



Effective Parent Leadership: A Practical Approach to Meaningful Partnerships between Parents and Providers

“...Being a Parent Leader has given me confidence and raised my self esteem. For me, parent leadership has meant that I have found a place where I can make a difference, a place where my experiences and ideas are valued.” Parents Anonymous® Parent Leader

Parents Anonymous® Inc. was the first national family strengthening organization to:

- Recognize the impact of parents speaking publicly about their life experiences
- Identify the importance of parents working side-by-side with service providers and policymakers to provide direction on child abuse prevention and family strengthening issues
- Advance a conceptual framework and ambitious research agenda on parent leadership and shared leadership

Meaningful Parent Leadership occurs when parents address the challenges of parenting, gain the knowledge and skills to function in meaningful leadership roles and represent a “parent voice” to help shape the direction of their families, programs and communities. **Shared Leadership** is successfully achieved when parents and professionals build effective partnerships and share responsibility, expertise and leadership in decisions being made that affect families and communities. The parents involved in this new way of collaborating are called **Parent Leaders**.

For over 34 years, Parents Anonymous® Inc. has demonstrated the effectiveness of engaging parents in meaningful leadership roles to ensure better outcomes for families and conducted research on this vital work. We continually advocate with federal, state and community-based organizations to create meaningful roles for parents where they can share leadership in making decisions to improve services, neighborhoods and policies to build and support strong, safe families. Our pioneering training programs and technical assistance offer successful and innovative strategies for promoting and implementing meaningful Parent Leadership and Shared Leadership in your community.

Our Trainings and Technical assistance are:

- Co-facilitated by Parents Anonymous® Parent Leaders and staff
- Implemented through on-site training and technical assistance
- Customized to meet individual needs of public and private agencies and communities
- Enriched by state-of-the-art training materials and publications

Our Customized Trainings and Technical Assistance include six strategic components:

- ◆ **Organizational Readiness and Goal Setting** – Parents Anonymous[®] Inc. assists administrators, service providers, and Parent Leaders within an agency in working as a team to assess their degree of readiness, needs, challenges and organizational capacity to share leadership.
- ◆ **Recruiting Parent Leaders** - Training and support are provided to the agency in developing and implementing strategies to recruit, train and support Parent Leaders who can actively serve in leadership roles.
- ◆ **Parent Leadership Training** – Customized training for parents to develop their leadership skills, attitudes and behaviors. Training includes topics such as:
 - “Telling Your Story” to increase parents skills in getting their message across”
 - “Effectively Communicating Your Ideas and Needs”
 - “Understanding the Dynamics of Meetings”.
- ◆ **Shared Leadership Training**- Customized trainings for administrators, staff and parents are developed. Trainings include topics such as:
 - Developing New Skills and Attitudes
 - Developing Effective Partnerships
 - Roles and Opportunities for Parent Leaders
 - Overcoming Barriers to Shared Leadership
 - Identifying, Recruiting and Supporting Parent Leaders
- ◆ **Training Materials and Publications**–Culturally relevant training materials and publications offer valuable information to administrators, service providers and Parent Leaders on promoting and implementing effective parent leadership and shared leadership strategies and partnerships.
- ◆ **Customized Technical Assistance**–Ongoing customized technical assistance and support help agencies and Parent Leaders implement strategies to successfully bring shared leadership into action.

Through Parents Anonymous[®] Inc. Training and Technical Assistance:

- Parent Leaders gain knowledge and leadership skills to become effective role models for other parents and successful partners with service providers in the development of policies and practices to strengthen families.
- Agency staff gain the knowledge and tools to successfully include Parent Leaders as partners in practice and policy at the individual, agency, county and state levels.



Parent Leadership and Shared Leadership: Parents Anonymous® Inc. Initiatives

"We believe significant results can only be achieved in partnership with parents in order to mutually benefit families, communities and service delivery systems." Dr. Lisa Pion-Berlin, President and Chief Executive Officer, Parents Anonymous® Inc.

