

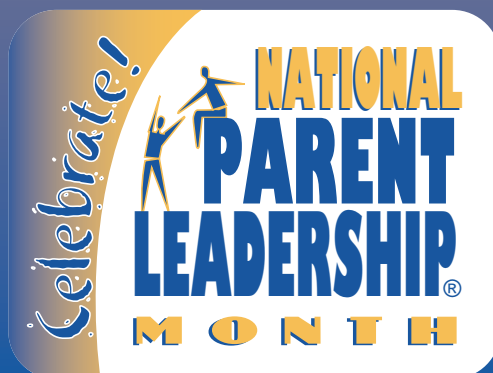
# Pathways to Meaningful Shared Leadership

A Publication of Parents Anonymous® Inc.



## Shared Leadership

A partnership where parents and staff share responsibility, expertise and leadership in any area that affects families and communities.



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Shared Leadership is a new and challenging approach where parents and staff work in partnership to achieve better outcomes for families, programs and systems. This publication is designed to help staff within public or private programs and large systems incorporate Shared Leadership strategies into their work with families and to assist parents in taking on leadership roles within their communities, schools, social service programs and other settings. Everyone's pathway to Shared Leadership is unique but there are common elements that support parents and staff in reaching their goals. Many of these are highlighted here, including ten key steps to successfully working in Shared Leadership based on the research and experiences of Parents Anonymous® Inc. This publication is intended to be widely disseminated to parents and staff with an interest in learning how to effectively work together in innovative and creative partnerships.

Since 1969, Parents Anonymous® Inc. has modeled Shared Leadership in its programs and its organizational structure. Individual parents and staff report the tremendous positive impact on their families and careers when they work in Shared Leadership. Based on proven effective Shared Leadership strategies, Parents Anonymous® Inc. offers training, technical assistance, publications, research assistance and other supports to public and private agencies, communities, and programs through the *Shared Leadership in Action Program*.

Two Parents Anonymous® Inc. publications, *Shared Leadership in Action: Trainer's Manual* and *Shared Leadership in Action: Guidebook for Participants* are valuable resources for organizations and individuals interested in providing Shared Leadership training to staff and Parent Leaders. Both publications are available in English and Spanish. This innovative model requires training teams that consist of both parents and staff and incorporates the latest research on Shared Leadership.

## What is a Parent Leader?

Leadership is demonstrated when individuals take action to accomplish a goal. The term Parent Leader best describes those committed parents who work to help make their community's schools, social services, health care providers and other entities become more responsive to and supportive of children and families. Parent Leaders may be parents, grandparents, kinship care providers, foster parents or anyone in a parenting role. They are speaking from their own perspective and are not speaking or acting in a staff role for an organization or other entity. Every parent has the potential to become a Parent Leader. The most effective Parent Leaders are those who have personal experience in the schools, programs or systems they are working to change.

## What is Shared Leadership?

Parent Leaders and staff increase their successes by working together to accomplish their mutual goals and shared vision. Shared leadership is successfully achieved when parents and staff build strong partnerships and share responsibility, expertise and leadership in any areas that affect families and communities.

*Parents are included in our plan as part of the solution, which is a new way of thinking for many staff working in the system*

*– Sandy, Staff Member*

## Results of Shared Leadership

Successful implementation of Shared Leadership strategies results in significant positive changes for systems, programs and individuals. The following examples highlight the tremendous benefits realized when Parent Leaders and staff join in partnership to strengthen families, create effective programs and design meaningful systems change.

**M**y job satisfaction has increased because I feel that families and I are in it together. I've learned a lot from working with the parents.

– Martha, Staff Member

### SYSTEMS:

#### Meaningful Systems Change

- ❖ Parent Leaders who have been part of the system can offer valuable, unique and diverse perspectives, ideas, suggestions and solutions.
- ❖ Parents who see Parent Leaders holding meaningful roles experience greater trust that the system will be more responsive to their needs and interests.
- ❖ Parent Leaders can be effective spokespersons and advocates for systems and their life experiences can lead to greater understanding of vital issues that affect families.
- ❖ By partnering with Parent Leaders, systems can achieve more positive results by utilizing resources more effectively and expanding their ability to create change.
- ❖ Based on the positive results achieved through Shared Leadership, systems create additional formal opportunities for Parent Leaders to have a voice and a stronger impact on future systemic developments.

