to begin with. But then we had this shared language and this model that really offered, instead of just lip service to like, 'You know, we all make mistakes,' it was like, 'Oh, we can really all reflect together with this shared model.' And it just, it changed actually the language within the entire framework of the school.

Another participant spoke about the stronger support network among staff resulting from their shared experience with COSP: “Whatever problem we have, we need help, we come to each other ... I can always depend on my co-workers. And when we need help with something, we help one another out - teamwork.”

Focus group participants said their organizations are beginning to examine their programming in light of the COSP concepts as more staff understand the model. Several participants mentioned discussions with co-workers and managers about offering new programs, changing policies and procedures, and changing the way they support their staff who work directly with young children.

Several participants talked about their organizations recognizing that teachers and frontline staff are not just instructing children but are acting as important support systems - hands on the circle, in COSP language - for families. This understanding allows teachers to share their focus between the children and the families, acknowledging that more secure caregivers are better able to care for their children.

Changes at Systems Level

As facilitators and teachers working directly with families, the focus group participants did not share any explicit stories of system change. The impact on their own lives, their organizations, and the caregivers with whom they work, however, offered insight into the potential for new ways of operating at higher levels. Systems such as early childhood education, social services, and child protective services have a mission of serving children and families but they are often locked into bureaucratic structures that prioritize efficiency, accountability, and rule-following. The root causes and real needs that bring families and caregivers into contact with these systems can get lost as forms are completed, boxes are checked, and families are directed into programs that may or may not address their real needs. Shifting these systems to better recognize the needs of children and their caregivers, be the hands on the circle, and be with those they serve without judgment could lead to better outcomes, including stronger, more secure, and resilient families.

Impact at Community Level

In the modified social-ecological model used to frame this report, the impact of Circle of Security on individual children and families appears at the community level. As COSP effects change with individual providers supporting families and children, at the organizational level, and within systems, the outcome is a healthier and more supportive environment for all children.

When identifying themes from the focus groups related to the impact at the community level, many examples align with the [Strengthening Families and Protective Factors Framework](#), created by the Center for the Study of Social Policy.² This framework complements the Circle of Security Theory of Change and widens the scope to include improved resilience for families in addition to children. The five key protective factors associated with the Strengthening Families framework are useful in organizing the many different ways that COSP is having an impact on children and their caregivers.

Protective Factor: Parental Resilience

Building parental resilience involves strengthening the abilities of caregivers to manage challenges and cope effectively with their needs and the needs of their family. This includes establishing supportive relationships and accessing resources.

² <https://cssp.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Core-Meanings-of-the-SF-Protective-Factors-2015.pdf>

By providing a secure base for parents and primary caregivers, the COSP facilitators enabled parents to be stronger and more responsive to their children. The facilitators shared parents' stories of coping with their children's outbursts and difficult moments by recognizing their own shark music, identifying their children's needs, and choosing to be with their children. The caregivers were experiencing less stress and feeling more effective in addressing the challenges as they arose.

One facilitator said,

Back in her country, a lot of the times her mama or her dad would use physical punishment. And she's like, "I don't want to do that. I don't want to. I don't want that for my kid." So, she uses a lot of positive words so she can have a stronger relationship with her son. And she said, "It works, it works. And I also tell my husband, and when I tell him, we're not supposed to do this, or that's not good for him, he listens ... It has started to be a different relationship."

Another facilitator spoke of a mother finding ways to lower her own stress and its effect on her child:

This mom had shared a lot about how she hears a lot of that shark music when her child is distressed. And so ... the next time her child was starting to get upset and really needed her mom to kind of get in there and help her organize her feelings, that mom first sat down on the floor, and just took a deep breath. She noticed immediately that her child copied her - sat down, took a deep breath. She was like, "Oh, my gosh, she calmed down right away. I didn't realize how much my stress was stressing her out." ... She noticed that had a big effect on her child's ability to just kind of come back down from the outset.

Protective Factor: Social Connections

Improved positive relationships with family members, friends, and others provides concrete and emotional support for primary caregivers. Facilitators spoke of parents improving their relationships not just with their very young children, but with their older children, their spouses, and their own parents. The group experience of Circle of Security also provides caregivers with an opportunity to build relationships with other parents and build their own support network.

One example shared by a facilitator described a mother repairing her relationship with her own mother:

She also realized ... how she could go back and repair some of these relationships now in adulthood with her mom, because she was feeling like [her mom] wasn't supportive when she went out into the world and when she came back. So that was helping with repairing her relationships as well.

