

Circle of Security Parenting

The Circle of Security Parenting program (COS-P) is an evidence-based early attachment intervention that can be implemented with groups, dyads and individuals¹. The main objective of COS-P is to provide caregivers with an opportunity to grasp their children's needs while addressing the challenges faced with meeting those needs.² An 8-10 week program, COS-P offers caregivers "an understanding of the reciprocal relationship between the attachment and exploratory systems; a roadmap to understand patterns of attachment; shifts the focus from ways to extinguish undesirable behaviors to seeing behavior as communication of a need; explores ways to respond sensitively to children's cues; and offers insight to caregivers of ways to manage their own struggles around certain attachment needs."³

Available in English, Spanish, Danish, Italian, Japanese, Norwegian and Swedish, COS-P has been administered in various countries across the world, demonstrating cross-cultural application.⁴ Adapting to meet the specific needs of its program's participants, COS-P has served different populations⁵ in a variety of diverse settings, including early head start programs, short term housing programs and clinical spaces. To demonstrate its adaptability, a literature review illustrated the flexibility of the program when the intervention was delivered in 4 days rather than 8 weeks for mothers and their children who lived in short term housing, due to housing instability.⁶ Furthermore, COS-P's developers maintain that the intervention is a universal curriculum "specifically designed for wide dissemination across broad populations"⁷ as the composition of the intervention allows facilitators to determine the pace of the program⁸.

Containing both educational and therapeutic components⁹, COS-P embeds trauma informed practices. The intervention is tied to an attachment theory in which caregivers are able to reflect on their own experiences and trauma histories and the impacts of trauma on their relationships,

¹ Pazzagli, Chiara, Loredana Laghezza, Francesca Manaresi, Claudia Mazzeschi, and Bert Powell. "The Circle of Security Parenting and Parental Conflict: A Single Case Study." *Frontiers*. Frontiers, January 1, 1AD. <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2014.00887/full>.

² Ibid.

³ "Circle of Security Parenting With Carers: Tools for Childcare Providers, Foster Parents, and Classrooms." Circleofsecurityinternational.com. Accessed November 2, 2021. <https://www.circleofsecurityinternational.com/circle-of-security-model/cosp-with-carers/>.

⁴ "Is COSP Culturally Responsive?: Asking Questions Rather Than Teaching Techniques." Circleofsecurityinternational.com. Accessed November 2, 2021. <https://www.circleofsecurityinternational.com/circle-of-security-model/is-cosp-culturally-responsive/>.

⁵ Maupin, Angela N., Emily E. Samuel, Susan M. Nappi, Jennifer M. Heath, and Megan V. Smith. "Disseminating a Parenting Intervention in the Community: Experiences from a Multi-Site Evaluation." Accessed November 2, 2021. https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Susan-Nappi/publication/317779701_Disseminating_a_Parenting_Intervention_in_the_Community_Experiences_from_a_Multi-Site_Evaluation/links/59bbd71c0f7e9b48a28df0b5/Disseminating-a-Parenting-Intervention-in-the-Community-Experiences-from-a-Multi-Site-Evaluation.pdf.

⁶ Id.

⁷ Horton, Evette, and Christine Murray. "A Quantitative Exploratory Evaluation of the Circle of Security-Parenting Program with Mothers in Residential Substance-Abuse Treatment," 2015. https://libres.uncg.edu/ir/uncg/f/C_Murray_Quantitative%20_2015.pdf.

⁸ Id.

⁹ Hoffman, Kent T., and Robert S. Marvin. "Changing Toddlers' and Preschoolers' Attachment Classifications: The Circle of Security Intervention." *American Psychological Association. Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, Volume Vol. 74, No. 6, 1017–1026, 2006. <https://www.circleofsecurityinternational.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/JCCP-COS-Published-Article.pdf>.

specifically ways in which the caregivers may struggle to meet their child's attachment needs.¹⁰ Partnering with the Head Start and Early Head Start programs, a study conducted with families living below the federal poverty line – majority of which reported living in violent neighborhoods and/or caregivers having experienced some form of trauma during their childhood – proved to have “significant positive impact on the attachment–caregiving patterns of high-risk toddlers, preschoolers, and their primary caregivers.”¹¹ Prior to the COS-P intervention, 60% of the participating children were classified into one of two highest risk groups compared to 25% of children during post-intervention.¹² With 99% of the women and children served at Lotus House having histories of complex trauma and/or victimization, this intervention appears to be practical for a shelter setting.

To further support its use with the families of Lotus House, a literary review examining the implementation of COS-P by community based providers, who specifically provided maternal and child services to under-resourced mothers was performed. Results from this study demonstrated that “significant positive changes in attachment status following participation in the 20-week intervention were found.”¹³ An additional study, determining the effectiveness of COS-P, with mothers in a residential treatment program, resulted in an improvement in problematic parenting practices for participants who attended the majority of the sessions.¹⁴ Backing the effectiveness of COS-P for parents who fully engage in the attachment intervention, the findings of this study provides “preliminary support to COS-P's effectiveness at impacting three parenting factors associated with child maltreatment.”¹⁵

The Circle of Security Parenting program objectives of “improving caregiver emotion regulation, attributions, and parental discipline practices”¹⁶ have proven to be suitable in assisting participating families in repairing parent-child relationships and acting as a prevention tool for at-risk families.

¹⁰ “Is COSP Trauma Informed?” Circle of Security International. Accessed November 2, 2021. <https://www.circleofsecurityinternational.com/circle-of-security-model/is-cosp-trauma-informed/>.

¹¹ Hoffman, Kent T, Robert S Marvin, Glen Cooper, and Bert Powell. “Changing Toddlers’ and Preschoolers’ Attachment Classifications: The Circle of Security Intervention.” Circle of Security. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 2006. <https://www.circleofsecurityinternational.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/JCCP-COS-Published-Article.pdf>.

¹² Id.

¹³ Maupin, Angela N, Emily E Samuel, Susan M Nappi, Jennifer M Heath, and Megan V Smith. “Disseminating a Parenting Intervention in the Community: Experiences from a Multi-Site Evaluation.” *Research Gate. Journal of Child and Family Studies*, November 2017. https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Susan-Nappi/publication/317779701_Disseminating_a_Parenting_Intervention_in_the_Community_Experiences_from_a_Multi-Site_Evaluation/links/59bbd71c0f7e9b48a28df0b5/Disseminating-a-Parenting-Intervention-in-the-Community-Experiences-from-a-Multi-Site-Evaluation.pdf.

¹⁴ Horton, Evette, and Christine Murray. “A Quantitative Exploratory Evaluation of the Circle of Security-Parenting Program with Mothers in Residential Substance-Abuse Treatment.” Wiley Online Library. Wiley Online Library, 2015. https://libres.uncg.edu/ir/uncg/f/C_Murray_Quantitative%20_2015.pdf.

¹⁵ Id.

¹⁶ Id.