### PROGRAMS:

#### Increased Program Effectiveness

- ❖ Parent Leaders often become advocates for stronger, more responsive programs and additional resources for families and the services that support them.
- ❖ Participation of Parent Leaders in recruiting, selecting, hiring and evaluating staff can lead to stronger partnerships and more effective programs.
- ❖ Parent Leaders often volunteer as resources and positive role models to other parents, including serving as parent mentors.
- ❖ Parent Leaders help programs better respond to the needs and wishes of the families they serve by providing staff with immediate, reality-based feedback and suggestions for improvement.

### INDIVIDUALS:

#### Better Outcomes for Parents, Children and Families

- ❖ Serving as a Parent Leader provides opportunities for growth and helps parents gain increased self-esteem, a stronger sense of personal power and greater leadership capabilities.
- ❖ Parent Leaders increase their skills in setting and reaching specific goals for themselves, their families and their communities.
- ❖ Parent Leaders often garner increased respect from their family members and friends.
- ❖ Often, children of Parent Leaders begin to demonstrate leadership behaviors in their homes, schools and communities appropriate for their age.
- ❖ Partnering with Parent Leaders increases staff satisfaction and reduces staff burnout.

**M**y Shared Leadership activities have not only impacted me, they have helped me serve as a positive role model for my children. As my children watched me become more active in their schools, on the Parent Leadership Task Force and on local councils and committees, they became more active. I am modeling the way for my kids.

– Pamela, Parent Leader

## Ten Steps to Successful Shared Leadership

The following ten steps represent vital elements for planning, implementing and supporting effective Shared Leadership strategies. These often take place in the order listed but individual experiences may vary. Strategic alliances between staff and parents can lead to powerful and positive changes. Partnerships may focus on a single program, organization or system or may include representatives of a wide range of diverse entities. It is important that staff and Parent Leaders participate in the same trainings, receive the same information and are offered any additional training needed to ensure they can participate fully in all activities and receive needed supports.

**1. Make a Significant Commitment to Shared Leadership.** This commitment process needs to take place at all levels of the organization or institution and on a personal level for those engaged in Shared Leadership roles. It is vital that Parent Leaders are key partners in developing the vision for Shared Leadership. Developing a formal structure such as a Task Force or an Advisory Team provides a strong foundation for turning the commitment to Shared Leadership into reality.

**2. Assess Readiness .** Self-assessments of parents, staff and organizations are necessary to identify personal and organizational strengths and any areas needing improvement to work effectively in Shared Leadership. Parents and staff should complete individual assessments and both should participate in the organizational assessment. Parents Anonymous® Inc.'s *Shared Leadership in Action* Program provides three separate assessment tools – one for Parent Leaders, one for staff and one for organizations.

**3. Think Outside the Box.** Challenge assumptions and attitudes that are

obstacles to Shared Leadership. Be open to personal and organizational growth and change. Seek new opportunities to incorporate essential elements of Shared Leadership in all aspects of working with children and families.

**4. Develop a Shared Leadership Plan.** Develop specific attainable goals and realistic timelines to ensure progress. Plan to begin right away and be patient. This is an on-going process and even small steps add up to significant results. Ensure resources are available to support this work. Determine strategies for building on strengths and for addressing any potential barriers.

**5. Provide Concrete and Emotional Supports.** Whenever possible, organizations should provide funds to help pay for child care, transportation and costs for Parent Leaders, including any lost wages due to participation in Shared Leadership activities. Parent Leaders should be able to participate without incurring out-of-pocket costs. Parent Leaders will benefit from supportive, positive and constructive feedback. Training for staff and Parent Leaders in Shared Leadership and any other relevant topics is another support that provides increased knowledge and skills for this new way of working together. Staff will need the support of their supervisors and the ability to devote work time to these Shared Leadership activities.

**6. Learn From Others.** Taking part in training and technical assistance opportunities helps develop specific skills, enhances knowledge and creates shared experiences. Seek formal and informal learning opportunities. For example, the Parents Anonymous® Inc. *Shared Leadership in Action* Program has helped thousands of staff and Parent Leaders build new partnerships and incorporate new strategies for working in Shared Leadership.