Since our inception, Parents Anonymous® Inc. has effectively partnered with many local communities, states, federal agencies, national organizations and foundations to increase the understanding of and opportunities for parents and providers to partner together. Some of our more current partnerships include:

- Parents Anonymous® Inc. launched a groundbreaking 3-year project to strengthen the California Child Welfare System by promoting and implementing the principles of parent leadership and shared leadership as critical elements in successful system change through funding from The Stuart Foundation, a renowned philanthropic organization. Local Parent Leadership Task Forces have been established in several Child Protective Service agencies to help reform systems and we are conducting research on this important initiative.
- As the largest statewide effort to ensure meaningful parent leadership, the California Department of Social Services, Office of Child Abuse Prevention (OCAP) partners with Parents Anonymous® Inc. in implementing a Parent Leadership Training Initiative to better meet the needs of families in all 58 counties utilizing federal Community-Based Family Resource and Support Programs funding. Because of our outstanding contributions in parent leadership, OCAP also selected Parents Anonymous® Inc. to launch the first California Parent Leadership Team to work in partnership with state and local policymakers to improve family support programs and child abuse prevention efforts throughout the state.
- In partnership with the Center for Community Partnerships in Child Welfare (formerly an initiative of the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation), Parents Anonymous® Inc. provided consultation, training and technical assistance to multiple county offices of the Missouri Division of Children's Services and to schools and non-profit organizations in those counties to assist them in partnering with parents as they implement the Community Partnerships for Protecting Children reform initiative.
- Parents Anonymous® Inc. and the D.C. Children's Trust Fund, worked together in the Washington, D.C. school system to create immediate and long-term avenues for partnering with parents to improve the D.C. school system and provide more effective services to families.



Parent Leadership In Action

Our innovative Training and Technical Assistance strategies pave the way for parents to take on key leadership roles and partner with professionals and policymakers at the national, state and local levels.

Parent Leaders are partnering with providers to strengthen families and prevent child abuse and neglect in numerous creative roles including:

- **Grant Review Committees** – Parents are helping to develop and review the responses to Requests for Proposals by providing valuable input into funding priorities and criteria.
- **Advisory Boards** – Parent Advisory Boards or Parent Leadership Teams are being developed to provide a voice for and access to parents.
- **State Level Committees** – Parents are members of state level Child Abuse Prevention, Social Service, and Mental Health committees.
- **Reviewers of Audiovisual and Written Materials** – Parents are being asked to help develop and review materials that agencies develop for families prior to printing and distribution of the materials.
- **Co-trainers** – Parents are participating in the orientation programs for new staff at family resource centers and in family strengthening and family reunification programs.
- **Paid Program Staff Positions** – Parents have been hired as advocates and liaisons within agencies and are representing the voice of parents and helping other parents identify their voices within the community.
- **Focus Groups** – Parents are being invited to participate in focus groups to discuss the challenges and opportunities facing parents today and the help that can be provided through service delivery systems.
- **Media** – Parents are providing valuable information about their own life experiences and about the availability of community services to other parents through local newspapers, radio programs and television.



Parents Anonymous® Inc.'s Research on Parent Leadership

The research conducted by Parents Anonymous® Inc. on meaningful parent leadership and shared leadership is significant because there are no other studies of its kind in the field of child abuse and neglect.

Parents Anonymous® Inc. has advanced a conceptual framework and ambitious research agenda on parent leadership and shared leadership. We have successfully developed and disseminated knowledge about the essential concepts, best practices and evaluation results regarding meaningful parent leadership. The goals of the Parents Anonymous® Inc. research agenda on parent leadership are:

- Defining the essential nature of parent leadership
- Obtaining a clearer understanding of the development of parent leadership and the supports needed for enhancement
- Delineating the significant behaviors and activities of parent leaders
- Identifying organizational structures that ensure meaningful parent leadership and shared leadership
- Measuring the impact of effective parent leadership and shared leadership on system reform

Highlights of our research findings include:

- Parents Anonymous® Inc. has conducted innovative ethnographic research resulting in a conceptual framework of the 10 significant steps to building successful parent leadership which includes culturally diverse perspectives.
- Parents Anonymous® Inc. created a groundbreaking Parent Leadership Behavior Scale to develop a valid and reliable measure of parent leadership behaviors (based on *Leadership Practices Inventory*, Kouzes and Posner's, 1995).
- Parents Anonymous® Inc. is currently conducting landmark research to measure the impact of parent leadership on the reform of the Child Welfare system in partnership with the Stuart Foundation.
- Parents Anonymous® Inc. conducted several evaluation studies on the effectiveness of Parents Anonymous® Inc. national trainings on parent leadership and concluded that there was enhancement of the knowledge, skills and abilities of Parent Leaders and an increase in their leadership activities.