

Circle Of Life: Cancer Education and Wellness

for American Indian and Alaska Native Communities



American Cancer Society Circle Of LifeSM
Cancer Education and Wellness for American Indian and Alaska Native Communities

Wellness along the Cancer Journey:
Coordinator's and Educator's Guide

Revised October 2016

Chapter 3: Purpose of This Guide



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Purpose of This Guide

Circle Of Life Coordinators and Educators

This guide was designed for leaders who are thinking of starting a Circle Of Life initiative in their communities. It is meant for the following two groups:

Circle Of Life coordinators: Local leaders who volunteer to set up a Circle Of Life initiative and provide support for Circle Of Life educators. Someone from a local tribe may want to work with an American Cancer Society staff person to help coordinate the initiative.

Circle Of Life educators: Volunteers who share the education modules. Coordinators may also choose to be educators.

The Circle Of Life Initiative

The Circle Of Life initiative was developed through a partnership between American Indian and Alaska Native tribal communities and the American Cancer Society. The purpose of the initiative is to reduce cancer death and improve well-being of native populations.

The chance of beating cancer among native populations may be influenced by many challenges, such as:

- Limited access to health care among many American Indian and Alaska Native communities
- Limited information about the cancer burden, causes, and treatments for American Indians and Alaska Natives
- Cancer services not being given as a continuum of care (Early detection, through treatment, to end-of-life care if needed, are not coordinated or even readily available in any one region.)
- Lack of prevention, screening, follow-up, timely treatment, and end-of-life care
- Cancer service providers who may allow racism and other biases to affect their work

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- Community's distrust of cancer prevention and early detection services offered by those outside their own community
- Lack of awareness of health services
- Uncertainty about how cancer prevention and early detection services can help

The Circle Of Life initiative will address these issues by offering cancer information and resources. These can be used by community educators working with American Indian and Alaska Native peoples. The initiative deals with issues that can happen before, during, and after a person is diagnosed with cancer. It also offers guidance for educators to tailor these modules for local use.

The Circle Of Life initiative uses the resources of the American Cancer Society to provide people with the cancer information, day-to-day help, and emotional support they need. The Society links people to cancer prevention, early detection, and quality of life resources. Many of these already exist and have been evaluated for use with American Indian and Alaska Native groups. The initiative supports current work within these communities by focusing on gaps in cancer education materials that have not yet been developed.

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2010

History of the Circle Of Life Initiative

1991

- Circle Of Life program launched in Oklahoma.
- Educational materials developed.
- Train the trainer focused on breast self-exam.

2000

- Society reviews program.
- Program emphasis shifts toward mammography.
- Funding to support tribal breast cancer screening programs supports importance of mammography promotion and outreach.

2001

- Program is field-tested in five communities.
- Updated training and program materials focus on mammography screening.
- Society changes look and feel of the materials.
- In 2003, the Society shifts its emphasis from community-based interventions to policy and systems change.

2008

- Society receives CDC grant to revise and expand program.
- Society Divisions are engaged to identify external and internal experts to serve on Circle Of Life Advisory Group.

