



# Understanding Poverty

## Poverty is relative.

Poverty occurs in all races and in all countries.  
Economic class is a continuous line, not a clear-cut distinction.  
Generational poverty and situational poverty are different.  
We cannot blame the victims of poverty for being in poverty.  
We cannot continue to support stereotypes and prejudices about the poor.

- Reasons people leave poverty:
1. Too painful to stay
  2. A vision or a goal
  3. A talent or a skill
  4. A significant relationship

## Empowering People to Thrive

The local Circles work is completely different from the safety net structure in which people are told how they need to live their lives. In Circles, a family wishing to leave poverty sets goals and uses relationships with people from middle class and wealth to help hold them accountable to their dreams. For people from generational poverty it is a difficult transition to move toward being “in charge”. Learning the skills to direct their own lives helps prepare them for increased education and success in the workplace.

Financial Empowerment is a major piece of what is offered to people who come to Second Harvest Food Bank Circles Program wishing to leave poverty. Courses including content from other programs, “Identifying Spending Leaks,” “Pathways to Financial Freedom” and “Your Money, Your Goals” are taught to Circle Leaders, and their Allies are exposed to some of this information as well.

In addition, children and youth study “Earn. Save. Spend & Give Back” as well as entrepreneurial techniques as part of their time in Circles.

Finally, there are a variety of leadership training opportunities offered within the Circle’s community and elsewhere in Delaware County. These help people expand their horizons and give back to the Circles community and to the Delaware County Community as a whole.



## Engaging the Community

Delaware County Circles is a relationship based community poverty initiative, not affiliated with the national work, in which social service agencies, businesses, and Delaware County community members come together to support individuals in poverty access their fullest potential. All participants complete Getting Ahead trainings culminating in the development of a personalized action plan to reach their goals. Following graduation each participant is matched with volunteers or Allies who befriend a family and support them to reach their highest potential. Through this initiative individuals and families can make real and positive changes in their lives and decide the path that would be best to assist them in the efforts to move from surviving to thriving.

### **Poverty Simulations**

How would you deal with the day to day realities of life with a shortage of money and an abundance of stress?

### **Understanding People in Poverty:**

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### **Study Groups**

For our Getting Ahead Graduates who need tutoring in college courses.

### **Getting Ahead**

It provides a way to examine the impact that poverty has on individuals, families, and their communities.



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## Getting Ahead in a Just Gettin' By World

Getting Ahead is both a workbook and an experience. It's based on Philip DeVol's *Getting Ahead in a Just-Gettin'-by-World: Building Your Resources for a Better Life*. Participants, called Investigators, work in groups to examine the impact of poverty on themselves and their communities and to explore the world through the lens of economic class. Their investigations produce information that is needed to design successful approaches to ending poverty and building sustainable communities. The Investigators create plans to build their own resources and come to the decision-making and planning tables in their communities as fellow problem-solvers with people from all classes, races, sectors, and political persuasions.

**Introduction:** Getting Ahead in a Just-Gettin'-by-World was written for people in poverty. It provides a way to examine the impact that poverty has on individuals, families, and their communities.

The aim is to provide a safe, agenda-free learning environment where adults can reflect on and examine their lives, investigate new information that is relevant to them, assess their own resources, make their own choices, enjoy the power that comes from solving problems and controlling their own lives, make plans for their own future stories, offer ideas for building a prosperous community, and choose a team to help them fulfill their dreams.

**How Getting Ahead is delivered:** Imagine 12 people sitting around a kitchen table. One of them is a Facilitator; the others are Investigators. The Facilitator guides the process; the Investigators do the work of exploring, examining, and processing the information. The Facilitator is not directive, does not make suggestions or offer solutions or analysis, and never makes the argument for change for someone else. The Facilitator does encourage and support the individuals and the group in their work.

This educational experience is valued by Getting Ahead Investigators because it doesn't force people into accepting the logic of, or conforming to, the system or organization; instead, it is a means by which Investigators can deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in solving community problems.

Getting Ahead is composed of 16-20 sessions, each two and a half hours long. Investigators are paid because of the value of the information they provide Getting Ahead sponsors and community planning groups. This work is based on the premise that people in poverty are PROBLEM SOLVERS!



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## FAQ

### How do I become an Ally?

Prospective Allies must complete the following preparation steps:

- Attend a Circles Overview session. These 45-minute sessions will help you understand the model and what is required to be in a Circle and are on the fourth Thursday of every month at 5 p.m. at First Baptist Church, 309 E. Adams. .
- Fill out an information form and an interest form available from the Coach or Second Harvest staff. Indicate your interests and background.
- Unless you have lived in poverty, attend a Poverty Simulation, a 2 hour role play activity that teaches some of the frustrations and issues associated with trying to manage life in poverty.
- Take an “Understanding People in Poverty” – usually a 2-2 ½- hour workshop that teaches participants about hidden rules of middle class that keep some people in poverty from being successful.
- Complete another a 10 or so hours of training over several weeks or months including Toolkit Training to prepare you for how to structure the Circle You will learn how to utilize the help of the Circles Coach, and how to avoid the pitfalls that may arise as you work to help your Circle Leader become self-sufficient.

### What is the time commitment of being an Ally?

In general, each month you will need to attend one 1-1 ½ hour Circles meeting where you are working with you Circle Leader on goals. Then you will try to make it to two weekly Circle Café dinners/meetings, for a total of about 5-5 ½ hours per month. Consistent effort to be a part of the Big View meetings is expected, as well as “checking in” on the Circle Leader and occasionally being involved with him/her on a more personal level, steps that could slightly increase time commitment.

### Is my commitment to this Circle long-term?

Unless you have a difficult personality clash with the Circle Leader and you both mutually agree through the Circles Evaluation Process that your involvement is not working or if a life-changing emergency precludes you from participating, you will be expected to be a part of your Circle for a minimum of 18 months. It takes time to get to know a person and their issues and to develop the trust to make the model work. To leave any sooner is a disservice to the Circle Leader’s effort to be successful. In most situations, Circle members become lifetime friends whose connections last long after the Circle has ended.



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## **Am I expected to make a monetary donation to my Circle Leader?**

Allies provide friendship and direction for the Circle Leaders. They are encouraged not to give money to their Circle Leaders.

## **How is the Circle Leader's progress evaluated?**

Circle Leaders undergo an intake process with the Circles Coach, who uses a tool called the Family Development Matrix to determine whether the Leader is in crisis or thriving in a variety of life issues ranging from housing to employment and transportation to health. Additionally, we use an internal data collections system.

## **If this work becomes difficult and I am feeling that I may be "in over my head," how can I find the support I need?**

We do not suggest that allies handle difficult situations in isolation, so the Circles Coach and Coordinator provide direct support and encouragement to allies. Periodic Ally Support meetings are a part of the Circles Café meetings so allies can come together to listen to and encourage each other. This is done with the utmost caution so as not to divulge personal issues the Circle Leaders are facing.

## **How will our Circle know when the Circle Leader is ready to move forward without the support of the Circle?**

In general, you will just know. The Circle Leaders will have surmounted the obstacles holding his/her goals. However, the statistical measure of the achievement will be when the Circle Leader reaches at least 200% of poverty, based on federal poverty guidelines and has enough other resources to be successful.