Protective Factor: Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development

The Strengthening Families framework identifies "Accurate information about raising children and appropriate expectations for their behavior" as a key component of this protective factor. Understanding that children's behaviors are related to their needs and responding appropriately is a fundamental concept in Circle of Security. The facilitators spoke of helping parents and teachers recognize what the children in their care needed, to organize their own feelings, and to provide an appropriate response.

Facilitators recognize when caregivers connect their behaviors to their own upbringing and actively choose a different approach to their own children. For many caregivers, this breaks a cycle of unhealthy relationships:

When growing up, when you've been exposed to certain ways of parenting where it's always just a stressful situation, where it's a lot of fussing and yelling... when you expose parents to a different way of doing it, when it's less stressful, parents hook onto it. They be like, well, that's a lot easier than yelling and being so hard, and just showing more love.

This different approach includes helping caregivers move away from corporal punishment:

One thing that I love that we've discovered is, we used to in our previous curriculum have a lot of pushback when we talked about positive discipline and why you can't spank or whoop your kids ... What's interesting now is, we'll go through a whole group and we won't even talk about it. And then we'll get to the end and my co-facilitator will say, "Have you noticed that we haven't really talked about spanking or whooping?" And they'll be like, "Yeah, like, why would you do that?"

Protective Factor: Children's Social and Emotional Development

Assisting children in organizing their feelings and interacting with others contributes to this protective factor. Facilitators shared stories of children learning to play more independently and caregivers helping children manage their emotions constructively.

A focus group participant shared a story of working with a child in a school environment:

There was this one little guy who was on the playground and the transition was happening to go inside ... any change was really a trigger for him. He started throwing mulch, and kicking all the buckets ... I just sat down close, but not too close ... and he was screaming at me, and just mad and crying. I was like, "I'm right here with you." ... The longer I sat there, the closer he got to me, even though he was still mad ... Eventually, he got close enough to where I could just put my arms out. And he just melted into my lap, and had a good cry. And then I was able to help organize his feelings around it ... "You are so mad that we have to go inside right now. And you are so sad that we can't be outside."

Protective Factor: Concrete Support in Times of Need

While the Circle of Security program does not provide tangible resources such as financial support, transportation, or food assistance, it does support the mental health needs of caregivers as they learn to acknowledge their own feelings rather than suppressing or ignoring them.

This four year old didn't want to go to mom...And instead of [the dad] saying, "Oh, no, okay, you don't have to go" ... or just saying, "It's gonna be okay, you're gonna have fun," he just hugged her. ... But then he got in his car and realized that he was feeling a lot of feelings about that exchange. He even pulled over on the side of the road so that he could just kind of be with himself and allow himself to feel sad about what had just transpired and then he shared it with us.

Many more stories from the three focus groups illustrate the greater impact that the Circle of Security work is having beyond individual caregivers and the children in their care. At the community level, a broader shift is occurring that creates a network of carers more effectively meeting the needs of

children. Strengthening support networks for caregivers, promoting healthy relationships, and reducing the stress of caregiving all contribute to the wide reach of COSP in meeting the needs of children.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As efforts to continue and expand the implementation of Circle of Security moves forward, several recommendations emerge from the data gathered for this report. These recommendations provide information for gathering additional data on the impact that the current Circle of Security work is having in North Carolina, considerations for developing plans to spread COSP more widely and deeply across the state, and suggestions for bringing a racial equity lens to all efforts.

Identifying Impact at the Organizational and Systems Levels

The three focus groups conducted for this report included facilitators who have used the COSP curriculum with individuals and groups, and teachers who have experienced COSP as participants. Participants were asked to focus on their own experiences and those of the caregivers and children with whom they worked. While some focus group attendees spoke of changes at their agencies, most of the stories involved impact at the individual level.

In the upcoming focus group with staff from Buncombe County Child Protective Services (CPS), more information can be gathered about the impact on organizations and systems when individuals learn about the COSP concepts. Does an understanding of the concepts translate to CPS staff working with families differently? Do these changes get institutionalized? If so, is there a particular mechanism that facilitates that, for example, having managers as well as frontline staff participate in the Circle of Security program? Is there impact beyond the Child Protective Services office resulting in changes in Buncombe County Health and Human Services? What would it take to create change at that level?

