

## SUGGESTED READINGS...

### **Parent Leadership: Successful Strategies**

A useful paper on parent leadership is available on the FRIENDS web site. FRIENDS is the national resource center for the Community Based Family Resource and Support Programs, which was established under Title II of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA). The paper "shares lessons from parents and organizations that have led the way" to promote and expand parent leadership. The article reviews the importance of parent leadership, implementation challenges, leadership roles for parents, and provides guidance from parents and organizations practicing shared leadership. The article can be read in full by logging onto the FRIENDS web page at [www.chtop.com/friends/Factsheets.htm](http://www.chtop.com/friends/Factsheets.htm) and clicking on 'Successful Strategies.' The article will download in Adobe Reader.

### **Media Guide for Parent Leaders** - Parent Leadership Series, Parents Anonymous® Inc.

This important publication, written by Parents

Anonymous® Inc. is a guide for parents who are considering being interviewed by the media. Through a series of questions and discussions, this guide helps parents to evaluate the possible effects that media exposure may have on their family and provides key information for parents to consider when agreeing to an interview. Additional topics include:

- How the media works
- Guidelines for being interviewed
- Tips on preparing for and holding an interview

The guide emphasizes the importance of partnering with providers when working with the media to ensure that parents can focus on their personal story and that they are supported throughout the process. This valuable resource is available from Parents Anonymous® Inc. Please e-mail your request to Meryl Levine at [mlevine@parentsanonymous.org](mailto:mlevine@parentsanonymous.org) or by fax at (909) 625-6304.

## CONTACTING PARENTS ANONYMOUS® INC. TO WORK WITH YOUR COUNTY

Do you want to move parent leadership forward in your county? CAPIT/CBFRS liaisons, community-based organizations, child abuse prevention council representatives, Family Resource Center representatives, Small County Initiative grantees, Americorps and other key stakeholders may contact Parents Anonymous® Inc. directly to request training or technical assistance. Following the initial contact, Parents Anonymous® Inc. will work with you, your County's OCAP Consultant and other

key prevention services stakeholders to determine the best strategies for parent leadership training in your county.

**For more information about Parent Leadership training and technical assistance for your county, please contact:**

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# Parent Leadership

EXPRESS

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## OCAP WELCOMES THE CALIFORNIA PARENT LEADERSHIP TEAM

The California Department of Social Services' Office of Child Abuse Prevention (OCAP) enjoyed welcoming the new parent leaders selected for the California Parent Leadership Team. What a pleasure it was to meet such a great group of parents at their first meeting on April 2, 2002. All Team members have shown leadership in their own lives with their own children and grandchildren, and they have had key leadership roles within their own communities. We look forward to working closely with the Team to improve family support programs and child abuse prevention efforts statewide.

We encourage counties who are not represented on the Team to identify parent leaders who have utilized



California Parent Leadership Team members welcomed by Sue Rodda, Unit Manager, OCAP (third from left) and Meryl Levine, Parents Anonymous® Inc. (on right).

family strengthening services and invite them to submit a nomination to join the California Parent Leadership Team. OCAP and Parents Anonymous® Inc. hope to see the Team expand to include 15 diverse parent leaders who represent the varied needs of families

throughout California. The California Parent Leadership Team will be a valuable asset to prevention efforts at the state-level and in each community as we all learn to walk hand-in-hand in protecting California's children.

## PARENT LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES ABOUND IN CALIFORNIA

Throughout California, more and more parents are participating with service providers to shape policy and practice and build stronger, safer communities for children. Many counties that Parents Anonymous® Inc. has provided training to have realized that while it is a great success to find one or two parents to participate on their Child Abuse Prevention Coordinating Councils, there is more to shared leadership than that. Counties have begun to identify numerous ways to involve parents as decision-makers at a wide variety of levels within their prevention services systems. Through these parent leadership roles, true partnerships are being developed and parents are being supported and

trained so they are better able to meaningfully participate on larger councils and commissions.

*Increasing parent leadership opportunities in your county just takes one person to speak up whenever decisions are being made about families. Be the one to ask, 'Have we asked parents to participate with us as we plan programs, develop materials, and set policies? Lets identify some parents who can help us and hold off planning further until we have their input.'*

Below is a listing of creative ways that counties have involved parents as decision-makers.

**Grant Review Committees** – Parents are helping to develop Requests for Proposals at the county level by providing valuable input into funding priorities and criteria. They are also meeting with community-based agency staff as they

write grants to ensure that the programs they are proposing meet the needs of families.

