

Last reviewed: July 2016

Intervention website: <https://www.connectedlives.org.uk/cos-p-fidelity-coaching>

GUIDEBOOK INTERVENTION INFORMATION SHEET

Circle of Security-Group (COS-G)

Please note that in the ‘Intervention Summary’ table below ‘child age’, ‘level of need’, and ‘race and ethnicities information is **as evaluated in studies**. Information in other fields describes the intervention as **offered/supported by the intervention provider**.

Intervention summary	
Description	Circle of Security Group (COS-G) is a parenting intervention for caregivers of a child between 0 and 5 years coping with adversity. It is delivered by a single practitioner to groups of five to six parents/carers through 20 weekly 75-minute sessions. During these sessions, parents are guided to reflect on their own experiences of parenting and learn strategies for responding sensitively to the needs of their child.
Evidence rating	2
Cost rating	2
Child outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting children’s mental health and wellbeing - Improved parent-child relationship
Child age (population characteristic)	0 to 5 years
Level of need (population characteristic)	Targeted Selected

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Intervention summary	
Race and ethnicities (population characteristic)	White
Type (model characteristic)	Group
Setting (model characteristic)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Early years setting• Community setting• Out-patient health setting.
Workforce (model characteristic)	Practitioners typically have a master's level qualification or higher in a helping profession
UK available?	Yes
UK tested?	No

Model description

Circle of Security Group (COS-G) offers group-based support to at-risk parents with a toddler or preschooler. It is intended for primary caregivers, this includes but is not limited to parents (mothers or fathers), foster carers, and grandparents.

COS-G is delivered by a single practitioner to groups of between five to six parents/carers through 20 75-minute sessions.

COS-G is based on attachment theory and aims at helping parents reflect on their own attachment experiences and thus reduce their negative mental attributions to the child's normal attachment-seeking behaviours. Parents are then expected to be in a better position to provide a secure base which fosters attachment security.

At each session, core concepts are reinforced through discussions aimed at helping parents consider:

- What they learned from their own parents during their childhoods
- The importance of a secure relationship for children to be able to manage their emotions
- The reasons why caregivers struggle to meet their children's needs
- Strategies to achieve greater attunement with their child.

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The sessions make use of an individualised treatment plan developed for each parent–child dyad on the basis of their interaction during Ainsworth’s Strange Situation (or the MacArthur Preschool Strange Situation) and the primary caregiver’s responses to the Circle of Security Interview (COSI).

These assessments are used to identify a ‘linchpin’ issue (i.e. a set of problematic attachment behaviours), and strategies are developed to help parents reflect on their behaviours through the use of video-feedback guidance used in the 20 group sessions.

The first two sessions provide parents with an overview of attachment theory and children’s basic attachment and exploration needs.

The following 18 sessions are devoted to each of the six parent–child dyads, with each caregiver being the focus of three sessions. These sessions make use of videotaped segments of each parent interacting individually with their child, which are used to facilitate dialogue between the parents.

The COS-G content is designed as an individualised treatment plan and is delivered through ‘chapters’ which begin with a 15-minute video clip that is viewed and discussed in the group during each session. The clips are of child–parent interactions, as well as of previous COS-G participants reflecting on what they learned about their own parenting from COS-G. The video indicates where to pause, what to discuss, and how to help parents consider their own parenting, as does the intervention manual.

Target population

Age of child	0 to 5 years (11 to 58 months)
Target population	Parents living in disadvantaged communities

Please note that the information in this section on target population is as **offered/supported by the intervention provider**.



Theory of change

Why		Who	How	What		
Science-based assumption	Science-based assumption	Science-based assumption	Intervention	Short-term outcomes	Medium-term outcomes	Long-term outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attachment security lays the foundation for children to develop positive expectations of themselves and others. Attachment security is thought to support children's emotional development in a way that reduces the risk of future mental health problems. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sensitive parent–child interactions increase the likelihood of children developing secure attachment relationships Sensitive parenting is supported by their ability to form positive representations of their child. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A parent's attachment history can negatively impact their representations of their child Negative representations of the child increase the risk of an insecure attachment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents are supported to reflect on their attachment history Parents are supported to form positive representations of themselves and their child Parents are coached to respond sensitively to their child's needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents develop positive representations of their child Parents are less likely to have negative representations of their child Parents become more sensitive and attuned to their child's needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved parent–infant interaction Reduced risk of the child developing an insecure attachment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children develop positive expectations of themselves and others Children are at less risk of future mental health problems Children are at less risk of child maltreatment.



Implementation requirements

Who is eligible?	Parents with a toddler or preschooler (child between 11 and 58 months) who is at risk of an insecure attachment. Risk factors include economic disadvantage, parental mental health problems, and parental substance misuse problems.
How is it delivered?	Circle of Security Group is delivered in 20 weekly sessions of 75 minutes to groups of five to six caregivers after an initial 90-minute assessment to develop an individualised treatment plan.
What happens during the intervention?	Practitioners use video segments to facilitate reflective discussions about caregivers' attachment experiences – more specifically: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What they learned from their own parents growing up • Understanding the importance of a secure relationship for children to be able to manage their emotions • Reasons why caregivers struggle to meet their children's needs.
Who can deliver it?	COS-G practitioners typically have a master's qualification or higher in a helping profession, such as social work, psychology, or family therapy.
What are the training requirements?	Practitioners complete a four-day intervention training. Booster training of practitioners is not required.
How are practitioners supervised?	Supervision is not required, but opt-in supervision arrangements (known as 'fidelity coaching') are available. In supervision sessions, practitioners reflect on their experiences leading the sessions.
What are the systems for maintaining fidelity?	Intervention fidelity is maintained through the following processes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training manual • Other printed material • Other online material • Video or DVD training • Face-to-face training • Fidelity monitoring.
Is there a licensing requirement?	No
*Contact details	Contact person: Neil Boris Organisation: Circle of Security International, Inc. Email address: neil@circleofsecurityinternational.com



