

Shared Leadership

SHARED LEADERSHIP IN ACTION IS PUBLISHED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE STUART FOUNDATION WINTER 2002

In Action

"The voices of parents are being heard alongside professionals to shape policy and practice to make a difference in the lives of children and families throughout California because of the vitally important collaborations between Parents Anonymous® Inc., these six forward-thinking California Child Welfare Services Departments and the Stuart Foundation."

Dr. Lisa Pion-Berlin,
President and Chief Executive Officer of
Parents Anonymous® Inc.



"Our foundation believes that we can best protect children and support families through collaborative partnerships. This innovative project addresses the most fundamental and important collaboration - the partnership between parents and service providers to address the needs of children and families in the Child Welfare System. In such a short time, we have already seen significant results in Fresno and Ventura counties through this stellar Parent Leadership Initiative spearheaded by Parents Anonymous® Inc."



Bill Bettencourt, Program Officer, Stuart Foundation

Child Welfare System Kicks Off Major Parent Leadership Initiative

The Stuart Foundation, a renowned philanthropic organization, selected Parents Anonymous® Inc. to launch a groundbreaking project to strengthen the California Child Welfare System by promoting and implementing the principles of parent leadership as a critical element in successful system change. Through this innovative alliance that began in January 2002, Parents Anonymous® Inc. is providing customized Parent Leadership Training and Technical Assistance to Child Welfare System staff and parents within six key California counties. Parents Anonymous® Inc. has designed a unique Parent Leadership training program that is assisting Child Welfare System staff in building effective partnerships with parents in activities such as local planning processes, funding decisions, and evaluation to ensure quality programs for children and families.

During the first year of this exciting new initiative, Parents Anonymous® Inc. began working intensively with the Child Welfare System administrators,



Linda Henderson and Richard Shaw, Ventura County Human Services Agency Administrators talk with Cleopra Dyas (center), California Parent Leadership Team Member.

managers, staff and parents in Fresno and Ventura Counties. Over the next two years, Imperial, Kern, Sacramento, and Tehama Counties will join the project. All of these Child Welfare Departments have wholeheartedly volunteered to participate in this initiative to build stronger and more effective partnerships between agency staff and parents in order to protect children, strengthen services in their communities and create

major Child Welfare System reform.

This innovative Parent Leadership initiative is off to a great start. In collaboration with Child Welfare System staff, Parents Anonymous® Inc. is building a base of new information on successful parent leadership strategies, challenges, and benefits, creating a statewide model for system reform through parent leadership, and making an important contribution to the overall goal of strengthening the California Child Protection System. When Parent Leadership is successfully implemented, significant

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when talking with a group of new parents in the Child Protection System as compared to making a presentation to the Board of Supervisors.

“Identifying Your Concerns and Communicating Effectively” – This training focused on strengthening partnerships between parents and agency staff by providing techniques to accurately identify concerns, formulate questions, and communicate needs and ideas better.

The dynamic partnership that developed with administrators and staff within the Fresno County Children and Family Services Department, Parent Leaders on the Task Force, and Parents Anonymous® Inc. has led to landmark results in the Fresno County Child Protection System including:

- Two parents serve as co-trainers with staff in parent education classes offered through the Department.



Parent Leadership Task Force members develop a Parent Leadership Plan.

- Two Parent Leaders are participating in the Multidisciplinary Round Table process as advocates at both the Emergency Response and Child Protective levels.
- Parent Leaders are co-training with staff during Family Reunification Orientations by presenting their story, talking about the importance of developing case plans that meet family needs, and answering parents’ questions.
- A parent leader has been identified to serve on the Child Protective Services Oversight Committee.
- Three parents have been identified to participate in new staff orientation. They will share their stories and provide insight to new Child Protective Service workers about what was

helpful and what might have been helpful when they were first involved with the system.

- A sub-committee of the Task Force was formed to create a newsletter, written by parents and social workers, to provide information to families about the Department and the multiple resources available to families.
- A sub-committee of the Task Force is investigating having Parent Leaders serve in paid positions as case aides working hand-in-hand with social workers and families.

Great work Fresno County!

Ventura County

The Ventura County Department of Children and Family Services decided that their first parent leadership training would be targeted to middle management staff to ensure that the Department demonstrated a unified message and commitment to the shared leadership model. Through a training entitled, **“Strengthening the Child Welfare System through Parent Leadership,”** Parents Anonymous® Inc. created an opportunity for social work supervisors and managers to discuss the benefits and possible challenges they may face as the Department moved towards a shared leadership model. Lots of suggestions and recommendations were made to identify parents who may be interested in serving on the Task Force.

With middle management on board, it was a breeze to identify volunteers to participate on the Parent

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Managers commit to Shared Leadership in Ventura County.

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