



# RESEARCH PROFILE

N U M B E R 2

## RESEARCH ON PARENT LEADERSHIP: SIGNIFICANCE AND FINDINGS

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*Since 1969, when Parents Anonymous® Inc. was created by a courageous mother, Jolly K., and her social worker, Leonard Lieber, parent leadership has been the cornerstone of the program model and is a key element of the program's effectiveness to prevent and treat child abuse and neglect. Parent leaders, in partnership with facilitators, staff and Boards of Directors of Parents Anonymous® accredited organizations, demonstrate the powerful mechanism of shared leadership in achieving better outcomes for families seeking help. Parents Anonymous® Inc. is the only national organization or program in the field of child maltreatment to have advanced a conceptual framework and ambitious research agenda on parent leadership.*

*Since its inception, Parents Anonymous® Inc. has established the knowledge base and expertise necessary to ensure meaningful parent leadership, which is not only tied to the positive outcomes of our program but also to shaping policy and practice to better meet the needs of families to prevent and treat child maltreatment. With the creation of the National Parent Leadership Team® (NPLT) in 1994, Parents Anonymous® Inc. formed a national organizational unit to ensure meaningful parent leadership roles beyond the Parents Anonymous® group. The NPLT partners in all programmatic and policy activities of Parents Anonymous® Inc., including the design and implementation of targeted trainings and technical assistance for parents and staff, and generates effective parent leadership strategies which local and state Parents Anonymous® organizations can replicate.*

*The goals of the Parents Anonymous® Inc. parent leadership research agenda include defining the essential nature of parent leadership, obtaining a clearer*

*understanding of the development of parent leadership and the supports needed for enhancement, and delineating the significant behaviors and activities of parent leaders. This research profile highlights the findings of the Parents Anonymous® Inc. parent leadership research studies to date. Since no other research of this nature has ever been conducted, these findings have major significance to the child abuse and neglect field (and other fields interested in parent leadership) because they form the foundation of a knowledge base on parent leadership.*

### **PARENTS ANONYMOUS® PARENT LEADERSHIP**

*Parent leadership is one of the guiding Parents Anonymous® Principles and is a key factor of the success of Parents Anonymous® programs, which prevent and treat child abuse and neglect all around the world. Parent leadership is demonstrated when parents recognize and take responsibility for their concerns, develop their own solutions and serve as role models for other parents.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Parents Anonymous® Inc., the nation's oldest national child abuse prevention organization dedicated to strengthening families through parent leadership and shared leadership, was founded in 1969 through the extraordinary efforts of a courageous mother and her social worker who, together, launched a national movement to bring help, support, strength, and hope to millions of families all across America. Parent leadership has been the cornerstone of the Parents Anonymous® program since the organization's inception and contributions of parent leaders have been essential to the program's success. Parent

leaders achieve better outcomes for families when they have opportunities to use their expertise through meaningful and active roles in the planning, implementation, oversight and evaluation of programs, as well as in the development of public policies that affect families and children. Parent leadership is a vital feature in all effective family strengthening and family support programs (Olson et al., 1983; CAPTA, 1996; McCubbin et al., 1996; Schorr, 1997; Kumpfer & Alvarado, 1998). In Parents Anonymous®, parent leadership is more than a philosophy – it is a critical component for achieving long-term outcomes for parents who seek help.

Within Parents Anonymous® groups, parents are personal change agents, responsible for their own growth and change, who develop key leadership skills and abilities that translate into becoming more effective parents. In addition, they gain the potential to expand their leadership roles to help others within the Parents Anonymous® group, and function in a policymaking capacity at local, state and national levels, exemplifying Parents Anonymous® Inc.'s commitment to shared leadership. All trainings, technical assistance, and materials within Parents Anonymous® are developed and implemented in partnership with parent leaders. Furthermore, all media interviews are conducted in collaboration with parent leaders to ensure that the expertise of parent leaders is valued and to achieve our goal of shared leadership.

Parents Anonymous® Inc. was the first national family strengthening organization to identify the importance of parents speaking publicly about their life experiences and working side-by-side with service providers and policymakers in the child welfare arena to provide direction for the broad range of social issues related to child abuse prevention and family strengthening. As part of its commitment to parent leadership, Parents Anonymous® Inc. has developed effective national trainings and successful, innovative strategies that promote and enhance parent leadership and provide parents with meaningful leadership opportunities beyond the Parents Anonymous® group. These leadership opportunities have enabled parents to utilize their leadership skills, which have impacted organizational and public policymaking, family service program development, and how the national media reports on child welfare issues.