	<p>Websites: www.circleofsecurityinternational.com</p> <p>*Please note that this information may not be up to date. In this case, please visit the listed intervention website for up to date contact details.</p>
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Evidence summary

COS-G's most rigorous evidence comes from a pre- and post-intervention study conducted in the United States that is consistent with Foundations' Level 2 evidence strength criteria. It has preliminary evidence of improving a child outcome, but we cannot be confident that the intervention caused the improvement.

This study observed statistically significant improvements in children's attachment security as observed by the Strange Situation at post-intervention.

Search and review

	Number of studies
Identified in search	2
Studies reviewed	1
Meeting the L2 threshold	1
Meeting the L3 threshold	0
Contributing to the L4 threshold	0
Ineligible	1

Individual study summary: Study 1

Study 1	
Study design	Pre-post study



Study 1	
Country	United States
Sample characteristics	75 parents (primary caregivers) of toddlers and preschoolers were recruited from Head Start services based on their availability to attend a group intervention, their regular engagement with the service and if the family were considered within ‘middle third level of functioning’ by Head Start staff
Race, ethnicities, and nationalities	86% of participants assessed at post-intervention were White
Population risk factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The participants were considered a high-risk group. • All participants assessed post-intervention were living below the federal poverty line. • 30 of 65 (46%) assessed post-intervention were single parents. • The majority of primary caregivers reported during delivery of living within violent communities and had experiences of maltreatment or trauma in childhood. A minority reported maltreatment of their child.
Timing	Pre- and post-intervention
Child outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child mental health and wellbeing • Attachment security <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increase in secure attachment - Increase in organised attachment.
Other outcomes	None
Study Rating	2
Citation	Hoffman, K. T. <i>et al.</i> (2006) Changing toddlers’ and preschoolers’ attachment classifications: The circle of security intervention. <i>Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology</i> 74 (6), 1017–1026.

Brief summary

Population characteristics

This study involved 75 parents (primary caregivers) living in a medium-sized city within Washington state, and their toddler or preschooler, aged 0 to 5 years (mean age 32 months),



recruited from Head Start and Early Head Start programmes. 35 (54%) of the 65 children assessed at post-intervention were girls. 86% of those assessed post-intervention were White.

Parents were recruited from Head Start services based on their availability to attend a group intervention, their regular engagement with the service, and if the family were considered within the ‘middle third of functioning’ – when all engaged families were ranked by functioning by Head Start staff.

The families included in the intervention were considered a high-risk sample. They were all living below the federal poverty line. (46%) 30 were single parents. Majority of caregivers reported living within violent communities and had experiences of maltreatment or trauma in childhood. Minority reported maltreatment of their child.

Study design

The study involved 75 primary caregivers and their child in a pre- and post-intervention to measure shifts in child attachment classification. 87 families were initially recruited, 75 families were assessed pre-intervention and 65 post-intervention.

Measurement

Assessments took place pre-intervention (6 to 8 weeks before delivery) and post-intervention (within 10 days after delivery).

Researcher-led assessments: The Strange Situation procedure was used to measure child’s attachment security at pre- and post-intervention:

- Ainsworth Strange Situation if child was younger than 24 months of age
- MacArthur Preschool Strange Situation if above 24 months of age

Each child’s pattern of attachment was classified from the videotapes of the Strange Situation according to coding criteria for Ainsworth’s infant system (Ainsworth et al., 1978) or Cassidy and Marvin’s (1992) preschool system.

Study retention

Post-intervention

65 families were assessed at post-intervention (87% of those completing pre-assessment).



Results

Data-analytic strategy

The study used the McNemar test, to measure shifts in attachment categorisation pre- and post-intervention based on the Strange Situation – measuring shifts in observed disorganised versus organised attachment and secure versus insecure attachment over time.

Findings

There was a significant increase in organised attachment/decrease in disorganised attachment after intervention. Movement from disorganised to organised classification was more likely than movement from organised to disorganised classification.

There was a significant increase in secure attachment/decrease in insecure attachment after the intervention. Movement from the insecure to secure classification was more likely than movement from secure to insecure.

Study 1: Outcomes table

Outcome	Measure	Effect size	Statistical significance	Number of participants	Measurement time point
Child outcomes					
Organised attachment	Ainsworth Strange Situation or MacArthur Preschool Strange Situation depending on age of child (Observation)	Not reported	Yes	65	Post-intervention
Secure attachment	Ainsworth Strange Situation or MacArthur Preschool Strange Situation depending on age of child (Observation)	Not reported	Yes	65	Post-intervention



Other studies

The following studies were identified for this intervention but did not count towards the intervention's overall evidence rating. An intervention receives the same rating as its most robust study or studies.

Cassidy, J. Ziv, Y., Stupica, B., Sherman, L. J., Butler, H., Karfgin, A., Cooper, G., Hoffman, K. T. & Powell, B. (2010) Enhancing attachment security in the infants of women in a jail-diversion program. *Attachment & Human Development*. 12 (4), 333–353.

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Note on provider involvement: This provider has agreed to Foundations' terms of reference (or the Early Intervention Foundation's terms of reference), and the assessment has been conducted and published with the full cooperation of the intervention provider.