**7. Continually Evaluate Progress.** Review and revise the Shared Leadership plan as needed. When tasks are accomplished, identify additional steps and incorporate them into the plan. Analyze setbacks and develop strategies to overcome barriers whenever possible. Be sure that Parent Leaders and staff are all engaged in periodic evaluations of progress and in discussions regarding the continued relevance of the goals and activities.

**8. Be a Role Model to Others.** Reach out and encourage other parents and staff to get involved. Continually replenish the pool of Parent Leaders and staff for various Shared Leadership activities. Recruitment is an on-going process and the best recruiters are parents and staff who are already committed to and involved in carrying out the Shared Leadership plans.

**9. Solidify Shared Leadership Commitments and Practices.** Formalize policies, practices and structures at all levels to solidify the commitment to and practice of meaningful Shared Leadership. With this strong foundation, Shared Leadership can be infused into the on-going work of the organization or entity.

**10. Celebrate Successes.** It is always important to acknowledge success along the way by recognizing achievement of small steps. Appreciating the hard work and dedication of Parent Leaders and staff will inspire continued efforts toward larger goals.

For additional information on implementing these steps, contact Parents Anonymous® Inc. or visit the Parents Anonymous® Inc. web site at [www.parentsanonymous.org](http://www.parentsanonymous.org).

## Shared Leadership in Action Program

Parents Anonymous® Inc. has developed the *Shared Leadership in Action* Program, an innovative research-based model where parents and staff learn how to effectively implement the “Ten Steps to Successful Shared Leadership.” Through participation in this program, parents gain new leadership skills and opportunities and staff learn to more effectively partner with parents. The *Shared Leadership in Action* Program has the following key components:

**1. Assessment and planning.** The first step in implementing Shared Leadership strategies is identifying existing strengths and barriers for Parent Leaders, staff and organizations. Parents Anonymous® Inc. provides assessment tools to: (1) help parents identify their strengths and any areas that might become barriers to their work as Parent Leaders; and (2) help staff assess personal and organizational readiness to work in partnership with parents on Shared Leadership activities. After completing these assessments, Parent Leaders and staff can develop a realistic plan for expanding their work in Shared Leadership. This plan should include action steps to be taken, key individuals and groups to be involved, resources needed and a timeline for completion.

**2. Development of organizational structures to support Shared Leadership strategies.** When implementing new Shared Leadership strategies, it is very important to have a structured avenue for Parent Leaders and staff to work together, share information, review and revise plans, receive training and create opportunities for Shared Leadership. Many organizations create Shared Leadership Task Forces, Parent Leadership Teams or other structures to support Parent Leaders and staff in their work together. These entities meet regularly and provide a foundation for lasting change.

**3. Shared Leadership in Action Training Institute.** Parents Anonymous® Inc. provides a series of trainings including the *Shared Leadership in Action* training which increases the knowledge, skills and abilities of participants to engage in Shared Leadership activities. The *Shared Leadership in Action* training focuses on roles for Parent Leaders, critical elements in Shared Leadership and strategies for recruiting, selecting and supporting Parent Leaders. This training incorporates Parents Anonymous® Inc. findings from national research on effective leadership practices of parents. Parent Leader and staff trainers facilitate discussion among participants regarding their expectations, Shared Leadership goals and needs for support. Participants create Shared Leadership Plans to guide their efforts for the six-month period following the initial training. A *Shared Leadership in Action: Guidebook for Participants* is given to each attendee and becomes an ongoing reference tool.

**4. On-going technical assistance.** Parents Anonymous® Inc. provides technical assistance to support staff and Parent Leaders in all aspects of implementing Shared Leadership strategies. This may include additional leadership development trainings, assistance in identifying roles for Parent Leaders, development of new written role descriptions, creation of structures such as Parent Advisory Councils and other areas of importance related to Shared Leadership.

**5. Supports for Parent Leaders and staff.** Throughout all aspects of the *Shared Leadership in Action* Program, Parents Anonymous® Inc. works with staff and Parent Leaders to identify and build on strengths and remove barriers so that parents can have more active roles and stronger voices. Parent Leaders and staff recommend needed supports to allow full engagement in Shared Leadership activities.

**6. On-going recruitment.** In order to maintain an active group of Parent Leaders and staff working in Shared Leadership, it is important to consistently engage in recruitment activities. Parents Anonymous® Inc. assists organizations in developing and implementing effective outreach materials and strategies.