The momentous testimony before Congress of the founding mother of Parents Anonymous® Inc., Jolly K., ensured the passage of the first federal legislation on the prevention of child maltreatment – the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act of 1974 (CAPTA). Because of the early success of Parents Anonymous®, the first of many CAPTA discretionary grants was provided to expand Parents Anonymous® nationwide and demonstrate its effectiveness through national research. In the reauthorization of CAPTA in 1996, Congress made significant changes in this federal legislation, which reflected the success of the Parents Anonymous® program and our parent leadership accomplishments. For the first time ever in federal legislation, CAPTA required states to create and maintain meaningful parent leadership roles in the planning, implementation, oversight and evaluation of all program activities. Congress highlighted Parents Anonymous® by name as the benchmark in child abuse prevention and treatment and identified our expertise as vital to achieving meaningful parent leadership in the implementation of CAPTA (1996) Title II: The Community-Based Family Resource and Support Programs (P.L. 104-235; Senate Report 104-177).

Parents Anonymous® Inc. took parent leadership to a new level in 1994 when it received funding to create the first National Parent Leadership Team® (NPLT), thereby ensuring shared leadership on a national scale. The creation, development, and study of this first National Parent Leadership Team® initiated the Parents Anonymous® Inc. parent leadership research agenda. Over the next several years, data was collected (and utilized in trainings) from the personal structured journals of NPLT members and numerous teleconference meetings where pathways to parent leadership were documented, supports were identified, leadership behaviors and activities were delineated and the Kouzes and Posner (1994, 1995) scales were piloted for use as measures of Parents Anonymous® parent leadership. Numerous trainings, technical assistance, and materials were created and delivered to local and state accredited Parents Anonymous® organizations, state child welfare agencies, and other community-based organizations, based on findings of the initial research involving

the NPLT. Follow-up surveys of two Parents Anonymous® Inc. national conferences affirmed the attitudes, behaviors and activities that enhance the development of parent leadership.

### ***WHAT IS A PARENTS ANONYMOUS® PARENT LEADER?***

*In Parents Anonymous® parents who have taken the step to create change in their lives are considered leaders. A Parents Anonymous® Parent Leader is a parent who has faced the challenges of parenting in our society, represents a vital “parent voice,” and functions in many leadership positions within Parents Anonymous®, including being a leader within the Parents Anonymous® group, and contributing to the enhancement of program development, implementation, evaluation, policymaking, training, technical assistance, public awareness, and outreach, which result in better outcomes for children and families.*

#### ***What is Parents Anonymous® Parent Leadership?***

Leaders are those who demonstrate expertise and experience in their area (Leadership for a Changing World, 2000) and leadership is the “art of mobilizing others to want to struggle for shared aspirations” (Kouzes & Posner, 1995, p. 30). In Parents Anonymous® parents who have taken the step to create change in their lives are considered leaders. A Parents Anonymous® parent leader is a parent who is facing the challenges of parenting in our society, represents a “parent voice,” and functions in a variety of leadership positions within Parents Anonymous®, including being a Parents Anonymous® Parent Group Leader, and contributing to the enhancement of program development, implementation, evaluation, policymaking, training, technical assistance, public awareness, and outreach, which result in better

outcomes for children and families (Parents Anonymous® Inc., 1999). Furthermore, Parents Anonymous® parent leaders play critical roles in policy and program initiatives regarding the reform of the Child Protective Services system, on national advisory councils, and in the National Call to Action, the first ever national collaboration to end child abuse and neglect in this country.

### **PARENTS ANONYMOUS® INC. PARENT LEADERSHIP RESEARCH**

Parents Anonymous® Inc. is the only national organization in the child abuse and neglect field that has successfully developed and disseminated knowledge about the essential concepts, best practices and evaluation results regarding meaningful parent leadership. The goals of the Parents Anonymous® parent leadership research agenda include defining the essential nature of parent leadership, obtaining a clearer understanding of the development of parent leadership and the supports needed for enhancement, and delineating the significant behaviors and activities of parent leaders. This research profile highlights the findings of Parents Anonymous® Inc. parent leadership research studies to date. The initial parent leadership research study (1995-96) was an exploratory review of interviews and meetings with the members of the first Parents Anonymous® National Parent Leadership Team® and interviews with ten additional Parents Anonymous® parent leaders of culturally diverse backgrounds. The other two parent leadership research studies described below were follow-up surveys with parent leaders who attended the 1998 Parents Anonymous® Inc. National Parent Leadership Institute and the 1999 Parents Anonymous® Inc. National Leadership Conference.