2009

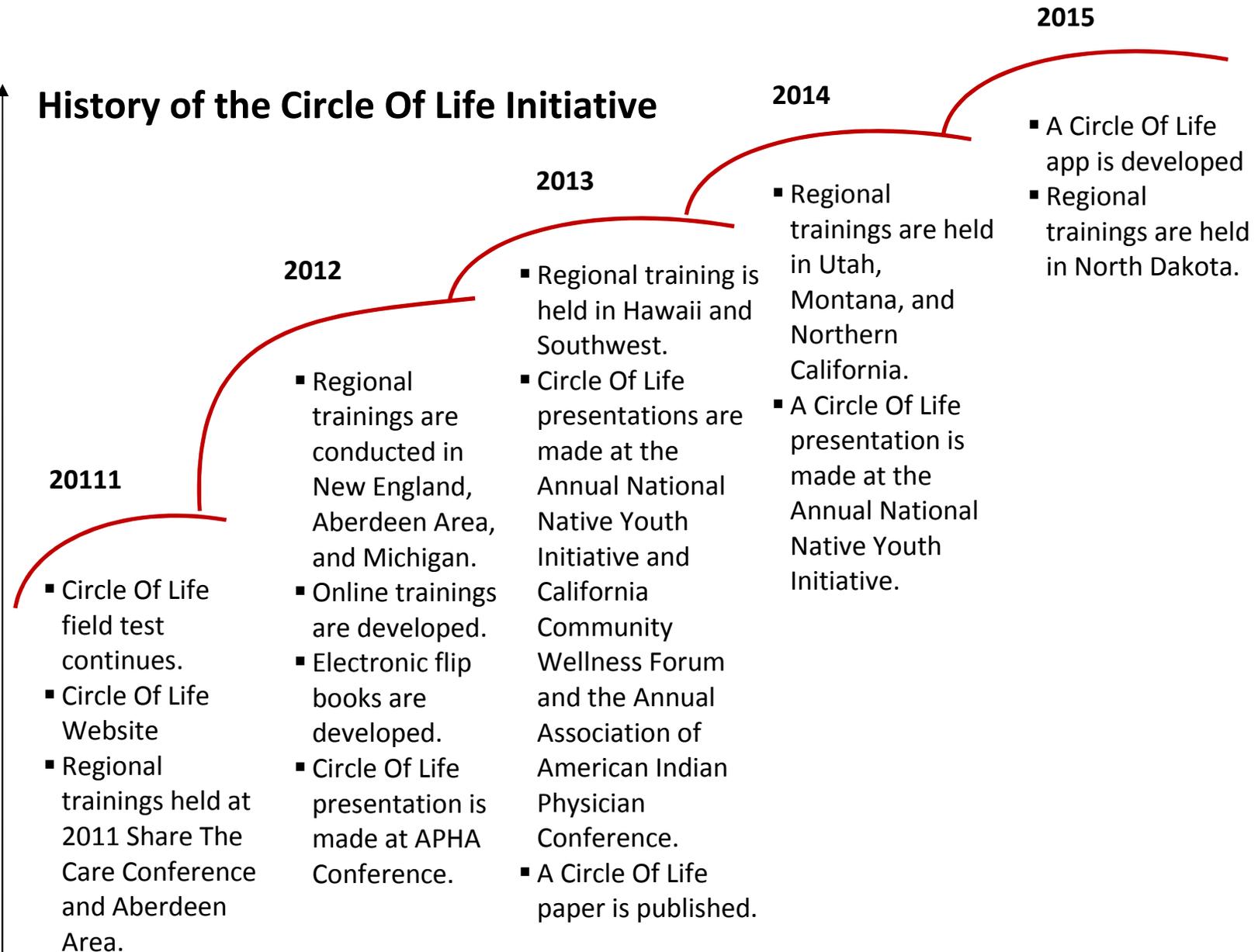
- Advisory group members review internal and external materials and make recommendations for program revisions.
- Initiative and resources are developed.
- Circle Of Life partnership assessment begins in summer.
- Society partners with Native American Cancer Research to provide scholarships to CHRs.

- Twelve communities field test the revised Circle Of Life program.
 - Feedback from field test is incorporated into final version.
- First regional training is held during the Indian Health Service 2010 National Community Health Representative Education Conference.

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History of the Circle Of Life Initiative



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Activity

Please check the box that best describes your belief or attitude about each statement. There are no right or wrong answers. The purpose of this exercise is to help you identify some of your basic beliefs about health and the cancer experience.

	Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Neutral	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
1. It is better not to talk about having cancer.					
2. Whether or not a person gets better is mostly a matter of luck.					
3. The more I know about cancer, the better I will be able to handle it.					
4. I'll never understand medical terms.					
5. I believe there are things people can do to improve their chances of recovery.					
6. It is wrong to bother the health care provider with a lot of questions.					
7. If a person has a positive attitude, they will get well.					
8. If others know about my cancer, they will feel sorry for me.					
9. I can only do what the health care provider tells me to do.					
10. I could learn to communicate better with health team members and friends about my situation.					

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Key Messages

- The risk of developing cancer among American Indians and Alaska Natives is about half that of whites. The overall death rate from cancer is also lower, about 70% that of whites (USCCR, 2004). This suggests that outcomes are not as good in American Indians and Alaska Natives with cancer. Whether this is because of later detection, harder-to-treat cancers, lack of access to cancer care and treatment, or some other cause is unclear.
- American Indians and Alaska Natives are less likely to be checked for cancer.
- Some tribal communities have higher rates of certain types of cancers.
- The goal of the Circle Of Life initiative is to reduce cancer deaths and improve the well-being of native populations.
- The initiative provides cancer information and resources for use by Circle Of Life educators working with American Indian and Alaska Native populations.
- The curriculum focuses on gaps in cancer education materials that have not been developed.
- The curriculum focuses on the whole journey from prevention to end-of-life care.