**Paid Program Staff** – Parents are being hired as advocates and liaisons within agencies and are

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## LEADING THE FIELD: THE CALIFORNIA PARENT LEADERSHIP TEAM

The first ever state-level Parent Leadership Team has been developed in collaboration with Parents Anonymous® Inc. and the California Department of Social Services, Office of Child Abuse Prevention (OCAP). The California Parent Leadership Team (CPLT) will work in partnership with Parents Anonymous® Inc. to provide Parent Leadership training and technical assistance to counties throughout California and will participate in policy and planning activities at the state level. The CPLT will enhance meaningful parent and provider partnerships, by bringing their authentic voices and experiences in family-strengthening programs, to the discussions, activities and decisions related to family support services throughout California.

Nominations were received from a total of 26 individuals representing 14 different counties. A thorough screening was completed on the nominees and 12 were invited to serve on the Team. During the screening process, the following information was requested from each nominee:

- How the nominee got involved with family services in their county;
- How the services affected their life and their family;
- Description of their involvement in leadership activities;
- Skills and strengths that the individual would bring to the Team;
- Challenges they may face in serving on the California Parent Leadership Team;
- Their goals regarding family strengthening in their community and in California;
- Reasons for wanting to be part of the California Parent Leadership Team;
- Ability to travel.

The Team members reflect different backgrounds, interests, and skills essential to the success of this project. The diversity of the California Parent

Leadership Team represents the wide variety of families who utilize family support programs in California. Parents Anonymous® Inc. and the Office of Child Abuse Prevention extend a warm welcome to:

### ALAMEDA COUNTY

**Tina Denise Howerton** was nominated by LIFETIME (Low-Income Families' Empowerment through Education). LIFETIME is a nonprofit organization, which focuses on assisting low-income parents in achieving their goals for education, employment and economic security. Tina is a student intern for LIFETIME and was a volunteer for approximately two years. She is a single parent and full-time student at Laney College. She has utilized community services, which she states have changed her life for the better. She is involved with low-income families within her community and serves on the EOPS/CARE Advisory Committee. She is described as a hard worker, good with follow-through, and a self-starter. Tina's goal as a California Parent Leadership Team member is to "utilize her experiences, motivation and enthusiasm to make this a successful Team effort."

### BUTTE COUNTY

**Melissa Miller Garcia** was also nominated by LIFETIME. Melissa is a full-time mother and a student. She volunteers for LIFETIME as a speaker and advocate for Welfare Reform/Reauthorization. She is described as motivated, an experienced public speaker, and a mentor for parents. Melissa's goals and passion are to help strengthen family productivity by advocating for education as part of the solution. During her initial interview, Melissa stated, "...through education, parents get self-esteem, become a better parent and a role model. They become productive community members." As a member of the CPLT, Melissa is looking forward to this wonderful opportunity to help make changes and having this forum where parents can voice their ideas and address concerns.

### CALAVERAS COUNTY

**Mike Carll** was nominated by the organization Prevent Child Abuse of Calaveras County. Mike is a single parent of two daughters with special needs. He has been actively involved in Prevent Child Abuse Calaveras for two years and is currently a member of the Child Abuse Prevention Council. Mike is a volunteer for the Community Learning Centers-Healthy Start and a member of the Children's Mental Health group. Mike works part-time for the Children's System of Care as a Community Services Parent Liaison in his county. He is described as dependable, dedicated, and a true advocate for parents. Mike's goal as a CPLT member is "to help make changes in the Social Services Department to strengthen family services."



### LAKE COUNTY

**Diane Davis** was nominated by the Clear Lake Association for Developmental Services (CLADS). Diane is a full-time home-schooling mother of three teenagers and wife. Her leadership skills grew as she advocated for her own children with disabilities. She has been a parent advocate for over 14 years, helping families with children with disabilities to negotiate systems including the schools, regional centers, mental health and child protective services. Diane is an experienced trainer and has facilitated many trainings for parents to promote leadership. Diane is presently the president of CLADS and has recently received a grant to promote collaboration between school systems and families. Diane hopes that as a member of the CPLT she will be able to help other parents understand that they have rights, need to advocate for their children and ask for the services they need.