Since no other research of this nature has ever been conducted, these findings have major significance for the child abuse and neglect field (and other fields interested in parent leadership) because they form the foundation of a knowledge base on parent leadership.

### *The Development and Study of the First National Parent Leadership Team®*

The creation of the Parents Anonymous® Inc. National Parent Leadership Team® in 1994 was a groundbreaking organizational effort and the first of its kind in the field of child abuse and neglect. The identification, development, and inclusion of parent leaders from around the country in a nationally-based parent leadership team was an unprecedented undertaking. Parent candidates for the first Parents Anonymous® Inc. National Parent Leadership Team® (NPLT) were outstanding leaders who had sought help for their families based on a wide range of issues. These parent leaders were nominated by accredited organizations of the Parents Anonymous® National Network. From the appointment of the first NPLT to the fourteen mothers and fathers who currently serve on the NPLT, we continue to achieve our commitment to diversity in ethnicity, gender, geography, and length of time in Parents Anonymous®. The National Parent Leadership Team®, in partnership with the Parents Anonymous® Inc. staff, functions as a central organizational unit of Parents Anonymous® Inc. The NPLT performs essential parent leadership roles in policymaking, the delivery of national trainings, the development of program materials, and as national print and broadcast media interviewees. In addition, NPLT members serve as the editorial board of *The Parent Networker*, the national newsletter for Parents Anonymous® parents.

The first twelve National Parent Leadership Team® members participated in extensive data collection efforts conducted from 1995-1996 by Dr. Margaret McKenna, an experienced anthropologist and evaluator (see **Study 1** box). This ethnographic study was conducted to identify the underlying themes of the pathways to parent leadership and the supports needed in becoming a parent leader. In the initial phase, data was analyzed from videotaped semi-structured interviews with NPLT members, journal entries by NPLT members following their speaking engagements and public presentations, and recordings of teleconference calls with NPLT members. Given Parents Anonymous® Inc.'s commitment to cultural diversity, ten additional Parents Anonymous® parent leaders from around the country (four Latino, four African American, and two

#### *Study 1. Identifying the Conceptual Framework for Parent Leadership Development*

**Goal:** Identify the pathways leading to parent leadership and the supports needed in becoming a parent leader.

**Participants:** 12 parents who had been nominated and selected for the first Parents Anonymous® Inc. National Parent Leadership Team® and 10 additional Parents Anonymous® parents from culturally diverse backgrounds.

**Background:** *Gender:* 16 women, 6 men

*Ethnic Background:* 5 Latino/Hispanic, 5 African American, 3 Native American, and 9 White

*Geographical Distribution:* From 14 states

*Average Age:* 41 years (Range: 30-54)

*Average Number of Years in Parents Anonymous®:* 8 (Range: 3-14)

**Methodology:** Content analyses of semi-structured interviews, videotapes, journal entries, meeting minutes, and teleconferences.

**Primary Findings:** Identified supports needed by parent leaders and “Pathways to Parent Leadership – Ten Steps to Success.” (See Figure 1.)

Native American parents) were interviewed extensively to ascertain their perspectives on parent leadership development.

The findings of this first parent leadership study demonstrated and supported Parents Anonymous® Inc.'s long-held belief that parents become parent leaders because they feel accepted, not judged, and positively reinforced by other parents and professionals in their Parents Anonymous® group. Initially, the parent leaders described themselves as somewhat reluctant leaders who had not envisioned themselves in the positions they had now assumed. However, they emphasized that encouragement came from emotional support from other parents, public recognition of their contributions to the group and successes with personal behavior change. In addition, these parent leaders noted the importance of serving as role models for other potential parent leaders and conveying a personal commitment to their Parents Anonymous® groups. As McKenna noted, “One of the prerequisites for a successful parent leader was a strong, sustained commitment to the principles, practices, and values of Parents Anonymous®.”

