



PARENTS ANONYMOUS, INC.

**STRATEGIES
FOR
BEST PRACTICE**

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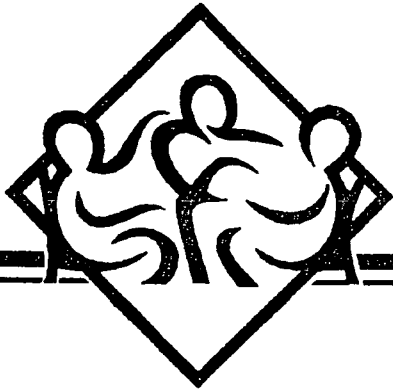
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PARENTS ANONYMOUS, INC.

STRATEGIES
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SECTION I

INTRODUCTION

Since 1970, hundreds of thousands of parents and children participating in Parents Anonymous programs have found hope for a better life, strength to make positive long term changes in their behavior, and help and support for conquering the challenges they face. Parents Anonymous programs have grown both in number and in diversity throughout the country and the need for culturally responsive, neighborhood-based Parents Anonymous programs has dramatically increased. Free, weekly, open-ended, mutually supportive Parents Anonymous groups which operate on a model of shared leadership remain a vital resource for all communities seeking to support parents in their efforts to build strong families and create safe neighborhoods.

This manual provides valuable information for individuals and organizations planning to promote, maintain, develop and expand Parents Anonymous programs in their community. It contains the results of an extensive documentation of the "best practices" for implementing Parents Anonymous programs in diverse communities utilizing strategies that respect and respond to the unique strengths and needs of individual settings. While the primary focus of this manual is on cultural and ethnic diversity, we use the word diversity in the broadest context - diversity of cultural and ethnic backgrounds, gender diversity, socio-economic diversity, geographic regional diversity and any other areas that help create a separate group identity for parents and children.

This manual is divided into several sections. This section, Section I, presents an overview of the manual and provides background information on the Parents Anonymous, Inc. activities to identify the Best Practices throughout the country for developing Parents Anonymous programs, with a special emphasis on working with communities of color.

Section II discusses the Parents Anonymous history, group model and research findings. This section will be useful for those individuals or organizations that are recent additions to the Parents Anonymous National Network. Section II is primarily designed to support public education,

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training, outreach, fund-raising and volunteer recruitment activities. Because the richness of the National Network is so diverse and wide-spread, this 'common language' for describing Parents Anonymous is provided to ensure consistency and accuracy in promoting local programs.

Section III provides a framework for joining in partnership with communities, or for helping others better understand your own community, in order to determine the best strategies for implementing Parents Anonymous programs. The most successful Parents Anonymous programs always build on the strengths of the community and respond to the diverse needs of the families who live there.

Section IV includes the "best practices" for developing Parents Anonymous groups in diverse setting. Successful strategies are identified and a menu of options is provided from which to choose those that best fit individual communities. The material in Section IV is based on several underlying assumptions. One is that each community is unique, with strengths and needs that are best known by members of the community. Through our work all across the country, it quickly became clear that while communities may appear to have vast similarities to the outsider, they actually have unique aspects and individual identities. Parents Anonymous' community development role is to partner with parents in need and all other interested members of a community to identify and build on their strengths and, through the development of Parents Anonymous programs, to support their efforts to create safe communities and strong families.

A second significant assumption made in Section IV is that the Parents Anonymous Principles provide a universal foundation for implementing Parents Anonymous programs in partnership with communities to better respond to the diverse needs of families. This community partnership is most successful when the issues raised in Section III are understood and incorporated into any program planning, implementation and evaluation activities. Program development strategies have been successfully formulated and implemented in a wide range of ethnically and culturally diverse

communities. For example, parents participate in culturally responsive Parents Anonymous groups on Native American reservations in Montana and Arizona, in low-income housing projects in South Chicago, rural towns in South Carolina, prisons in Texas and Massachusetts, groups for Spanish-speaking parents in central Washington and Latino families in East Los Angeles. The third assumption is that all parents need support and information and that parents, whatever their cultural or community context, benefit from participation in Parents Anonymous programs.

Section V contains several examples of successful Parents Anonymous programs in Native American and Latino communities. These brief reports portray the practices of several Parents Anonymous affiliates who participated in interviews and site visits. Their experiences help bring to life some of the strategies discussed in Section IV.

Section VI is the appendix and includes additional information about Parents Anonymous and culturally diverse practices. The information contained in this manual provides a solid basis for developing Parents Anonymous groups in diverse communities, but there is much additional information that can be useful. We strongly encourage additional reading on cultural diversity and other relevant issues and have identified several useful resources.

Sections VII, VIII, and IX and X are included to ensure this manual remains a living document and fully incorporates current and future Parents Anonymous publications which expand upon topics raised in the main body of this material. Parents Anonymous, Inc. periodically publishes technical assistance bulletins to provide in-depth information on specific areas. *Innovations* and *The Parent Networker* are newsletters published by Parents Anonymous, Inc. and are further described in Section II. A major strength of the Parents Anonymous programs across the country is the on-going discovery of creative and innovative methods for responding to the many needs and concerns of families. We know this discovery will continue and this manual will be updated periodically to include additional strategies and successful programs.

While the promotion, maintenance, expansion and development of quality Parents Anonymous programs is the primary goal of this manual, all Parents Anonymous programs must be developed in concert with Parents Anonymous, Inc. or a Parents Anonymous Affiliate. If you are reading this manual and want to begin a Parents Anonymous group, but are not yet in contact with us, call or write so that we can support your efforts, provide necessary materials and include you in on-going training and support activities. *Strategies for Best Practice* is designed to be used as part of the Parents Anonymous, Inc. full package of program materials, including *The Manual for Group Facilitators*, *The Group Leader* brochure and the *I Am A Parents Anonymous Parent* booklet.

We are grateful to the many Parents Anonymous parents, volunteers and staff who contributed their time and expertise to assist in developing this material. With the generous support of the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and The Freddie Mac Foundation, Parents Anonymous, Inc. utilized the various strategies identified below to identify, assess and report on these strategies for best practice.

METHODOLOGY

Based on our vision that all parents should have access to culturally responsive Parents Anonymous programs, Parents Anonymous, Inc. implemented a Best Practices Initiative. A Task Force consisting of talented and committed Parents Anonymous executive directors representing 10 Parents Anonymous state and regional affiliates was formed in August, 1994 to develop Parents Anonymous groups serving families of color in diverse communities and to highlight the successful strategies utilized during this process. The organizations represented on the Task Force share the Parents Anonymous, Inc. vision of expanding culturally responsive Parents Anonymous programs in diverse communities. Through structured interviews, site visits and surveys, Parents Anonymous, Inc. staff collected "best practices" information from these targeted sites.

During the 1995 Parents Anonymous National Leadership Conference held in Washington, D.C., affiliate executive directors, board members, program staff and volunteers, and parents participated in structured focus group discussions regarding the best practices for providing Parents Anonymous programs, from their individual perspectives. The questions posed to participants focused on how to develop and implement Parents Anonymous programs in diverse communities and implement strategies for promoting parent leadership in diverse settings.

The 1994 and 1995 Data Base Surveys, completed by all affiliates of Parents Anonymous, Inc., were expanded to include pertinent information regarding Parents Anonymous programs in diverse settings. In addition, Parents Anonymous, Inc. staff conducted structured interviews with members of the Parents Anonymous National Network who have specific expertise in working with families of color and made site visits to interview local Parents Anonymous staff, volunteers and parents, as well as to observe Parents Anonymous groups serving parents in diverse settings. The Task Force reviewed the data collected and helped identify areas requiring further attention. Of tremendous significance, from 1994 - 1996, the Parents Anonymous affiliate organizations represented on the Task Force implemented and maintained more than 30 new Parents Anonymous groups in diverse communities where there were few other resources for families and children. The experience and expertise gained during this collaborative effort will continue to serve as an important resource for Parents Anonymous parents, volunteers and staff throughout the country.