### LOS ANGELES COUNTY

**Cleopra Dyas** was nominated by the organization SOAR (Seeking Other Alternative Resources). SOAR is a community-based, family strengthening organization in South Central Los Angeles. Cleopra Dyas serves on the Parents Anonymous® Inc. National Parent Leadership Team<sup>sm</sup> and has participated as a parent trainer in Parent Leadership trainings. She is a single parent, mother of two and grandmother of five, and works full-time for Los Angeles City. She is described as a committed and dedicated parent, who is honest, supportive, and self confident in her abilities. Cleopra's goal as a CPLT member is to "bring her community's voice to the Team."



### LOS ANGELES COUNTY

**Patricia Enciso** was nominated by Parents Anonymous® Inc. She is the mother of four children and she sought help through Parents Anonymous® because she wanted to become a better parent. As a charter member of the Parents Anonymous® Inc. National Parent Leadership Team<sup>sm</sup>, Patty has co-trained nationally and locally with Parents Anonymous® Inc. staff and has appeared on national television. As a result of her parent leadership activities, Patty is now employed by Tri-City Mental Health Center as an Intensive In-Home Case Manager. Patty believes that everybody deserves a second chance, and she wants to continue helping other parents and families to know that there is hope.



### NEVADA COUNTY

**Tammy Ghasvarian** was nominated by The Community Network for Children and Families. Tammy has been an active member of this local collaborative for 6 years. She serves



on the Child Abuse Prevention Council's local board and the County Mental Health Board. She was an AmeriCorp VISTA volunteer. She has participated in the Right Questions Project, which teaches parents how to ask the right questions so they can effectively get the information they need. Tammy made "huge changes in my life" through the family strengthening services she received. She is described as a "people person", good public speaker, and problem solver. Tammy's goal as a CPLT member is to "utilize this opportunity to look for innovative ways of decision-making to change policy," and "to build family strengths within the Child Protective Services system."

**RIVERSIDE COUNTY**

**Arthur Hernandez** was nominated by his Parents Anonymous® group facilitator. He is the biological parent of two grown children and is in the process of adopting a six-year old son. He was disabled in an accident four years ago and has learned to seek community resources to support his family. Art brings a unique perspective as a father who parented two children as a married, able-bodied dad and now, as an adoptive, single parent with a disability. He is a member of a grandparents support group and very active in his community. He recently moved from Arizona to California and is hoping to help expand the availability of services in Riverside County.



**SACRAMENTO COUNTY**

**Sharon Angle** was nominated by The River Oak Center for Children. Sharon is employed as the Parent Involvement Coordinator for the River Oak Center for Children. She is the mother of four and grandmother of 12 children, four of whom have special needs. She has utilized a variety of family strengthening services in California for her own child with special needs and for her grandson, whom she adopted. She was the first paid advocate for United Advocates for Children of California in 1998 in Riverside County. She moved to Sacramento in 1998 to "pursue working in the advocacy field." She is described as a person with integrity and commitment, and is known as a bridge builder in



networking with communities, services and families. As a businesswoman for many years, Sharon brings to the CPLT "an understanding of parents' needs along with an understanding of the 'system' perspective."

**SISKIYOU COUNTY**

**Gwen Watson** was nominated by the Siskiyou County Family Interagency Services Council (FISC). Gwen is a full-time mother and full-time college student. She works part-time at the Siskiyou College Learning Service Center as a peer mentor and previously worked as a parent advocate at Choices for Yreka Family Resource Center. Gwen was a VISTA volunteer. She has shown strong leadership skills in her work with parents and community groups. She is currently a member of the FISC Steering Committee and the FISC Service Evaluation Committee. Gwen attended all Parents Anonymous® Inc. Parent Leadership trainings in Siskiyou County. She is described as intelligent and hard working and is highly respected by community leaders for her viewpoints relating to parent advocacy. Gwen's goal as a CPLT member is to "help make effective changes for families in her community and across the state."



**VENTURA COUNTY**

**Maria Moreno** was nominated by the Ventura County Children and Family Services Department. She is the parent of two young children. Maria attended a Parent Leadership training provided by Parents Anonymous® Inc. in her county and has volunteered to be a member of the Ventura County Parent Leadership Task Force that is just forming. Maria is said to be outspoken about family needs and open to hearing and learning from others. She has participated in many family support services within her county. Through the Team, Maria hopes to "help providers understand the importance of seeing their "clients" as people, who all have individual needs."

**YOLO COUNTY**

**Kathy Dreyer** was nominated by the organization Parents Anonymous® Inc. Kathy is the parent of one four-year old child.