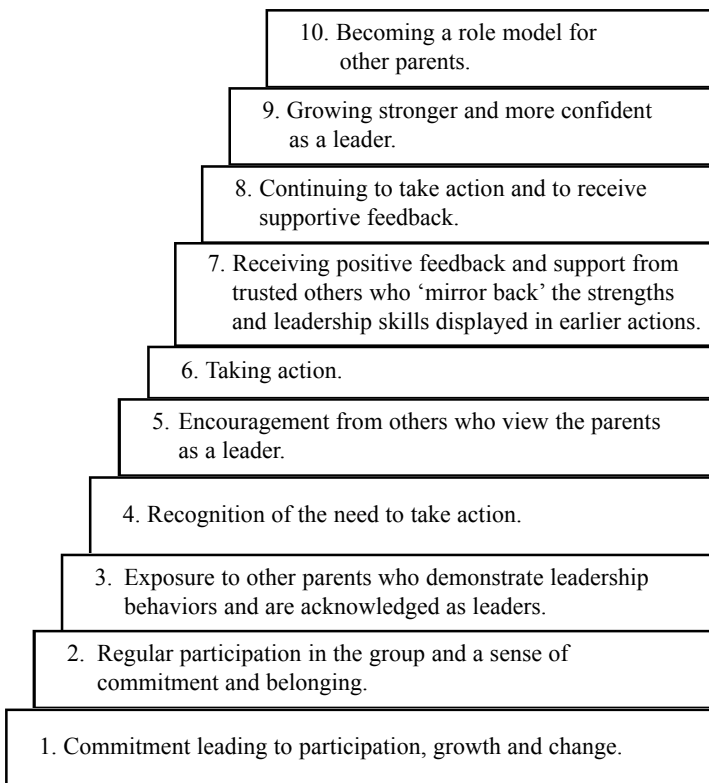
Another important finding indicated that parent leaders often transferred their leadership skills to other areas of their lives, such as advocating in their children’s schools, as they became more confident and assertive (McKenna, September 1996, November 1996).

***“When I started taking responsibility in my Parents Anonymous® group, I also started taking responsibility at home. Being a parent leader is so important because it does spread to other areas of my life. Parent leadership empowers. It gives a parent the opportunity to find their strengths and to be effective. 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, 1995***

The initial study identified the process of leadership development in parents, which is the conceptual framework summarized in Figure 1, “Pathways to Parent Leadership – Ten Steps to Success.”

**Figure 1.  
PATHWAYS TO PARENT LEADERSHIP –TEN STEPS TO SUCCESS**



The pathways illustrate the steps to parent leadership described by the parent leaders, beginning with joining and participating in a Parents Anonymous® group and feeling a sense of mutual commitment and belonging – often very important to those who may have felt isolated in the past. The next steps involve observing other parents as leadership role models and desiring to emulate those parents, recognizing the need to take action, being encouraged by others to become a leader, taking various steps toward being a leader, and receiving positive feedback. Further steps identified by the parent leaders involve continuous encouragement and continued involvement in leadership activities, which allow parents to model leadership behaviors to other parents and to strengthen their own skills and confidence (McKenna, September 1996, November 1996).

While the pathways described have been identified as the critical steps to parent leadership, it is important to note that they are not linear. Parents move up and down the steps based on their personal life situations, commitments and activities at any given time. Parent leadership is fostered by supporting parents wherever they are along this path of growth and development.

The NPLT members also identified the primary supports needed by parent leaders in order to participate in meaningful leadership roles at local, state and national levels. These supports fall into three general categories: tangible (stipends, provision of or reimbursement for childcare and transportation, and reimbursement for lost wages); emotional (respect, understanding, validation, and ongoing support to fulfill their parent leadership roles, including times of transition and crisis); and environmental (training, equality with service providers, and full inclusion in activities). The tangible supports allow parents to fully participate in parent leadership activities, without creating an economic burden on them. The emotional supports provide parent leaders with the encouragement they need to feel confident in their new parent leadership roles and to know that others will be there for them as they grow through these experiences. The environmental supports give parent leaders the tools and skills to achieve shared leadership through training in effective public speaking, media interviews, and co-training with staff which emphasize the full equality and inclusion of parent leaders in agency and organizational settings and activities.

Overall, parents identified training as the most important support for Parents Anonymous® parent leaders (although the other supports are equally necessary). While Parents Anonymous® had been training parent leaders all along, the initial work with the NPLT in 1994 led to piloting and refining a new series of parent leadership trainings for parent leaders and complementary shared leadership trainings for staff. Numerous national teleconferences, on-site trainings and comprehensive technical assistance activities have been and continue to be provided by Parents Anonymous® Inc. to accredited Parents Anonymous® organizations, public child welfare agencies and community-based organizations committed to achieving meaningful parent leadership.

### *Studies of Parents Anonymous® Inc. National Parent Leadership Trainings*

Based on our work with the National Parent Leadership Team®, Parents Anonymous® Inc. designed and implemented two national parent leadership trainings. The trainings were the first of their kind in the nation and furthered our goal of taking parent leadership to the national level. The first national training for parent leaders was the Parents Anonymous® Inc. National Parent Leadership Institute held in 1998, followed by the Parents Anonymous® Inc. National Leadership Conference in 1999. Hundreds of Parents Anonymous® parents from around the country attended these conferences over several days, with the goal of improving their skills, knowledge, and abilities related to leadership.