SECTION II.

PARENTS ANONYMOUS, INC. AND THE PARENTS ANONYMOUS PROGRAM

Parents Anonymous, Inc. is a national, not-for-profit organization committed to building on family strengths, creating more caring communities, and promoting parent leadership and mutual support. The Parents Anonymous, Inc. mission is achieved through local, state and national advocacy efforts, national program initiatives, training and technical assistance, consultation and research. In addition, Parents Anonymous, Inc. maintains a diverse and dynamic National Network of affiliated organizations that provide Parents Anonymous groups as a means of strengthening families in partnership with their communities. State and local agencies, community organizations and community planning teams join with Parents Anonymous, Inc. and with our affiliates throughout the country to implement Parents Anonymous programs. Parents Anonymous is the oldest and largest child abuse prevention program in America and has helped hundreds of thousands of parents create safe and caring homes for their children.

One of the challenges for any individual or organization developing a new Parents Anonymous program is that of clearly conveying to parents, professionals, funders and the broader community just what the Parents Anonymous model is, how it works and what outcomes are anticipated. This section provides a brief overview of the Parents Anonymous Principles, describes the essential program components and highlights general research findings. This information can be used in public speaking, training about Parents Anonymous, fund-raising and volunteer recruitment

THE PARENTS ANONYMOUS PRINCIPLES

Parents Anonymous programs are based on four guiding principles. These principles must all be incorporated in any successful Parents Anonymous program. In addition, they provide valuable guidance to other programs and organizations focused on strengthening families and protecting

children. The Parents Anonymous Principles are:

- Parent Leadership:** Parents recognize and take responsibility for their problems, develop their own solutions and serve as role models for other parents.
- Mutual Support:** Help is reciprocal in that parents give and get support from each other, which creates a sense of community.
- Shared Leadership:** Parents and professionals create a partnership to share responsibility, expertise and leadership roles.
- Personal Growth:** Parents make significant long term positive change through identifying their options, exploring their feelings and acting on their decisions in an atmosphere of belonging, trust and acceptance in which healthy interactions are modeled.

Throughout this manual, we will refer to these Parents Anonymous Principles. The Parents Anonymous Group Standards, listed also in this section, provide detailed guidelines for implementing these principles in the Parents Anonymous group.

HISTORY

Parents Anonymous, Inc. was founded in 1970 by a courageous mother seeking a better life for herself and her children, and her partnership with a social worker who believed in promoting the individual strengths of parents, a radical concept in 1970. The Parents Anonymous group model began as an innovative strategy for addressing family problems related to child abuse and neglect, and the resulting issues of juvenile delinquency, teen pregnancy, and poor educational experiences. The Parents Anonymous program is rooted in the child abuse prevention field, with a strong focus on strengthening families. However, a vast array of research has demonstrated the positive outcomes for children in all areas when their families are strong and caring. Parents

Anonymous has therefore been recognized as an important program in the fields of juvenile justice, health and education.

The story of Jolly K., the founding parent, is one that has provided hope and inspiration to thousands of parents throughout the country. In 1970, Jolly was searching for help in providing a safe and caring home for her two daughters. She was particularly worried about her abusive behavior toward her youngest daughter, six year old Faith. After many fruitless attempts to locate help in changing her behavior toward her children, Jolly was finally assigned to the caseload of Leonard Lieber, a clinical social worker at a California State Mental Health Clinic. Jolly and Leonard met in traditional therapy sessions for several months. When Jolly expressed frustration about her progress and reported she was still struggling with abusive behaviors, Leonard encouraged Jolly to suggest alternative solutions. With profound wisdom, Jolly realized that if she could meet with other parents with similar problems they could explore solutions together. She and Leonard met with other mothers whom he was working and who were also seeking to change their abusive behavior toward their children.

They met once, with Jolly leading the discussion and with Leonard serving as a resource and a facilitator. At the end of two hours, the parents attending this first Parents Anonymous group felt encouraged and hopeful and decided to continue meeting under the following guidelines:

1. They would make a commitment to stop behaviors they deemed unacceptable or abusive.
2. They would exchange phone numbers and be available to each other day or night, especially in times of crisis.
3. They would meet in donated space and would welcome, free of charge, any other parents who wanted to attend.

In Redondo Beach, California they placed the first advertisement in a local newspaper, "For

Moms Who Lose Their Cool With Their Kids, Call" This gave birth to a national movement which has helped hundreds of thousands of parents and children all across America. The parents in the first Parents Anonymous group demonstrated that by helping each other, they could find the strength to become the parents they wanted to be. Jolly and Leonard began to speak to community groups and the media. They and others told the story of the significant positive changes that were taking place in families when parents participated in Parents Anonymous groups. During a period in our country's history when child abuse and family problems elicited punishment rather than treatment, Jolly became a strong and outspoken advocate for parents who wanted a better life for their families, and she sought avenues to support them in making critical changes.

In March 1973, Jolly testified in Washington, D.C., before former U.S. Senator Walter Mondale's Subcommittee on Children and Youth, in support of the first piece of federal child abuse legislation in American history. Jolly's moving story provided a human face for a complex social issue and, due in large part to her efforts, Congress passed the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) in 1974. Prior to this legislation, child protective services were inconsistent across the country and there was no federal child abuse reporting law. Most importantly, CAPTA focused national attention on the solutions to child abuse and neglect. It established a federal leadership role in promoting community-based prevention efforts such as Parents Anonymous. This important legislation was reauthorized in 1996, once again through the strong support of Parents Anonymous parents, volunteers and staff. Sid Johnson, now executive director of the American Public Welfare Association, was a legislative aide to Senator Mondale in 1993, and he vividly recalls the powerful impact Jolly's testimony had on Congress and people across the country who saw her on the evening news, "Her personal story was moving...She humanized the issue for Congress, eliciting understanding and support for the concept of prevention and treatment."

Professionals seeking effective models for strengthening families and who believed in the power

of parents as their own change agents became involved in Parents Anonymous programs. Thousands of professionals throughout the years have gained significant benefit from their work with parents in Parents Anonymous programs, transforming their beliefs, perspectives and direct practice methods of strengthening families by being more responsive and mutually supporting to parents. They regard their involvement with Parents Anonymous to be among their most challenging and rewarding experiences. Dr. Roland Summit, Head Physician of the Community Consultation Service of the Department of Psychiatry, Harbor-UCLA Medical Center and member emeritus of the Parents Anonymous, Inc. Board of Directors, was one of the early pioneers in the Parents Anonymous movement. He represented the views held by many professionals when he said, "Meeting Jolly was the turning point in my professional life. She opened the door to the realities of child abuse and neglect. It was not only through Jolly, but also through several other Parents Anonymous parents who had the grace to share their very personal abuse stories and insights with me, that I began to fully understand the impact and prevalence of abuse of children."

With a unique focus on prevention, Parents Anonymous was the first innovative community-based program to join in partnership with parents to successfully address child abuse and other family problems. In the early 1970s, Parents Anonymous, Inc. received requests from parents and professionals from all across America seeking help in developing Parents Anonymous groups. Through the efforts of Jolly and other committed Parents Anonymous parents, the issues related to child abuse and neglect became publicly known and could be recognized and addressed by community members and policy makers throughout the country.

In the beginning, Jolly, Leonard and other dedicated Parents Anonymous pioneers created Parents Anonymous, Inc. to provide training, technical assistance and consultation to states, communities, agencies and individuals throughout the country who wanted to replicate the Parents Anonymous model in their local communities. They envisioned an organization that promoted, in addition to the local programs, advocacy regarding issues of importance to families and a strong 'parent voice' in the discussions that impact children and families. Parents Anonymous, Inc. has always

worked with the national media to educate the public and reach out to parents. For example, in the mid-1970s, Mike Wallace on *60 Minutes* presented a compelling story about an individual family involved in Parents Anonymous. The impact of this story reached the Halls of Congress and created even more significant support for the program.