She served on the Child Welfare Services Stakeholders Group Subcommittee on Rules and Regulations. She was a member of the Yolo County committee that developed the Answers Benefiting Children (ABC) grant and was successful in shaping policy in her county so parent education classes would be available to any parent requesting such classes. She was instrumental in getting a Parents Anonymous® group developed in Yolo County and presently serves as the parent leader of that group. Kathy is a member of the Yolo County Child Abuse Prevention Council. Kathy has been the Patients Rights Advocate for Yolo County since 1996. She has also served on the Board of Directors of the Mental Health Association of Yolo County. She is a founding member of the Incest Survivors Speakers Bureau of Yolo County and helped put on their eighth annual conference. As a CPLT member, Kathy is looking forward to "utilizing my experiences, motivation and energy to help make this a highly successful Team effort."

**NOMINATIONS STILL BEING ACCEPTED FOR THE CALIFORNIA PARENT LEADERSHIP TEAM**

The California Parent Leadership Team is continuing to accept nominations of parent leaders who have participated in family support programs. Do you know a parent who has leadership skills and is committed to strengthening families in California? Parent leaders, particularly parents who bring ethnic diversity to the Team and fathers or grandfathers, are encouraged to apply. Make sure your county contributes to the success of this exciting, first ever, statewide California Parent Leadership Team. This is a great opportunity to acknowledge parent leaders who have partnered with you in your county. There are only a few openings left so nominate key Parent Leaders in your county now!

For more information or to nominate a parent contact:

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**PARENT LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES ABOUND IN CALIFORNIA**

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representing the voice of parents and helping other parents identify their voices within the community.

**Reviewers of Audiovisual and Written Materials** – Parents are being asked to help develop and review all materials (brochures, orientation packets, videos, etc.) that agencies develop for families PRIOR to being printed and distributed. This is a great way to reach out to parents who have difficulty attending meetings. Reviewing materials can be done at home!

**Advisory Boards** – Parent Advisory Boards or Parent Leadership Teams are being developed to provide a voice for and access to parents. Some counties are developing Spanish Parent Advisory Boards.

**Focus Groups** – Parents are being invited (and often paid a stipend) to participate in focus groups to discuss strengths and challenges in service delivery within organizations. One organization recently held a focus group where parents shared their experiences of the initial contact from the agency. The agency learned what was working and what needed to be changed.

**Co-trainers** – Parents are participating in the new staff orientation programs at family resource centers, and in family maintenance and family reunification programs. Parents, who have utilized services through those programs, can provide insight to new employees about what is or is not helpful to them.

**Media** – Parents are sharing their personal stories through local newspapers, radio programs and television shows. Their authentic voices reach many parents and provide valuable information about services in their community.

**Attending Trainings** – Parents are participating with staff in many staff training opportunities. The more parents understand about the service delivery system, the better partners they can be.

## KICK-OFF MEETING FOR CALIFORNIA PARENT LEADERSHIP TEAM



Team members discuss working with the media with Barbara Meltzer (center) Parents Anonymous® Inc. Media Consultant.



Kathy Dreyer, California Parent Leadership Team member, co-training in Siskiyou County.

On April 2, 2002, the newly appointed members of the California Parent Leadership Team (CPLT) came together for their first Team meeting. The room was filled with energy as the parent leaders, Office of Child Abuse Prevention (OCAP) Consultants and Parents Anonymous® Inc. staff shared and learned from one another. "This is such an exciting moment," said Alyson Kohl, OCAP Consultant, "the parent leaders on this Team represent the many parents in counties throughout California, who have utilized family strengthening services and are ready to give back by sharing their experiences to shape the service delivery system in California."

Lisa Pion-Berlin, President and Chief Executive Officer of Parents Anonymous® Inc. and Sue Rodda, Unit Manager, Prevention Network Development, Office of Child Abuse Prevention set the positive tone for the day. "The California Parent Leadership Team will not only have a powerful impact on policy and practice in this state, but will be an important model nationwide," stated Dr. Pion-Berlin.

To ensure their ability to meaningfully participate as decision-makers, this first meeting was jam-packed with information. The OCAP Consultants provided an overview of the California Child Abuse Prevention Service System and Parents Anonymous® Inc. staff presented information on the partnership between OCAP and Parents Anonymous® Inc, the role of the Team and the numerous parent leadership opportunities available to them. Team members, OCAP Consultants and Parents

Anonymous® Inc. staff spent quite a bit of time getting to know one another by sharing information about their work and personal lives. We found that all had many things in common, including the common goal of being the best parents we could be.