Parents Anonymous® Inc. conducted follow-up studies after the training events to identify and document leadership activities and behaviors engaged in by the parent leaders and to assess their development and attitudes about themselves as leaders. The findings from the follow-up surveys are described below.

#### **Follow-Up Survey to the 1998 National Parent Leadership Institute**

In March 1998, Parents Anonymous® Inc. held the first ever three-day National Parent Leadership Institute. The Institute provided training to parent leaders to increase leadership activities at the local, state and national levels.

During the Institute parent leaders developed personal leadership action plans and strategized about how to increase their leadership activities within their local and state Parents Anonymous® organizations.

Eight months after the Institute, a follow-up survey was mailed to the 100 Parents Anonymous® parent leaders who had attended. The overall goals of the survey were to assess the degree to which personal leadership action plans made at the Institute were completed and identify parent leadership activities and behaviors following the Institute. About half (48%) of those surveyed responded. The average respondent had been a Parents Anonymous® parent for six years. The **Study 2** box provides a summary of the study goals, respondents, and findings (Pion-Berlin, et al., June 1999; Polinsky, April 1999).

#### ***Study 2. Follow-Up Survey to the 1998 National Parent Leadership Institute***

**Goal:** Assess the accomplishment of action plans made at the Institute and identify parent leadership activities and behaviors following the Institute.

**Participants:** 48 of 100 Parent Leaders who attended the Institute (48%).

**Background:** *Gender:* 36 women, 12 men  
*Geographical Distribution:* From 20 states  
*Average Number of Years in Parents Anonymous®:* 5  
(Range: 6 months-16 years).

**Methodology:** Mailed survey sent 8 months post-Institute, followed by reminder post cards and telephone calls.

**Findings:** Most parent leaders had completed or made progress toward completing their action plans. The parent leaders had engaged in many meaningful leadership activities within their Parents Anonymous® groups and organizations, notably based on the skills and motivation they gained by attending the Parents Anonymous® Inc. National Parent Leadership Institute.

**Action Plan Accomplishments.** A significant number of respondents (63%) reported they had completed or made real progress toward completing their action plans during the short eight months following the Institute. The action plans included significant activities such as increasing awareness about Parents Anonymous® in their communities (reported by 37% of the respondents); starting, developing, or working on a local parent leadership team (34%); and starting new groups or improving existing ones (17%). Other types of action plans included getting more people involved in Parents Anonymous®, applying for funding for Parents Anonymous®, improving their personal parenting skills, working with Parents Anonymous® Inc. on the revision of the Parents Anonymous® National Network accreditation process, and helping to develop long-range plans for the future of their Parents Anonymous® organization.

**Participation in Leadership Activities.** The parent leaders were asked to rate how often they had participated in certain leadership activities since the Institute. Activities included many of those emphasized at the Institute and action plan accomplishments were reflected in many of the activities reported.

More than half (53%) of the respondents reported working with their Parents Anonymous® organization to expand parent leadership opportunities, and another 53% had extended their network by being in touch with other parents who had attended the Institute. Almost half (48%) had participated in activities to raise awareness about Parents Anonymous® such as distributing materials about Parents Anonymous® to school psychologists, teachers, and local mental health agencies; sharing information about Parents Anonymous® in various settings such as on the bus, at church, in stores, and at a parenting course; and staffing a booth at a neighborhood job fair. One respondent began a monthly mailing of information about Parents Anonymous® and child abuse to about 200 parents in the preschool/Head Start program where she worked and another reported that he began promoting Parents Anonymous® by “going around town talking to people and putting up flyers.” (See Table 1.)

**Table 1. Leadership Activities Following the 1998 National Parent Leadership Institute**

- 53% - Worked with their Parents Anonymous® organization to expand parent leadership opportunities
- 53% - Furthered their peer support network by contacting other parents who had attended the Institute
- 48% - Participated in activities to raise awareness about Parents Anonymous®
- 39% - Participated in additional parent leadership training
- 38% - Became members of boards of directors, advisory councils, or other policymaking groups
- 37% - Worked with their Parents Anonymous® organization to develop a local parent leadership team
- 37% - Provided training for Parents Anonymous®
- 30% - Participated in advocacy activities

**Media Activities**

- 48% - Wrote newspaper or newsletter articles
- 13% - Gave TV, radio, or newspaper interviews
- 4% - Successfully submitted public service announcements to television stations