THE PARENTS ANONYMOUS GROUP

The unique Parents Anonymous group model of shared leadership provides a setting where parents function as group leaders and a professionally trained facilitator serves as a resource to the group. The model utilizes the best examples of role modeling and self-directed learning and incorporates the key principles of adult education. Parents Anonymous programs promote community capacity-building for the purpose of strengthening and supporting families and children.

The Parents Anonymous group has proven to be effective for parents seeking to identify and build on their own strengths and to create a safe and healthy home for themselves and their children. Based on the success of the first Parents Anonymous group, Jolly K. and Leonard Leiber created and shaped a national movement to strengthen families based on the recognition that parents are the best agents of their own change. The strength and vitality of Parents Anonymous, Inc. and the Parents Anonymous National Network continues to ensure the growth and development of critically important Parents Anonymous programs throughout the country. The core component of Parents Anonymous programs is the Parents Anonymous group. All Parents Anonymous groups adhere to the **Parents Anonymous Group Standards** as listed below:

- ◆ Groups must have at least one facilitator who is professionally trained in the Parents Anonymous model, principles and practices.

- ◆ Groups must have at least one parent group member who is in an acknowledged leadership role and receives training and support for that role.

- ◆ Groups meet weekly, for one and one-half or two hours, at a designated time and place and in a location that is free of stigma and acceptable to the parents and the facilitator.
- ◆ Parents provide non-judgmental support to each other.
- ◆ Information shared by and among group members remains confidential within the group unless abuse and/or neglect of children is suspected and necessitates a report in accordance with state laws.
- ◆ Parents determine what information they share with the group. Many choose to share only first names and telephone numbers.
- ◆ No fee is charged for parents or children to attend a group meeting.
- ◆ Parents determine the content of each meeting and shape the agenda to fit their specific needs on any given week.
- ◆ Between weekly meetings, the group leader and facilitator are available for consultation group members as are members to each other.
- ◆ Parents may join Parents Anonymous groups at any time and may participate for any length of time they determine to be most useful to them.
- ◆ All parent members receive an "I Am A Parents Anonymous Parent" handbook available in Spanish and in English which defines the expectations of the group, discusses parenting issues and provides an on-going resource.

- ◆ All parents are encouraged to take on leadership roles and all parent group leaders receive "The Group Leader" brochure.

- ◆ All parent group leaders and facilitators receive a "Manual For Group Facilitators."

While parents attend a Parents Anonymous group, their children participate in a structured children's program with a focus on increasing self-esteem, teaching problem-solving skills and promoting positive social interaction skills. The children's program ensures easier attendance for parents and is designed to provide an enriching learning experience for the children. At a minimum, child care is provided for each Parents Anonymous group to ensure easier attendance by parents. ✓

Parents and professionals often locate Parents Anonymous groups in their communities through contact with Parents Anonymous, Inc. or a local Parents Anonymous support and information telephone line. Parents Anonymous staff and volunteers throughout the country respond to thousands of calls from parents each year, providing immediate support for parents under stress and referral to the nearest Parents Anonymous groups for long-term help and support.

Parents or adults in parenting roles (grandparents, aunts, uncles, foster parents, step-parents, older siblings, etc.), concerned about their parenting abilities, and seeking support, information and training, are welcomed at Parents Anonymous groups throughout the country, whatever the age of their children or their current circumstances. Parents Anonymous groups are on-going and open-ended, so parents can join at any time and participate as long as necessary. Parents Anonymous groups do not have a formal screening or intake process, and the group participants are not restricted by age, educational level, income, presenting problem in the parents or children, or any other specific criteria. Because the groups are most often based in local communities, the participants usually closely reflect the population of the surrounding area.

During the past decade, Parents Anonymous, Inc. has responded to the diverse needs of families by focusing on specialized populations in diverse settings. For example, Parents Anonymous groups meet in prisons, in homeless shelters, and in Head Start centers. In addition, Parents Anonymous group members across the country discuss parenting concerns in English, Spanish, French and several Southeast Asian and Native American languages. Parents Anonymous groups provide a valuable resource for any parent who is having difficulty providing the safe and caring homes they want for themselves and their children.

Parents Anonymous groups meet in donated spaces which are selected based on their accessibility and safety. The size of the group membership varies based on weekly attendance patterns. When the group becomes too large for equitable participation, the recommended practice is to begin another group rather than turn parents away. In the interim, group members determine how best to provide support and information to each other in the larger group to ensure the needs of individual members are met. For example, some groups divide into two smaller groups when they are too large for all members to have the opportunity to participate fully in the discussion each week. Other groups expand the length of their meeting time or develop a mechanism for more structured contact among members during the week between the meetings. Each of these solutions provides temporary help, but the long term solution is to develop another fully functioning Parents Anonymous group in the same area.

Parents Anonymous group members determine the content of each meeting, usually through formal agenda-building at the beginning of each session, although multiple strategies may be employed. Thus, the topics discussed on any given day specifically relate to the needs and interests of the group members present. This allows for valuable discussion since members often can share their own expertise in particular areas with other members seeking assistance. The Parents Anonymous group model capitalizes on the learning styles of adults, in that adults learn best what they perceive a need to know at any given time, that learning is reinforced when a new skill can be practiced immediately, and that on-going support and feedback is available to promote

long-term change.

Because all aspects of a parent's life may affect their relationship with their children, all relevant topics are open for discussion. Parents may want support and information regarding their relationship with their children, their child's development, the stresses they encounter from dealing with life in high risk neighborhoods, job pressures, unhealthy personal relationships and their own childhood experiences. Parents participating in a Parents Anonymous group discuss communication, discipline, child development, parental roles, effective strategies for helping children achieve independence and self control, methods for successfully dealing with the every day stresses of parenting and any other issues that impact their parenting behavior. To reinforce and solidify their new skills, parents in a Parents Anonymous group practice new behaviors at home and discuss the results at the group each week. Attitudes dramatically change and form the basis for integrating new knowledge and skills, so parents learn to successfully foster the healthy growth and development of their children.

Through interactions with their peers, parents identify their options, examine their attitudes toward child rearing and learn positive ways of relating to their children. Group members and the facilitator also exchange telephone numbers, offering 24-hour support to parents when they experience crisis or stress. Parents build strong peer connections within the group and these are often reinforced through the telephone calls and other personal contacts outside the group. The facilitator serves as a role model and a link to other community resources and helps create a sense of safety and positive growth in the group.

Practicing the principle of shared leadership requires a partnership between an acknowledged parent group leader and a professionally trained facilitator. Facilitators and parent participants share responsibility for leadership and for all operations of the group. Since all members give and get help, there is no hierarchial status. Each parent is a resource to each other and the facilitator is another resource, as well as a link to other resources in the community. By fostering mutual

support and parent leadership, Parents Anonymous creates a powerful environment for significant and long-term change.

THE PARENT GROUP LEADER

The parent group leader shares in facilitating the group and serves as a role model for other parents in the group. He or she is a parent group participant who has made progress resolving his or her own problems. This parent may volunteer to take on the role of Parent Group Leader or may be selected by the group. Parents join Parents Anonymous groups for multiple personal reasons and any parent can grow into the role of Parent Group Leader.

Parent leadership may be shared among several members of the Parents Anonymous group so that multiple parents have the opportunity to practice and strengthen their leadership skills. In a Parents Anonymous group, help is reciprocal and every parent has avenues to provide help and become a leader, rather than only being the recipient of help. This aspect of Parents Anonymous is an excellent example of the "helper principle", in that parents who reach out to other parents and provide help to them benefit as much or more as the parents who receive the help that is given.