**7. Evaluation.** Parents Anonymous® Inc. has developed tools and models for evaluating the results of the Shared Leadership activities. Standardized measurements are used to determine the increase in knowledge, skills and abilities among Parent Leaders and staff who participate in the *Shared Leadership in Action* trainings. Other tools are used to track growth in Shared Leadership activities and changes in attitudes and perceptions.

As a result of this program, parents and staff have created positive changes in their communities by:

- ▲ Developing new attitudes, behaviors and trust leading to stronger partnerships
- ▲ Identifying meaningful leadership roles for parents
- ▲ Forming organizational structures, such as Shared Leadership Task Forces, for staff and Parent Leaders to work together to implement and support a wide range of opportunities for Shared Leadership
- ▲ Creating organizational cultures with resources to support roles for Parent Leaders
- ▲ Removing barriers to partnering with parents
- ▲ Supporting and recognizing parents in advocacy roles
- ▲ Encouraging Parent Leaders to serve as role models and mentors to other parents.

# Opportunities for Shared Leadership are Everywhere

To make positive changes, think creatively, move beyond traditional and limited roles for Parent Leaders and staff and challenge old assumptions. It is important to think of every parent as a potential Parent Leader. Sometimes staff are concerned that parents in their program are not ready to take on leadership roles because their lives are too complicated or they are too emotionally or physically fragile. Parents may be reluctant to take on leadership roles because they are not sure they will have an impact or that their investment of time and effort will achieve any meaningful results. In some well-established systems, it can be confusing to identify roles for parents. Organizations benefit tremendously when they address these challenges in partnership with Parent Leaders and make opportunities for Shared Leadership in:

- Strategic planning
- Program development and implementation
- Resource development, including raising funds
- Staffing and program operations
- Curriculum development
- Developing and meeting standards
- Policy development
- Creating legislative agendas
- Participation in public awareness and outreach activities
- Creating and serving on state and local parent leadership teams
- Evaluation and research
- Organizational governance
- Advocacy
- Working with the media
- Providing training and technical assistance
- Governance and oversight
- All other areas that impact children and families

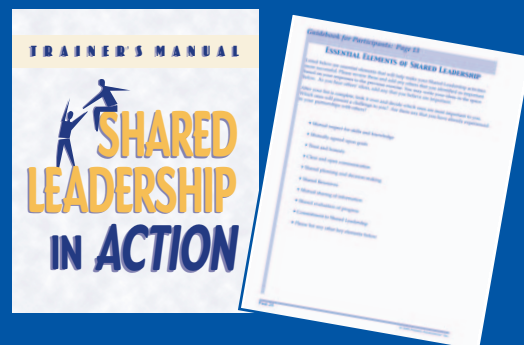
**E**veryone always told me I had potential but it wasn't until I was asked to take on a leadership role that I was able to grow and learn.

– Patty, Parent Leader

## Essential Elements of Meaningful Shared Leadership

Shared Leadership is identified by a set of behaviors and attitudes that create an environment of trust, respect and partnership. The following elements are vital to ensuring the success of any Shared Leadership effort.

- Mutually agreed upon goals
- Mutual respect for skills, knowledge and abilities
- Trust and honesty
- Defined and meaningful roles
- Mutual sharing of information
- Shared evaluation of progress
- Shared resources
- Clear and open communication
- Shared planning and decision-making



## Celebrate!

### National Parent Leadership Month

Each February, parents, staff, community members and public officials throughout the country celebrate National Parent Leadership Month to recognize, honor and support parents for leadership roles in their homes and communities and in state, national and international arenas. National Parent Leadership Month was developed by Parents Anonymous® Inc. Annually, numerous co-sponsors join together in this exciting celebration. National Parent Leadership Month activities help public and private systems in social services, education, juvenile justice, childcare, mental health and health, businesses and policymakers to promote Parent Leadership in communities nationwide to:

- ❖ Raise public awareness about the important roles parents play in shaping the lives of children and families.
- ❖ Publicize and expand opportunities for Parent Leaders to participate in meaningful Parent Leadership activities.
- ❖ Recognize individual Parent Leaders whose contributions make a positive difference to their families and communities.
- ❖ Build successful partnerships between Parent Leaders and professionals to strengthen and support families and communities.