For many participants the Institute provided encouragement and increased their interest and motivation to enhance their leadership knowledge and skills. Quite a few respondents (39%) reported participating in additional trainings when they returned home, such as state conferences and local trainings and workshops to improve their knowledge, skills, and abilities related to parent leadership and Parents Anonymous®. Also, by applying the skills they learned at the Institute, over one-third (38%) had become members of a board of directors, advisory council, or other policymaking body. Many had taken on new roles as trainers or co-trainers for Parents Anonymous® or had worked with their Parents Anonymous® organization to develop a local parent leadership team, modeled after the NPLT. One parent leader wrote, “We came right home and started a Parent Leadership Team!” and another noted that her state had begun to “assemble a Parent Advisory Committee in response to discussion at the Institute.”

About one-third (30%) reported participating in advocacy activities such as speaking at a conference on the role of parent leadership in Child Protective Services system reform, explaining Parents Anonymous® to the Board of

Directors of a local Head Start program, advocating for Parents Anonymous® in a public agency, and writing and visiting Congressional members.

Demonstrating their new skills and confidence as leaders, many parents also reported leadership activities in media and public speaking (see Table 1). Almost half (48%) had written newspaper or newsletter articles and many had given TV, radio, or newspaper interviews. Some parent leaders reported successful submission of public service announcements to television stations. Examples of the variety and types of media and public speaking activities of the parent leaders included establishing a parent call-in line at a local radio station and receiving twelve calls in the first broadcast hour. Another parent leader reported that her local Parent Leadership Team had been practicing videotaping each other to improve their public speaking abilities. A third parent leader spoke on TV about how, through Parents Anonymous®, she was able to stop child abuse in her family.

### Follow-Up Survey to the 1999 National Leadership Conference

The third Parents Anonymous® Inc. parent leadership study was a follow-up survey mailed in May 1999 to the 188 parent leaders who attended the Parents Anonymous® Inc. National Leadership Conference in February 1999. In addition to the parent leaders, those in attendance included 100 Parents Anonymous® staff, facilitators, and board members from accredited Parents Anonymous® programs all across America. About half (47%) of the parent leaders returned their surveys. On average, most had participated in Parents Anonymous® groups for about five years and had been Parents Anonymous® Parent Group Leaders for about three years. More than half had served on a local Parent Leadership Team and more than a third were currently members of boards of directors, community advisory councils, or other types of policymaking bodies. The **Study 3** box provides a summary of the study goals, respondents, and findings (Polinsky, June 1999; Polinsky, Gilbert & Pion-Berlin, 1999).

### *Study 3. Follow-Up Survey to the 1999 National Leadership Conference*

**Goal:** Identify the post-Conference leadership activities of the Parent Leaders who attended, determine their attitudes about themselves as leaders, and assess their leadership development.

**Participants:** 89 of 188 Parent Leaders who attended the Conference (47%).

**Background:** *Gender:* 73 women, 16 men  
*Ethnic Background:* 64 White, 13 African American, 7 Hispanic/Latino, 5 Other  
*Geographical Distribution:* From 25 states  
*Average Age:* 40 years (Range: 18-71)  
*Average Number of Years in Parents Anonymous:* 5 (Range: 4 months - 22 years).

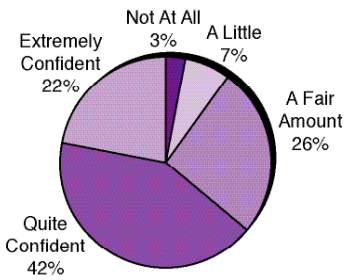
**Methodology:** Mailed survey sent 3 months post-Conference, followed by reminder post cards and a second survey mailing.

**Summary Findings:** Post-conference, parent leaders engaged in many meaningful and varied leadership activities, rated themselves highly as confident parent leaders and role models, and ranked in the high ranges of Kouzes and Posner's (1992) standardized Leadership Practices Inventory.

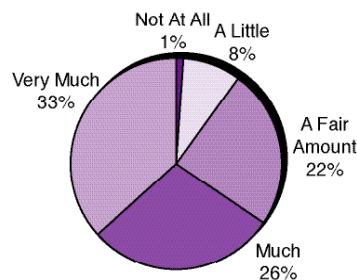
**Measuring Leadership Development.** To assess personal leadership development, respondents were asked to rate themselves in terms of how confident they felt as a parent leader and the degree to which they saw themselves as a positive role model for other parents. Reflecting their skills and experience, most respondents (54%) were "quite" or "extremely" confident as parent leaders (see Figure 2), and most (69%) rated themselves as "much" or "very much" of a positive role model for other parents (see Figure 3).