The parent group leader role is implemented through various strategies to ensure respect for the cultural context of the group. For example, in some Parents Anonymous groups, parent leadership practices are utilized, but the parents are called 'parent helpers' or a similar title. Primarily in Native American communities, it may be disrespectful to the elders to call a younger person a leader.

THE PROFESSIONALLY TRAINED FACILITATOR

The Parents Anonymous parent group requires the commitment of a professionally trained

facilitator who commits to meet with parents for one and one-half to two hours each week, and who agrees to be available to the parent group leader and other group members during the week between meetings. The facilitator may be a volunteer, may be given release time by his or her employer, or may be paid a stipend. All facilitators must be trained in the Parents Anonymous principles and group standards.

Parents Anonymous group facilitators bring a variety of skills and talents to their work with Parents Anonymous. They are primarily practicing professionals with expertise in social work, counseling, mental health, teaching, health care, or related fields. They possess personal characteristics which embody the principles of Parents Anonymous. They are knowledgeable about child abuse, juvenile delinquency, group dynamics, family systems, child development and local community resources. Above all, they must be capable of working with parents in the unique Parents Anonymous model of shared leadership, flexibility and acceptance. In addition, they remain mandated reporters of child abuse and must be comfortable reporting child abuse as is necessary to protect the safety of children, but doing so in a way that continues to promote the strength of the parent. The facilitator is an integral part of the group. The nature of the facilitator's role differs significantly from the traditional role of human service professionals. In fact, the word "client" is inappropriate if used in reference to parents attending a Parents Anonymous group. The group belongs to the members.

NATIONAL PARENT LEADERSHIP ACTIVITIES

Parents Anonymous, Inc. developed a National Parent Leadership Team in 1995 consisting of parents who have demonstrated leadership in their local Parents Anonymous groups and in their community or state Parents Anonymous organizations and who have an interest in expanding their leadership role. The members of the National Parent Leadership Team actively participate in training professionals and other parents and in public education, outreach and advocacy activities. They advise Parents Anonymous, Inc. regarding programmatic and organizational issues that

affect families, and work with local, state and national media to ensure that the voices of parents are heard regarding issues that impact families and children. Based on the success of the National Parent Leadership Team, some Parents Anonymous affiliate organizations have developed state or local parent leadership teams.

In addition, Parents Anonymous, Inc. is integrally involved in major national system reform initiatives addressing the need for changes in the child protective services system and in other child welfare arenas. Through consultation, training and technical assistance with local communities and state public child welfare systems, Parents Anonymous, Inc. helps others understand and incorporate the Parents Anonymous Principles into their work with families and children.

PUBLIC AWARENESS AND OUTREACH

Parents Anonymous, Inc. conducts public awareness activities and outreach to potential participants. Strategies include both news and feature coverage in local and national media; distribution of brochures, pamphlets, newsletters and flyers; production and distribution of informational videos; and training for health, social service and education professionals to encourage referrals of parents. Since parent leadership has always been a core principle of Parents Anonymous programs, parents reach out to other parents, and this is the most effective form of outreach. Parents Anonymous, Inc. helps provide an avenue for parents to share their successes and encourage others to join or support Parents Anonymous programs across the country. State and local Parents Anonymous affiliates replicate these activities on the local level through contacts with local media, distribution of printed materials, training of community professionals and use of Parents Anonymous, Inc. program and public awareness materials.

The Parent Networker, a newsletter written by and for parents, is distributed twice each year to all parents attending Parents Anonymous groups throughout the country. The National Parent Leadership Team, developed by Parents Anonymous, Inc. in 1995 and consisting of selected

parent leaders from community based Parents Anonymous groups, serves as the editorial board. They and other parents contribute valuable articles, share their stories and advocate for children and families through the pages of *The Parent Networker*.

Innovations is the official Parents Anonymous, Inc. newsletter and is distributed three times each year to thousands of professionals and policy makers. Both newsletters are effective vehicles for outreach to parents and professionals who may refer parents to local Parents Anonymous programs. Parents Anonymous, Inc. utilizes multiple avenues to reach out to parents all across America, and parents who respond are linked directly with the local Parents Anonymous programs nearest to them. In addition, the name "Parents Anonymous" encourages parents to reach out voluntarily for help and assures confidentiality while promoting a sense of trust.

VOLUNTEERS

Parents Anonymous programs are strongly supported by volunteer efforts throughout the country. This contributes to the cost effectiveness of the program and to the high level of community ownership and ease of local replication of the model. Through volunteering for Parents Anonymous programs, community members all across America are given a vehicle to address the needs of their neighbors and to invest in strengthening families and children. Parents Anonymous, Inc. is a recipient of the President's Volunteer Action Award. Each year approximately 30,000 volunteers contribute hundreds of thousands of hours of service in a broad range of roles to ensure the availability of Parents Anonymous programs in their neighborhoods. Strong volunteer recruitment, screening, training and recognition are important qualities in Parents Anonymous organizational affiliates and the National Organization provides support for all these activities. Volunteers provide outreach, public education, and telephone support for parents; staff the children's program; and offer general programmatic assistance.

THE PARENTS ANONYMOUS NATIONAL NETWORK

Parents Anonymous affiliate organizations develop, promote, maintain and expand Parents Anonymous programs in communities throughout the country, all utilizing the Parents Anonymous group model and training literature. Local affiliates provide on-going training for all Parents Anonymous volunteers and staff which supplements the national training offered through national and regional training conferences, technical assistance bulletins, teleconference training calls, regular mailings and newsletters. In addition, Parents Anonymous, Inc. staff are available for consultation and problem-solving assistance as needed by Network affiliates.

EVALUATION

National research confirms that Parents Anonymous provides a uniquely effective approach to preventing child abuse. Through Parents Anonymous, parents develop personal competencies, increase their ability to deal with stress, reduce their social isolation, enhance their self-esteem and significantly expand their knowledge of child development. National research on Parents Anonymous children's programs revealed significant improvements in children's self-esteem, behavior and social interaction skills. (Behavior Associates, 1983.) In addition, many state and regional Parents Anonymous affiliate organizations conduct regular "satisfaction and progress" surveys. All groups regularly provide demographic and other basic data to Parents Anonymous, Inc. for the purpose of constructing a detailed perspective regarding participation in Parents Anonymous programs throughout the country.

Comparative Research on Parents Anonymous and Other Programs: The first formal study of Parents Anonymous was conducted in 1974 by Berkeley Planning Associates. The essential elements of a successful community-based child abuse prevention and treatment model were identified in a 10-month study of 11 demonstration projects conducted for the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare. In their report, Berkeley Planning Associates singled out Parents Anonymous as the most successful child abuse prevention program of the eleven, in terms of parent satisfaction, child welfare outcome and cost effectiveness (Cohn, 1979):

"We found that parents who participated in Parents Anonymous, irrespective of whatever other services they received, were significantly more likely to have their problems resolved than clients who did not participate in this service." (p. 495)

Evaluative Research on Parents Anonymous: The largest evaluation of Parents Anonymous programs was conducted between May 1975 and April 1976 by Behavior Associates of Tucson, Arizona. The Behavior Associates study found that participation in a Parents Anonymous group provided an almost immediate decrease in reported frequency of physical abuse by family perpetrators. Another major program outcome was that PA parents developed feelings of competence in their parenting role as well as an increased ability to deal with stress. Participant satisfaction was high in the Parents Anonymous program and increased significantly with duration of attendance.

Additional Research: Research on mutual assistance-shared leadership models has revealed that such groups are a more effective intervention strategy than "pure" self-help or traditional therapy. For example, Yoak and Chesler (1985) found that mutual assistance groups with shared leadership enjoyed greater longevity than groups led by a single individual, either a professional or a parent member.