The second Parent Leadership Team meeting was held on June 10. The Team members created their own agenda which included:

- Setting ground rules for the Team
- Electing officers and developing term limits
- Training on working with the media and telling your personal story

The Team is off to a great start and have already begun co-training with Parents Anonymous® Inc. staff. After meeting them, we are sure that they will bring valuable insight and knowledge about their process of becoming parent leaders and will serve as role models to other parents throughout California.

## MOVING PARENT LEADERSHIP FORWARD: COUNTY HIGHLIGHTS

As parent leadership activities increase throughout California there are more and more opportunities to highlight the good work that counties are doing. In this issue of the *Parent Leadership Express* two counties, that selected different strategies to help them move forward with parent leadership, are highlighted - Kern and Siskiyou.

### Kern County

Through technical assistance calls with Kern County's CAPIT/CBFRS Liaison, Blake Smith, and Jayme Stewart, Kern County Network for Children, it was clear that the key players in Kern County were already sold on parent leadership. They were requesting assistance to help their county move forward with parent leadership by addressing the barriers that inhibit parent-provider partnerships from happening. An individualized training was developed to begin identifying barriers and developing a plan of action to eliminate them.

On February 21, 2002, 61 participants attended an innovative training called **Shared Leadership: Building Partnerships with Parents to Strengthen Kern County**. Approximately one-third of the attendees were parents and the other two-thirds included staff and administrators from community-based organizations, the school district, and the county.

The training response was very positive. Parents and agency representatives shared their concerns and ideas on how to work collaboratively. An extensive list of barriers was identified and the group developed solutions to many of them. Some solutions included:

- Easing childcare problems by developing parent babysitting co-ops, on site childcare, and childcare reimbursements;
- Getting the word out by developing a simple newsletter written by parents for parents;
- Having two bilingual parents available at meetings for translation;
- Reminding people at meetings not to use jargon and writing information with terminology that is understandable to all;
- Offering more ESL classes;
- Making sure that administrators are more accessible to parents, asking them for their feedback, advice and ideas.

Both parents and administrators enthusiastically gave their input during the training activities. Parents overwhelmingly stated that they would attend more meetings if held after traditional work hours or on weekends.

"The recent training by Parents Anonymous® Inc. has increased our knowledge on how to involve parents in the design of our services," stated Blake Smith, CAPIT/CBFRS

Liaison. "It has also provided us with some excellent tools that we can use to better involve parents in the services that affect them directly. I think this is a benefit to our County!"

Following the training, one parent said that she was "so excited to find that there is a place for a parent like me who wants to be involved and wants to help." Keep up the good work Kern County!

### Siskiyou County

With a brand new Child Abuse Prevention Council appointed by the Board of Supervisors, Jeff Palmer, CAPIT/CBFRS Liaison felt the time was perfect to provide some intensive Parent Leadership training that focused specifically on the roles and responsibilities of the Council. "Although difficult, the hard part of the parent/consumer issue is not identifying parents to serve, it is retaining them," states Jeff Palmer. "With only one seat on our Child Abuse Prevention Council for a parent, the Council is faced with figuring out how to ensure that the voices of parents will be heard. If we truly want parent participation, we must be willing to change our attitudes and we need to rethink the way we make decisions in our community."

During the training, entitled **Building an Effective Child Abuse Prevention Council: Recruiting and Retaining Parent Consumers for Service Provider Planning**, the following topics were discussed:

- The fundamentals of building a strong Child Abuse Prevention Council;
- Recruiting and retaining parents;
- State and Federal requirements related to parent leadership;
- The importance of parent partnership in the planning and evaluation process to create meaningful programs.

After much brainstorming and discussion, the members of the Child Abuse Prevention Council decided that a Parent Advisory Group should be established. The Advisory Group would provide support and input on the needs of families in the community to the parent member of the Council. It was also decided that other members of the Council, in addition to the parent member, would meet regularly with the Parent Advisory Group so that the perspective of families in Siskiyou would be heard and represented by more than one member of the Council. This innovative solution is a great way to begin ensuring that parents' voices are heard. The Council also developed a longer-term plan to recommend to the County Board of Supervisors that additional parent members be added to the Council. Sher Huss, Director, Human Services Department and Chair of the Child Abuse Prevention Council said "We've been talking about parent leadership for two years. Now it is time to just do it!"