**Figure 2. Self-Ratings of Confidence as a Parent Leader**



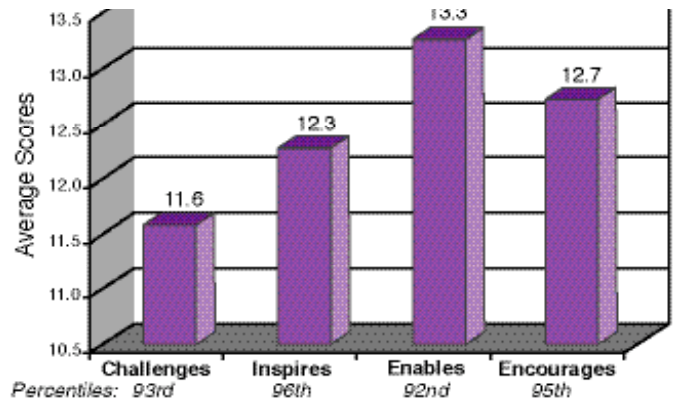
**Figure 3. Self-Ratings of Parent Leaders as Role Models**



As an important enhancement to the National Leadership Conference follow-up survey, a modified version of Kouzes and Posner’s (1994, 1995) *Leadership Practices Inventory* was included in the survey form, in order to refine our conceptualization of the essential components of leadership. Through a number of studies begun in 1983, Kouzes and Posner (1995) identified five fundamental practices of exemplary leadership: Challenging the Process (risk-taker, loves challenges), Inspiring a Shared Vision (future-oriented, enlists others), Enabling Others to Act (fosters collaboration, involves others), Modeling the Way (sets an example, plans small wins), and Encouraging the Heart (recognizes contributions and accomplishments). Kouzes and Posner (1995) then developed inventory items arranged in subscales to measure the degree to which a person practiced these leadership behaviors (from rarely or very seldom to very frequently or almost always). The subscale items for Modeling the Way were excluded from the Parents Anonymous® Inc. version as inappropriate for use because they focused on such ideas as letting others know the respondent’s beliefs as head of the organization.

In the Parents Anonymous® Inc. follow-up survey, each *Leadership Practices Inventory* subscale had three items, with a 3 to 15 scoring range. The average scores for the Parents Anonymous® parents are shown at the top of each bar in Figure 4 and indicate very high ratings on leadership attitudes and practices: 13.3 for Enabling Others to Act, 12.7 for Encouraging the Heart, 12.3 for Inspiring a Shared Vision, and 11.4 for Challenging the Process. The percentiles across the bottom of Figure 4, ranging from 92nd to 96th, denote that the average respondent was in the high range of Kouzes and Posner’s standardized scores for each subscale, indicating excellence and accomplishment in their leadership attitudes and practices (Posner & Kouzes, 1992).

**Figure 4. Leadership Practices Inventory – Group Averages (N=89)**  
Follow-Up Survey to 1999 Parents Anonymous® National Leadership Conference



**SUBSCALES:**  
**Challenging the Process:** Risk-Taker, Loves Challenges; **Inspiring a Shared Vision:** Future-Oriented, Enlists Others; **Enabling Others to Act:** Fosters Collaboration, Involves Others; **Encouraging the Heart:** Recognizes Contributions and Accomplishments  
 Higher ratings indicate more frequent engagement in leadership actions and behaviors. Subscale scores range from a low of 3 to a high of 15. Instrument was a modified from Kouzes and Posner, 1994; half (3) of the items of each Kouzes and Posner subscale were included for a total of 12 items. The item wording was modified to reflect Parents Anonymous® activities.