### Join the Parent Leadership Network



The Parent Leadership Network is a unique on-line community where parents and staff come together to talk about ways to develop and expand their skills and create opportunities for Parent Leadership and Shared Leadership. Participants share their experiences and ideas, give and get support for Shared

Leadership and Parent Leadership activities, increase their own leadership abilities and encourage others to grow as leaders. The Parent Leadership Network was created by Parents Anonymous® Inc. and is hosted by the Parents Anonymous® National Parent Leadership Team®. Team members serve as moderators and take responsibility for posting information shared through this on-line community. Membership is free of charge. It's easy to join by completing the on-line registration form at [www.parentleadershipnetwork.org](http://www.parentleadershipnetwork.org).

### Publications

The following publications can be purchased at the Parents Anonymous® Inc. Web site, [www.parentsanonymous.org](http://www.parentsanonymous.org). Many other publications on this site can be downloaded free of charge.

#### Media Guide for Professionals

This publication will assist the reader in developing effective skills for working with the media, including reaching out to create media opportunities, identifying and partnering with Parent Leaders and developing a Shared Leadership approach to all media activities.

#### Media Guide for Parent Leaders

This companion publication is an excellent tool for parents who are working with the media. It is designed to help Parent Leaders effectively communicate their message through the media and offers valuable information about how the media works and general guidelines about being interviewed.

#### Shared Leadership in Action: Trainers Manual

Available in English and Spanish

This manual provides detailed guidelines for staff and Parent Leader co-trainers to present the Shared Leadership in Action training. This training is also provided by Parents Anonymous® Inc. as part of the Shared Leadership in Action Program as described in this publication.

#### Shared Leadership in Action: Guidebook for Participants

Available in English and Spanish

This publication is designed for use by participants in the Shared Leadership in Action training and provides all needed handouts, worksheets and notes to ensure the greatest benefit is gained from participating in the training.

# Research Demonstrates Effectiveness of Shared Leadership in Action Program

Evaluation findings have demonstrated the effectiveness of *Shared Leadership in Action* trainings in increasing the knowledge, skills and abilities of Parent Leaders and staff participants. The areas of greatest growth include:

- Essential practices for developing leadership skills
- Effective strategies for recruiting and selecting Parent Leaders
- Creating meaningful roles for Parent Leaders

Results have also demonstrated increases in the ability of the participants to apply what they learned in the training, especially with regard to developing a Shared Leadership Plan and incorporating the training content into their daily lives.

Significant results have been measured in evaluation studies of Parents Anonymous® Inc. Shared Leadership/Parent Leadership Initiatives in multiple California Counties. These results indicate impressive increases in the number of meaningful Parent Leadership roles at all levels of the County Child Welfare Systems to ensure the achievement of systems improvement. Parent Leaders and staff are now working in Shared Leadership to:

- ◆ Establish Parent Mentoring Programs, where Parent Leaders serve as mentors for other parents entering the Child Welfare System and reach out to parents in Family Court and Juvenile Court settings
- ◆ Co-train in Parent Education Classes
- ◆ Develop telephone helplines which are operated by Parent Leaders to respond to calls from other parents
- ◆ Design and disseminate informational materials to inform parent consumers about services and expectations, including developing "A Parent's Guide" to orient new parents to the Child Welfare System
- ◆ Ensure that Parent Leaders are included in the development, implementation and oversight of Program Improvement Plans, System Improvement Plans, and County Child Welfare System Redesign efforts
- ◆ Train and orient staff and present the parent perspective regarding various agency practices
- ◆ Represent the County Child Welfare System at state and national meetings and conferences
- ◆ Address agency policymaking and program planning
- ◆ Co-present at meetings with county officials.

### Evaluation Findings

*All participant ratings of the Shared Leadership in Action trainings have indicated statistically significant increases in knowledge levels and abilities related to Shared Leadership. As a result of new meaningful Shared Leadership opportunities, organizational cultural change and improved services to families have occurred in a number of child protective and social services systems.*

Parents Anonymous® Inc. is a national leader in helping individuals, organizations and systems achieve meaningful Shared Leadership by building partnerships between parents and staff. This is achieved by providing training and technical assistance, developing publications and conducting research on Parent Leadership and Shared Leadership, systems reform and effective community-based strategies. In addition, Parents Anonymous® Inc. leads a diverse international Network of accredited organizations and affiliates that implement quality Parents Anonymous® Groups and Children's Programs. For additional information, contact:

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