Borkman (1990), one of the major theorists and researchers in the area of mutual assistance groups, claims that this model has legitimacy when groups become institutionalized and buttressed with national organizations (who offer chartering status to local groups meeting crucial criteria), and when there are organizational supports such as training of staff, information and referral hotlines, and educational materials available for participants and significant public awareness activities. Parents Anonymous is the archetype of the shared-leadership mutual support groups.

POSITIVE OUTCOMES FOR FAMILIES

Parents attending Parents Anonymous groups learn effective, family strengthening practices. They work to end or prevent juvenile delinquency and child abuse problems in their families. They learn to utilize appropriate community resources and to build supportive, positive peer relationships for themselves and their children. They learn the skill of reciprocity to help maintain positive relationships and avoid 'burning out' the members of their personal support system. Parents gain a sense of their own power and use it to improve their ability to care for their children.

In a practical sense, parents are expected to avoid violent reactions to their children and to protect them from violence inflicted by other adults in their lives. They learn and use parenting practices that promote healthy outcomes for their children. They are encouraged and helped to become involved in the community systems that affect their families, such as education and health care.

Seeking help early is key to preventing child abuse and neglect. Throughout the United States, Parents Anonymous has successfully reinforced the idea that it is a sign of strength to ask for help. On average, four out of five parents attending Parents Anonymous groups do so voluntarily, based on their own commitments to strengthen their families. At Parents Anonymous, parents find help, hope, strength and support.

SECTION III.

THE PARENTS ANONYMOUS MODEL FOR DEVELOPING CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PROGRAMS

This section will focus on proven strategies that lead to effective outcomes in developing, implementing and maintaining Parents Anonymous programs in partnership with local communities. In collecting and analyzing the most effective strategies for Parents Anonymous programs in diverse communities, there is a clear consensus that specific methods for working with diverse families may vary significantly from community to community. For example, we found that Parents Anonymous programs for Latino families in Washington state differed significantly from Parents Anonymous programs for Latino families in Southern California. Upon further exploration, it was clear that the Parents Anonymous programs in both settings were very effective for the Latino families living in their respective communities. Other such examples caused us to challenge our initial premise that similar cultures would share common programmatic interests across the country.

We reaffirmed, however, that when Jolly K., the founding parent, and Leonard Lieber, the founding social worker, developed the first Parents Anonymous Group in Redondo Beach, California, they made two important contributions. One was the Parents Anonymous program that has been replicated thousands and thousands of times throughout the country. Through Parents Anonymous hundreds of thousands of families have found hope and help and have made tremendous positive changes in their lives.

Their second major contribution was that of operationalizing a set of principles which, when implemented in a way that is reflective of each individual community setting, have led to the exceptional effectiveness of Parents Anonymous programs throughout the country. The Parents Anonymous Principles are listed in Section II of this manual, but will be repeated here because of their importance to the discussion in this section.

THE PARENTS ANONYMOUS PRINCIPLES

The Parents Anonymous Principles are:

- Parent Leadership:** Parents recognize and take responsibility for their problems, develop their own solutions and serve as role models for other parents.
- Mutual Support:** Help is reciprocal in that parents give and get support from each other, which creates a sense of community.
- Shared Leadership:** Parents and professionals create a partnership to share responsibility, expertise and leadership roles.
- Personal Growth:** Parents make significant long term positive change through identifying their options, exploring their feelings and acting on their decisions in an atmosphere of belonging, trust and acceptance in which healthy interactions are modeled.

Parents Anonymous principles can be implemented in any community. Because of the commitment to cultural responsiveness and the impact of community ownership and parent leadership, Parents Anonymous programs reflect the values and strengths of their local setting. Each community brings its own sets of opportunities and challenges. For example: Parents Anonymous programs currently serve Native American, Latino, African-America, Southeast Asian and Caucasian families living in urban or rural areas or in targeted settings such as low income housing projects and reservations. In addition, Parents Anonymous programs are available to parents living in shelters and prisons, and also reach out to families through their children's involvement in Head Start and other educational settings. The principles of Parents Anonymous are successfully applied in working with families in all of these, and many other, diverse settings. The model for

developing a Parents Anonymous program is not based on a set of didactic steps but rather is a process which allows the program to benefit from applying the Parents Anonymous principles within the context of the unique richness of individual communities.

The key strategy for best practice is a process model of collaboration with local communities, based on respect for the cultural environment of each community and building on the strengths of the people who live there. For that reason, we have intentionally avoided simplistic, general statements about specific cultural or ethnic groups. There is great diversity within groups and many factors influence a community's strengths and needs and the best response to both areas. The most successful model for joining in partnership with a community to develop a successful Parents Anonymous program is based in developing strong ties with knowledgeable community guides who can ensure the Parents Anonymous Principles and group model are implemented in the most respectful and responsive way *for that particular community*. We identified, once again, the critical need for grass-roots community partnerships as a basis for successful Parents Anonymous programs.

This section will provide a framework for integrating the Parents Anonymous Principles and group model with the individual aspects of any community. To that end, specific questions and issues are outlined here to increase understanding of the many aspects affecting the cultural context of communities.

CULTURAL AND COMMUNITY RESPONSIVENESS

The most successful efforts to develop Parents Anonymous programs in a community will benefit from the active involvement of formal and informal community leaders who understand and appreciate the cultural nuances of their particular community. These nuances are demonstrated in the norms of behavior that reflect the community values and shape individual and family behaviors. Examples of such norms and their implications are discussed below.

I. OVERALL CULTURAL NORMS IN THE COMMUNITY

▶ **Time and time consciousness**

An example of time consciousness is found in the length of "pause" time different cultures allow when speaking. For example, most Americans' "pause" time is one second or less. In many Native American cultures, the language "pause" time is one and half seconds or more. Therefore, Parents Anonymous facilitators and those working to start a Parents Anonymous group may need to become more comfortable with silence and perhaps increase their own "pause" time.

▶ **Definition of community**

Communities are defined by the people who live in them. A community could be a neighborhood, or several neighborhoods, or it could be a rural area encompassing several miles. Regardless of the physical area, it important to know what constitutes a community to the people who live there. A Parents Anonymous staff member in Connecticut suggests that organizers walk through the community and observe how residents interact. She also recommends that organizers learn about the history of the community, including its economic history. It is important to know whether the community is in transition or if it remains stable with generations of the same families continuing as residents.

▶ **Language**

Many Parents Anonymous groups are monolingual in languages other than English. Most of the facilitators in these groups are native speakers of the language. However, this issue, language, does not only pertain to English vs. another language, but also how language is used and the dialects within the language. An

Oregon Parents Anonymous staff member who works in the African American community cites Ebonics, or Black English, as an example of a dialect of English used by many African American communities throughout the United States. When working with and training volunteer Parents Anonymous facilitators, she tells the volunteers to try to understand the feelings behind the words rather than focusing on the exact wording. Use of paraphrasing back to the parent is a method of ensuring the message was correctly understood. By focusing on the parents strengths, expertise and expressed needs, rather than letting language become a barrier, parents will more quickly gain trust and begin to identify their goals for positive change in their lives. While this example touches on a somewhat controversial topic, some language researchers define Ebonics as a well-ordered, highly developed language system based on West African language rules. In Parents Anonymous, the use of specific language patterns is much less important than the growth of parents and their ability to provide safe and caring homes for their children.

► **Celebrations**

Celebrations and special events often portray the values and beliefs held by those who live in a specific community. For example, during the Christmas season, La Posada, a play about the first Christmas, is performed for nine days in many Mexican American communities throughout the United States. Though many larger communities may perform this play for a wide audience, most communities celebrate this event among themselves, with few outsiders present. In addition, other public and private events may be unique to a particular community. A Parents Anonymous of Arizona staff member recommends that organizers and group facilitators go to social and educational events to learn how community residents enjoy themselves and which events are important to them. The Director

of the Native American Family Empowerment Project who organizes Parents Anonymous groups on reservations in Montana, suggests that people who want to get to know a Native American community attend a funeral or wake because they are four days and four nights long, and the entire community is involved in offering support to the bereaved. Since Native American communities on reservations are generally small and closely connected, one person's pain is shared by everyone. Someone new to the community would be able to experience how the community celebrates and mourns a life.