**Comparison of Parent Leadership Behaviors following National Trainings**

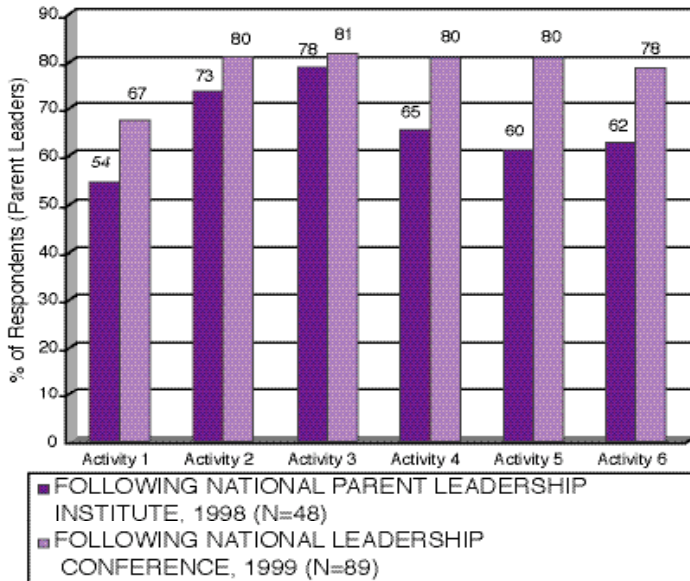
The follow-up surveys to the National Parent Leadership Institute and the National Leadership Conference included the same set of questions asking parent leaders to rate their level of participation in specific leadership behaviors since the training event. Most respondents provided ratings and written comments that indicated very high levels of leadership behaviors in the areas addressed, which included searching for new opportunities, experimenting with new ideas, doing something new or different to get others involved in Parents Anonymous®, doing something to help others recognize and use their strengths, setting a leadership example others could follow, and doing something new or different to recognize or celebrate the accomplishments of others.

Parent leaders wrote about leadership behaviors such as sending out a survey to Parents Anonymous® group members asking what they wanted from the group, writing a letter to welcome new parents to their Parents Anonymous® group, helping their group agree on a policy of “always recognizing each other’s accomplishments,” and designing and distributing a Parents Anonymous®

flyer for their area. These leadership activities created vital program enhancements in partnership with Parents Anonymous® staff, and modeled positive results from these shared leadership efforts.

Levels of participation in parent leadership behaviors following each training event are compared in Figure 5. The highest activity levels involved doing something new or different to get others involved in Parents Anonymous®, reported by 78% of the Institute participants and 81% of the Conference participants. The somewhat higher activity levels following the 1999 training may indicate improvement in the content and relevance of that training based on what was learned from the 1998 training.

**Figure 5. Levels of Participation in Leadership Behaviors Following Training Events**



- Activity 1 = Searched for new opportunities for Parents Anonymous®
- Activity 2 = Experimented with new ideas for Parents Anonymous®
- Activity 3 = Did something new or different to get others involved in Parents Anonymous®
- Activity 4 = Did something to help others recognize and use their strengths
- Activity 5 = Set a leadership example that others could follow
- Activity 6 = Did something new or different to recognize or celebrate accomplishments of others

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The pioneering efforts of Parents Anonymous® Inc. in achieving meaningful parent leadership and investigating the process of parent leadership development have significantly contributed to our understanding of the roles and functions of parent leaders and the positive results that can be realized. The study findings reported here provide the first published conceptual framework of parent leadership, as demonstrated by the “Pathways to Parent Leadership – Ten Steps to Success.” The findings also support the conclusion that parent leadership training, based on clear objectives and the stated needs of parent leaders, is possible and essential for the development and advancement of parent leaders who can make significant contributions to program and policy efforts.

The creation and study of the first Parents Anonymous® Inc. National Parent Leadership Team® and the evaluations of the two national parent leader training events reported here indicate that the application of the principles learned from the NPLT members led to effective and useful trainings which fostered the development of parent leaders and produced meaningful Parents Anonymous® parent leadership activities. The trainings improved the skills, knowledge, and abilities of the parent leaders and they gained the motivation and support they needed to return home and contribute to the leadership of their local and state Parents Anonymous® organizations. Numerous local parent leadership teams have also been developed by accredited Parents Anonymous® organizations that model the results of these vital Parents Anonymous® Inc. efforts.

Parents Anonymous® Inc. is the only child abuse prevention organization to have instituted parent leadership at every organizational level, conducted effective trainings, and demonstrated significant results based on research. The research conducted by Parents Anonymous® Inc. on meaningful parent leadership is significant because there are no studies of its kind in the field of child abuse and neglect. Attention to the processes of instituting and developing parent leadership is crucial to understanding the decisive role that parents can have in community development and child abuse prevention.

The dedication of Parents Anonymous® Inc. to parent leadership development and study will continue with the evaluation of future national parent leadership trainings and fostering the partnership of Parents Anonymous® parent leaders at all organizational levels. Parents Anonymous® Inc. is committed to expanding this research agenda to identify organizational structures that ensure meaningful

parent leadership, create strategies to overcome barriers to change, and measure the long-term impact of parent leadership with regard to program effectiveness and policy initiatives designed to reform service delivery systems so that they can better respond to the needs of families seeking help.

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