'The Child's Protective Circle' (le Cercle de l'Enfant): A tool of community social pediatry

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The Child’s Protective Circle Model

- Mobilization and Strengths Focus
- Family network (children, parents, family)
- Social Network (professionals, institutions)

Supported by community members

- A tool developed in community social pediatry.
The GOPE Vision

**Gift**
Every child is born with at least one gift
This gift is developed through opportunities offered to the child from her family network and her community

**Opportunities**
The family network, the community and the social network must work in partnership

**Partnership**
Partnership will ensure equitable opportunities and resources for children in various communities

**Equity**
The Child’s Protective Circle Model
Le Cercle de l’Enfant

1) Model philosophy and description;

2) Evaluation study: preliminary findings

3) Discussion: alternative approaches to children’s well-being.
Cercle: Philosophy and Application

Philosophy rooted in:
- Aboriginal Perspective
- Participatory Justice
- Community Social Pediatrics

Influential Approaches:
- Multidisciplinary
- Mediation
- Family Group Conference
Community social pediatry

Based on trust, respect and proximity to ensure that everyone who is on the child’s development path can act efficiently in a concept of shared social responsibilities.

Establishing a special relationship

Exchanging information

Decoding knowledge and experience

Acting based on a consensus between family members and professionals, for all childrens’ needs.
Children’s health or behavioural problems too often hide a breach of their fundamental rights:
The origin of vulnerability

- Unsafe housing
- Lack of stimulation
- Financial insecurity
- Poor environment
- Poor attachment and filiation
- Lack of a protective circle
- Precarity or absence of identity
- Lack of sustainability
- Malnutrition
- Lack of reference and guidance
- Cultural breakdown
- Exclusion and abandonment
- Violence
- No citizenship
Community Social Pediatry Centres
Mechanism in the community that ensures efficient actions to meet the child’s needs

- Global needs
- Health determinants
- Fundamental rights of children
- Health
- Education
- Social services
- Security
- Leisure
- Environment

CSP

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Phase of reference (social pediatry centre)

Phase of preparation: Individual/Pré-Cercle
Family + Social Networks

Cercle de l’Enfant Session

Implementation of the plan
Follow-Up Circle
Cercle de l'Enfant Session

1) Opening remarks or ceremony
2) Sharing of information
3) Private time
4) Sharing of a meal together
5) Putting the objectives in common
6) Building a partnership to identify means, responsible people, and calendar
7) Distributing the action plan to all participants
8) Closing remarks or ceremony
Evaluation Objectives

- To explore and describe Le Cercle during implementation years (2008-2011);
- Phase I: model description, impacts, perceptions
- Phase II: comparative measure of impacts on participants (children and families);
- Data collected: family and social networks participation, evolution of children’s situations, perceptions about the model, resource access and use, information sharing.
Analysis of the Cercle Model

1) Observations: Cercles (10), Cercles de suivi (3) Comités clinique/évaluation;
2) In-depth semi-structured interviews; participants from all networks involved (15)
3) Questionnaires (exiting the Cercle meeting) (n=61)
4) Follow-up phone calls: planning and decision making processes (n=13)
5) Discussions with mediators and model developers;
6) Case analysis of family trajectories (in development).
## Participant’s Evaluation of the meeting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-Scales</th>
<th>Satisfaction Level (1 to 7)</th>
<th>Mean (Standard deviation)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preparation</td>
<td></td>
<td>6.1 (1.03)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td></td>
<td>6.3 (0.86)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animation/Organisation of meeting</td>
<td></td>
<td>6.1 (0.90)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Plan and decision-making</td>
<td></td>
<td>6.2 (0.64)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global satisfaction score:</td>
<td></td>
<td>6.2 (0.75)</td>
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</table>
Observations and interviews

Themes:
1) Participation of networks;
2) Sharing and expression of participants;
3) Involvement and mobilization of family networks;
4) Efficacy and continuity of partnerships.
Participation of networks

- **Proportion of networks in the meeting**
  - Ratio professionals/family network members
  - Over-involvement of professionals = a necessary evil?

- **Distance in the child situation; closer collaborations in the Cercle**
  - Reinvolving significant adults/discovering who’s there
  - Familiarization and clarification of professional’s roles/family member’s assets
  - Uncovering the unknown: the situation and contributions of hidden collaborators.
Sharing and expression

- Balancing sharing time (concerns) and efficacy of the meeting;
- Preserving energy to produce a satisfying plan;
- Need to develop a knowledge of the child’s situation; need to understand interventions;
- Perceptions to clarify in conflictual situations = Time and process.
- Families who feel judged/professionals who want to be considered.
(ctn’d) Factors limiting or encouraging expression of participants

- Divergent viewpoints among participants and networks:
  - Definition of the problem (reading of the level of risk)----Pré-Cercle step was added
  - Approaches or interventions judged necessary.
- External decisions (outside of the Circle)
  - Parental competencies evaluations, court date, etc.
(ctn’d) Factors limiting or encouraging expression of participants

- **Family Dynamics**
  - Loyalty conflicts; ambivalence in exposing family problems
  - Dynamics of denunciation or support
  - The cost of helping.

- **Power and weight of professional/family interventions**
  - Families need support and encouragement (expression and ownership of the process)
  - Being there, while transferring the solution process;

- **Knowledge of the situation/confidentiality concerns**
  - Breaking the ice/asserting the level of concern with everyone.
Involvement and mobilization of family networks

- Balancing the needs of children and adults
  - Child centered process
  - Parents: developing the capacity to be involved.
- Message of strength, message of concern
  - Mobilizing the positive aspects of the family;
  - Alleviates the heaviness of difficulties;
    encouraging and empowering;
  - Keeping a place for a full recognition of the problem by the family network.
(ctn’d) Involvement and mobilization of family networks

- Decisional power of families and institutions
  - Empowerment and risk: tension
  - Circle = independent process
  - Family networks need to demonstrate their capacity and their organization to prevent recurrence;
  - Precarious social situations: conflicts, instability or lack of recognition?
  - Familiarization with available resources and possibilities - encouraging / not imposing
Efficacy and continuity of partnerships

- A work of communication
  - Preparatory phase
  - Meeting
  - Follow-up
- A work of trust
- Continuity of the partnership mode
- Expectations about the Cercle
  - Being saved/ownership of the process
  - Continued service or punctual resolution?
Discussion: challenges in implementing Le Cercle

- Redistributing responsibility
- Towards a global definition of children’s well-being in interventions
- Mobilizing partners in the process.
Conclusion...and Discussion

- Model is adapted to the needs, is useful to unlock strengths of different networks and involve them.
- Access to the Cercle and steps of the process follow the empowerment logic;
- Collaborations among professional and family partners are complex; understanding and strengthening of relationships;
- Who owns the Circle?
  - Identification of problems/degrees of recognition
  - Motivations and understanding of model
- Sharing of responsibilities in care: degree and risk management
- Creation of stronger supports/ breaking isolation
- Development of model theory and identity.