▶ **Attitudes and issues regarding authority figures**

Many parents may seem passive, and almost willing to go along with anything the facilitator wants, especially if the parents are mandated to be in a group. In addition, if a facilitator is working with a cultural group different from the facilitator's own culture, parents may feel intimidated and unsure how the facilitator will judge them. To help parents make their Parents Anonymous group their own, a Miami, FL facilitator who works with both Haitian and Cuban parents enlists influential people in the parents' community to support the group. Enlisting people who parents consider to be influential suggests to the parents that the facilitator is willing to learn about their community. A Tallahassee, FL volunteer who facilitates groups in a housing project states that it important that facilitators not try to be the "experts," and be willing learn from parents. When facilitators, especially those who are not of the same racial or ethnic background, view parents as partners in a Parents Anonymous group, parents are more willing to view themselves as leaders within the group and their families.

▶ **Other cultural norms**

Many cultural norms are unique to their particular community. To learn what the important norms are, a Virginia Parents Anonymous staff member who develops groups in the African American community recommends that people who are interested in starting a Parents Anonymous group in a new community do their homework on the culture of the community. This includes talking with residents, especially the elders, and local business people, reading local newspapers and participating in community events.

II. NORMS REGARDING FAMILIES

▶ **Role expectations, power relationships, gender roles**

In all families, each member has a specific role, a certain amount of power, which may sometimes be based on the member's gender or age. For example, Latino parents are expected to nurture, provide for and educate their children. Latino children are expected to respect and obey their parents. They are strongly discouraged from questioning or defying their parents. Though many Latino parents may be mandated to attend a Parents Anonymous group, when asked what issue they would like to work on, it is not unusual for these parents to say that they want their children to be more respectful. A California Parents Anonymous facilitator who works with Latino parents says that many of these parents feel powerless and may have a rigid definition of respect, as if any misbehavior was a sign of disrespect. Through their participation in a Parents Anonymous group, parents begin to feel more empowered and more willing to look at their children's misbehavior as something to work on, but not as disrespect or a challenge to their authority.

▶ **Definition of family and extended family relationships**

When describing what family is, many Native Americans, Hawaiians, African Americans and Latinos consider not only mother, father and children to be members of the nuclear family, but also grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, and close family friends to also be part of their nuclear family. Therefore, when developing a Parents Anonymous group, it will be important to find out how the community defines the term "family." For example, in many Native American communities, elders are considered important, respected members of an individual's family regardless of whether there is a blood relationship. On reservations in Arizona and Montana, Parents Anonymous staff work closely with elders to help parents identify their needs, and as a result, sanction the group by their involvement. Because of their role, elders may be invited to the Parents Anonymous group, especially in the beginning stages as groups are forming. Moreover, other family members also may attend the group to provide support to an individual parent. This helps the parents view Parents Anonymous as a safe and supportive place.

▶ **Spirituality and religious beliefs, rituals and ceremonies**

Religion and religious centers often play a key role in the community. Community residents often go to ministers for help with family problems. Many Parents Anonymous programs work with churches on outreach and recruitment activities. In addition, many Parents Anonymous groups are held in church settings because parents view churches as non-threatening settings. However, it is important that Parents Anonymous organizers do not assume that all communities view churches as acceptable settings for a group.

Acknowledging the ceremonies and rituals that are important to a community is

vital to the success of Parents Anonymous programs. For example, Native Americans may use a talking circle ritual in every Parents Anonymous group session or in certain sessions. Many Native Americans believe that talking circles are a spiritual way of encouraging people to teach, listen and share. The circle can be a powerful means of touching or bringing healing to the mind, the heart, the body and the spirit.

III. NORMS REGARDING THE INDIVIDUAL

▶ Values

Values are concepts or beliefs that guide our selection of behaviors. Values also involve personal evaluations of the behavior of oneself and others. As the guidepost by which people live, values not only highlight similarities but also highlight differences in people. While values are very personal, they are frequently widely held throughout the community. Therefore, parents who are attending a Parents Anonymous group with diverse cultural values represented among the membership often try to find some common ground among themselves. For example, a Milwaukee, WI African American facilitator who facilitates a group that is primarily, but not exclusively made up African American parents, may frame parenting issues in cultural terms. Then, the facilitator and the parent leader, along with the group, try to find commonalities among all participants within the issues presented.

▶ Coping mechanisms

This relates to how families cope with problems and how they also seek help in solving their problems. In some cultures, emotions are expressed openly and in

others, they are carefully restrained.

Among certain cultural groups seeking help outside the family is strongly discouraged. Parents do not discuss their parenting issues with others outside their family. For example, a Parents Anonymous staff member in Connecticut tried many different methods to recruit Puerto Rican parents to a group. None of them worked because, as the parents explained, talking about their troubles outside the family was not appropriate. To create a greater sense of safety and comfort, she begins each group session with a topic about a parenting issue. Then group members do small arts and crafts projects as they talk about the topic. This facilitator found that the parents are willing to talk about their personal issues within the context of talking about a specific topic. This breaks the ice and opens the door to further communication. This strategy will be most helpful if the topics are determined by the parents and remain broad enough so parents can make the connection between the topic under discussion and their individual concerns.

▶ **Personal space needs**

Many cultures have norms regarding their space needs, some people stand very close when speaking to another person, and others become uncomfortable if a person is too close. Furthermore, in many cultures, people are comfortable with physical contact and greet acquaintances with hugs. In other cultures, people shake hands when greeting others but do not initiate other physical contact.

▶ **Eye contact, voice and other body language**

Eye contact, voice level and tone, and other types of body language can imply respect or invade individual privacy. Cultural groups often place different

interpretations on specific behaviors so it is important to fully understand the implications of body language when working with a Parents Anonymous program. For example, many Native American Parents Anonymous groups believe significant amounts of direct eye contact is invasive and disrespectful. In order to build trust, demonstrate respect and avoid awkwardness, many Native American groups participate in craft activities such as quilting or sewing during group time. This does not interfere with the effectiveness of the group and allows for culturally respectful avenues for avoiding too much eye contact among the group members.

Successful Parents Anonymous programs implement the principles of Parents Anonymous, utilizing the key components of the program, in a method that incorporates important aspects of the community culture.

SECTION IV.

PARENTS ANONYMOUS GROUP DEVELOPMENT

Parents Anonymous is a neighborhood-based program that strengthens parents who attend Parents Anonymous groups, volunteers who work in support of the programs and others in the community who come together around Parents Anonymous to use their skills and organizations to strengthen and support families. We believe that planning, implementing and maintaining Parents Anonymous programs in a community is a task that is too important to try to handle alone. All across America, Parents Anonymous programs benefit from community-based collaborative efforts. These collaborations in support of Parents Anonymous also serve to strengthen communities and reinforce the connections between policy makers, social service and other professional staff, volunteers and parents. An openness to collaboration and an interest in reaching out to potential partners in the community are strong assets in any effort to promote, maintain, develop or expand Parents Anonymous programs. A well-thought out collaboration, based on mutual goals and shared practices can help ensure a long-lasting Parents Anonymous program and one that will benefit from a strong base of community support.

There are several strategies for developing community support for Parents Anonymous programs. Two of these will be discussed here. The first, the community collaboration model, involves a broad collaboration among organizations and individuals in a community who come together to ensure the availability of Parents Anonymous programs. The second, the community organizer model, is most useful when a Parents Anonymous organization is working with a new community to develop a Parents Anonymous group and is seeking a local community organizer to be a catalyst for on-going support of the group.