Using the Focus Group Data in the Scaling Up Process

The focus group participants were clear and enthusiastic about their wishes to have Circle of Security offered more widely across the state. Many spoke of wanting every family to have access to the program and to have it supported by public funds. They also expressed interest in having the program offered not just to individual caregivers but also within organizations, and spoke of the potential for wider change if systems adopted the COSP principles. The experience of the facilitators can inform the path for reaching more caregivers and agencies across the state. They can also provide feedback about improving and adapting the curriculum to families of diverse backgrounds, cultures, structures, and needs. Continuing to listen to facilitators from across the state will keep the process grounded in lived experience and direct contact with the carers and children who benefit from Circle of Security.

Other lessons from the focus group participants include managing timelines and expectations about the pace of change. Allowing a process to move at a speed that prioritizes ensuring good outcomes rather than keeping to artificial timelines creates a system that centers the participants and builds trust. It also provides time to focus on the process, ensuring that how the work is done is consistent with shared values.

The focus group of Early Head Start teachers informs recommendations about creating organizational commitment to supporting professional carers as they implement the Circle of Security principles in their work. It illustrated the benefit of ongoing support beyond the initial program to help individuals more fully translate the concepts into action. Developing support within the existing management structure

can build the cohesion of the team through shared language and mutual encouragement. Engaging management, not just frontline staff, in the curriculum can also hasten a culture shift in an organisation towards adopting the Circle of Security at multiple levels.

Participants in all of the focus groups spoke of the ongoing learning involved in using the Circle of Security principles and the value of having others doing the work to process with and learn from. Building these networks of support among facilitators can deepen understanding and help them deliver the program with more confidence and competence. This may also help keep trained individuals in the work and build a critical mass of facilitators to spread the program.

Reflection plays an important part in the COSP model and should remain central as efforts to broaden the program across the state continue. Circle of Security has the potential to facilitate reflection at the level of the individual provider, the organization, and the system. How are each of these holding and supporting families? How are they recognizing and responding to the needs of the people they serve? Are they responding based on current information and input or are they reacting from experiences they had with other families in the past? Are they empowering families or trying to fix them?

Using a Racial Equity Lens

In meetings with Lucy Daniels Center, Resources for Resilience, and the Partners for Impact evaluation team, racial equity is discussed often, particularly in the context of increasing the reach of Circle of Security. A commitment to racial equity requires continuous and explicit interrogation of the ways that systems advantage white children and families and disadvantage black and brown children and families. These systems include providers and organizations that are using the Circle of Security Parenting model or may be targeted in the expansion effort. Addressing inequities requires questioning assumptions, having appropriate data, and ensuring a diverse range of expertise - professional and lived - is included in decision-making. This includes disaggregating data to identify differences in participants' experiences of Circle of Security Parenting. It also means including families and providers in explicit conversations about race as it relates to access to the program. These conversations should also include the impact of language and cultural differences for those from different backgrounds.

Partners for Impact uses the modified socio-ecological model to more clearly focus conversations on inequities created by systems. More typical models of direct services put parents and children at the center, placing the burden to change on the child and their primary caregivers. This focuses programs on the choices that caregivers make while relieving the system of responsibility for the limited options that many caregivers have. The modified socio-economic model that places individual professionals working with families and children at the center changes the outcomes from fixing families to impacting the people charged with supporting them - or holding them, in Circle of Security terms. These concepts can then cascade to the organization in policies and practices that support and hold staff. These organizations can influence the systems within which they operate. This true systemic change can then reduce inequities that unfairly burden children and their caregivers, and create new structures that better meet their needs.

CONCLUSION

Multiple studies with direct observation of children and their caregivers have documented the effectiveness of Circle of Security. Rather than repeating that work, this evaluation collected data from the perspective of the facilitators and teachers working with children and caregivers in order to capture

the program's impact. In alignment with the target audience of Circle of Security, the stories in this report focus mostly on change in the behavior of the caregivers and how they relate to their children. Some examples of behavior change of individual children are included but were not the primary intention of the focus groups.

This analysis presents the changes that Lucy Daniels Center and Resources for Resilience are effecting using the Circle of Security curriculum. The extent of the impact reaches beyond the ways that facilitators, caregivers, and professionals going through the program interact with the children in their care. The focus group participants' shared language, personal stories, and passion for their work attest to a mindset that prioritizes relationships, feelings, and reflection. This way of being affects their interactions with everyone in their lives. And it speaks to the potential for greater community change as the impact of this program ripples outward.

COS-P Theory of Change