THE COMMUNITY COLLABORATION MODEL

Collaboration among agencies and individuals in a community involves seeking better family

outcomes through a shared vision, shared resources and shared power. There are both benefits and risks associated with collaboration, and in planning any collaborative effort it is important to think through all aspects associated with the activity. Good collaborations provide an increased skill base to draw from; shared staff and resource expenditures; increased recognition and visibility; and, because of the previous items, greater attractiveness to funders.

Collaborative efforts can be of tremendous benefit in the development of Parents Anonymous programs if the collaborative partners agree upon a common strategy and if the goal of providing Parents Anonymous programs is a close fit with the mission of each organization and the goals of each individual.

The downside to collaboration is that it can be a time and energy consuming process. Potential partners may invest valuable time in exploring the possibilities and then determining that the proposed collaboration is not one that will be conducive to meeting personal or organizational goals. It reduces the amount of control each individual partner has over the process and the outcomes, and may reduce the visibility of each organization.

It is important to weigh these benefits and risks and to determine at each stage of collaboration if, in fact, the collaborative effort is the most effective strategy for achieving the goal of promoting, maintaining, developing and expanding Parents Anonymous programs.

Collaborative efforts can be particularly effective strategies for providing Parents Anonymous services to families residing in communities with few resources. However, it is important to recognize that Parents Anonymous organizations and programs may sometimes be viewed as a threat to existing agencies in such communities. As Parents Anonymous programs and organizations seek to join with other agencies, they may be viewed as competing for the limited resources in the community. One key strategy to facilitate stronger collaborations in many communities is to either bring tangible or in-kind resources into the community through your

collaborative agreement, or to work with local agencies to gather the necessary resources so that collaboration with Parents Anonymous does not involve an expenditure of already scarce resources.

Some organizations in communities with fewer resources will be newer ones developed to respond to emerging needs. As newer organizations they may be informally structured and be in early developmental stages. It is always important, when developing collaborative partnerships, to recognize and capitalize on the cultural strengths of each organization and to identify areas of common interest on which to build future partnerships.

In any collaborative planning activity to develop a Parents Anonymous program in a community, it is always critically important that parents who are potential participants in a Parents Anonymous program be included as members of the collaborative partnership from the very beginning. A key role for parents in this activity will be in helping to shape the mission, clarify the vision and identify successful strategies for accomplishing the necessary tasks. Parents from a community will have expertise in planning, implementing and evaluating the Parents Anonymous program in ways that are culturally responsive and reflective of the community. In addition, the parents who are part of this planning committee can be key leaders in the outreach and recruitment of other parents who will participate in the Parents Anonymous group. Strong parent involvement in collaborative processes leads to more successful programmatic outcomes.

While it is important to share leadership and to acknowledge the involvement of all organizations, it is also important to preserve the integrity of the Parents Anonymous program model and to ensure the collaboration provides for the long-term support and development of Parents Anonymous programs. Many Parents Anonymous organizations, and local community organizers seeking to develop Parents Anonymous groups in their community, have developed strategies for formal partnerships with other collaborators. It is most valuable when standards and guidelines for establishing and maintaining the collaborative relationships can be developed and formally

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agreed upon by all parties involved. These standards should include clear descriptions of roles and responsibilities so that each of the partners involved can fully understand and commit to the expectations that will lead to strong Parents Anonymous programs.

Forming collaborations with diverse partners in new communities may require a broad definition of the Parents Anonymous program. For example, the role of Parents Anonymous as a family strengthening program, as it relates to the prevention of juvenile delinquency, is an important aspect to focus upon when linking with partners in the juvenile justice field. In fact, in 1996 Parents Anonymous was selected as a model family strengthening program to prevent juvenile delinquency during a nationwide search sponsored by the federal Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

In partnering with child welfare organizations, focus on the success of Parents Anonymous in preventing and treating child⁷ and strengthening families. In working with partners from the field of education, highlight the progress achieved when families are strengthened, children receive greater support at home and attend school ready to learn. In partnering with health care organizations, focus on the better health outcomes which are realized when parents are more actively involved in all aspects of health care for their children. ✓

All these perspectives of the Parents Anonymous model are accurate and reflect the positive results gained in multiple areas when families are strengthened and parents become more capable in their role. A collaborative process may begin with finding those points of commonality between Parents Anonymous programs, and the goals and missions of other organizations.

Successful collaborations sometimes include cross-training staff and volunteers with other agencies in the community. This increases understanding of each program and helps provide a more seamless system of services to families in the community.

Stages of Collaboration

In developing a new collaborative base to support Parents Anonymous programs, it is valuable to consider the primary developmental stages of collaboration and tasks to be accomplished during each of these stages. In applying the following stages to a "typical" example of developing a collaborative effort to support Parents Anonymous programs in a community, the following steps are likely to take place.

Formation: In the initial stage of collaboration, key individuals and organizations that share a common vision to promote, maintain, develop and expand Parents Anonymous programs join together. Other stakeholders are invited to participate and potential resources are identified. Potential stakeholders include, among others:

- Members of organizations for parents (PTA, Welfare Rights groups, Head Start Policy Councils, etc.)
- Parents who are potential participants in the future Parents Anonymous groups
- Members of community groups such as Block Watches
- Members of local ethnic and cultural organizations
- Educators
- Elders and other formal and informal respected community leaders
- Health care providers, especially public health
- Religious organizations, particularly Interfaith Councils
- Private social service agency staff
- Public (child) welfare staff
- Juvenile Justice staff
- Probation officers
- Juvenile court and family court judges
- Business leaders
- Small business owners, based in the community

- Representatives from local government
- Community police officers
- Local media
- Local funders, especially United Way

There will be many other individuals and organizations that will be stakeholders in specific communities and the effort to include as many as possible should continue throughout the collaborative process.

Conceptualization: During this second developmental stage, the collaborating group defines tasks and roles, develops a decision making system and agrees on an administrative structure. The activities involved in developing a Parents Anonymous program include identifying all the components which are necessary for the provision of the Parents Anonymous group. At a minimum, these include:

- selecting a meeting site,
- recruiting and selecting facilitators for the group,
- developing a plan for a children's program,
- developing a plan for telephone information and referral,
- securing initial funding and developing a plan for on-going operational funding,
- identifying and planning for any other needs which are important in that particular community.

Organizational aspects include determining which agency will take ~~with~~ the lead or how ~~with~~ the leadership role will be shared among multiple agencies and which key contributions will be made by individual agencies, organizations or individuals. A community council or advisory board, or a collaborating partner may be identified at this stage and agree to hold primary responsibility for maintaining with the group.

Development: During this third stage, specific individuals are involved in carrying out their assigned tasks. At any point, but particularly in this stage, additional partners or participants might be identified and recruited to help meet more specific needs as they evolve. As plans become more specific, particular risks and concerns may be identified and must be addressed. A time-line will be developed for implementation of the group and it is very common for a formal written agreement of collaboration to be signed at this point. In several Parents Anonymous state organizations, there are formal collaborative agreements which are signed by the Parents Anonymous organization and one or more community collaborators who agree to accept certain responsibilities and tasks to ensure the provision of a quality Parents Anonymous program in their community. It is during this stage that such an agreement would be finalized.

Implementation: In this stage, the group is developed and begins operation. Final adjustments in policies or procedures which might be necessary among the collaborators will be made at this point. The structure that was agreed upon in the third stage will be carried out and revised if necessary. The trust and clear communication that have evolved in the earlier stages of development will help ensure a smooth implementation of the collaborative plan and positive results when issues arise which must be resolved. The Parents Anonymous group becomes operational and is a valuable asset to the community. Finally, and of great importance, the collaborative partners publicize the Parents Anonymous program and celebrate the successful accomplishment of their vision and goals.

This collaborative effort may involve two or three partners, or a broad range of representatives from the community. In the formation stage, many key stakeholders may be identified and recruited, and share the vision of a Parents Anonymous program in their community. Some may determine that their time and resources will not support their active involvement in the collaboration. However, their interest in supporting the program is stronger if they are part of the initial visioning discussion. These potential partners can continue to be strong supporters in the community and will be particularly valuable in referring parents to the group. It is likely that

as this process becomes more focused, it will include a smaller group of people. It is always valuable to help the participants in a collaboration identify their level of commitment and the most useful ways they can support the Parents Anonymous groups.

Considerations in collaborations

In any collaborative effort, continually ask yourself and your collaborative partners:

- Do you understand why you want to be part of this collaboration and why you support this common goal?
- Do you understand the key aspects of this collaboration, how they fit together and how they fit with your personal and organizational interests?
- How well are you able to do what is expected of you, considering the necessary abilities and competencies, time and resources and presence of any barriers?

The most important question of all, and one that should be constantly in mind throughout the entire collaborative process, is **“will this strategy provide the best possible support for a strong Parents Anonymous program for the families in my community?”** Given that the ultimate outcome of collaborative efforts is to ensure the availability of Parents Anonymous programs to families, particularly those in communities with fewer resources, we must frequently assess the following areas:

1. Is the collaboration strong?
2. Do additional partners need to be included?
3. Do current partners continue to hold the same vision and goals so that commitment to the Parents Anonymous model remains strong?
4. Are parents in the community well served by the collaborative efforts?

Examples of many successful collaborative projects were gathered during our Best Practices surveys and interviews. Several examples include:

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In Iowa, the Parents Anonymous organization developed a partnership with a local YMCA and the YMCA aids in the recruitment of parents by offering a free membership to any parent attending the Parents Anonymous group.

- In Oregon, the Parents Anonymous organization has expanded their ability to serve families from diverse backgrounds through the use of a translation bank to assist their telephone hotline services in responding to calls from parents speaking in any one of several hundred languages. Parents may also access this hotline service through a collaborative arrangement between Parents Anonymous of Oregon and the 911 Emergency telephone service. This arrangement allows the 911 Emergency operators to transfer non-life threatening calls to the Parents Anonymous hotline volunteers who are jointly trained by the 911 Emergency operators and Parents Anonymous. This 911 hotline service is being piloted in one county in Oregon and is funded by the county's government.
- In many areas, Parents Anonymous organizations are collaborating with county jails and state prisons to provide services to parents who are incarcerated in those settings.
- Many Parents Anonymous organizations collaborate with educational systems to provide programs for parents of school-age children and to provide programs for teenagers who are parents and in the public school setting. This has been an excellent support for strengthening family involvement in the schools and has provided a strong vehicle for serving teen parents who are in school. Parents Anonymous programs in Head Start centers are growing in number throughout the country and have proven to be successful collaborative efforts. This partnership helps Head Start centers fulfill their requirements for parent involvement and increases support for Parents Anonymous programs. For example, Parents Anonymous of Illinois works closely with Head Start programs in Chicago and both organizations view the partnership as an avenue for furthering their

missions and helping families. One of these Parents Anonymous groups serves primarily African American parents and meets at the Head Start site in Cabrini Green Housing Project. This group has been a tremendous success.

- As Healthy Families programs have grown throughout the country, many Parents Anonymous affiliates have found them to be valuable partners. The combination of home visitation and the shared leadership and mutual support found in a Parents Anonymous group is a powerful combination for many families. The Parents Anonymous affiliate in Virginia is also the statewide resource for Healthy Families programs. Whenever they work in a community to promote Healthy Families, they always promote Parents Anonymous groups as an important aspect of that model.
- Family Support Centers are based in neighborhoods and host a variety of child and family activities. Many Parents Anonymous groups are highly effective components of these center-based programs. Parents Anonymous groups benefit from the use of a central site which is familiar and comfortable for parents in a specific community and the center benefits from the availability of the quality, respected Parents Anonymous program as part of their menu of options for families.
- Many organizations provide training and staff development assistance to other agencies regarding issues related to parents and children. In return, those agencies support the Parents Anonymous programs through referrals and other types of in-kind contributions. This collaboration helps all partners in that the Parents Anonymous principles can be well disseminated in the community, and the community gains greater awareness of the Parents Anonymous resources available to them.

THE COMMUNITY ORGANIZER MODEL

A second avenue for successfully developing and maintaining Parents Anonymous programs in local communities is the community organizer model. This path also has several distinct stages as briefly outlined below.

Developing Partnerships: This initial phase includes identifying an individual or individuals in the community who are formal or informal leaders and who hold the respect of the community members who know them. They will have a strong respect for and understanding of the unique aspects of that particular community. This individual(s) may be involved in social services, health or education, but not necessarily so. He/she could be found working in an agency, could be a volunteer for Parents Anonymous or could serve in some form of paid staff capacity for the local Parents Anonymous organization. More than one community leader may be identified at this stage and demonstrate an interest in supporting the development of Parents Anonymous programs. Sharing the community organizer role can work very well as long as the individuals involved work closely together.

Seeking Agreement: The second step is to begin working very closely with this individual or group of individuals, training them on the Parents Anonymous principles and group model, and helping them determine whether this program is one that they can commit to helping develop or expand in their community.

Expanding the Base of Support: The third step is to expand the work of these individuals by helping to ensure that a small group of perhaps 4-10 others will work as colleagues in this process. This small group is sometimes called a Parents Anonymous Advisory Group or Council or a Board or even the Chapter. This group of local community citizens can join together with the Parents Anonymous organization to develop, promote, expand and maintain Parents Anonymous programs for the families who live in that community.

The task of that group of individuals will include involving other community collaborators as

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partners, selecting a location for the Parents Anonymous meeting, recruiting and selecting a facilitator or facilitators for the group, planning the children's program, organizing a telephone information and referral system, securing initial funding and planning for long-term funding, and outreach to and recruitment of parents who will be participants in the group. Potential parent participants should be part of this original group developing the Parents Anonymous programs so that parents are already involved in making the decisions which will impact the success of the group.

In summary, these two models provide a basic framework for ensuring community ownership and cultural responsiveness of Parents Anonymous programs. This collaborative, long-term support in neighborhoods all across the country has helped promote the growth of Parents Anonymous since 1970 and maintains the successful grass-roots nature of ensuring culturally responsive programs in diverse communities.

The remaining portion of this section will focus on issues to consider and successful strategies for implementing the various tasks involved in promoting, maintaining, expanding and developing Parents Anonymous programs.

SITE SELECTION

An important factor in the success of any Parents Anonymous group is the selection of an appropriate location for the meeting site. Several factors require consideration in selecting a site for a group meeting. The site must provide a confidential and private meeting space for the parent group and be large enough to accommodate up to 20 parents. In addition, appropriate space must be located nearby at the same site to accommodate the children's program. Some locations will require that the Parents Anonymous group provide insurance to cover liability or breakage and theft. Most Parents Anonymous groups are able to negotiate with individual sites to waive the need for insurance and will implement risk management plans to reduce the likelihood of damage to the site.

When selecting a site for a Parents Anonymous group, be sure it is:

- free of charge.
- available at the time and on the date needed.
- appropriate space for both parent and children's groups.
- arranged in a way that assures confidentiality and privacy for the parents.
- near public transportation and also provides free parking.
- accessible for individuals with disabilities.
- free of stigma.
- in a safe location

Safety Issues: There are several factors to be considered in determining the safety of a location. Particularly in high risk settings, safety will be a factor in recruiting parents to attend and in assuring that the group can continue without interruption. The strategies discussed below are raised for consideration, but this discussion is not intended to imply that all groups will need to take all of these safety precautions. The individuals from the community who are involved in

developing and maintaining the Parents Anonymous group will know best how to ensure the safety of group members and will help determine the level of risk involved in selecting specific sites.

It is helpful to be sure there is a security guard on the site, if that is necessary and can be provided by the site. It also increases safety if other activities are taking place at the same site so that the Parents Anonymous group is not isolated. However, the nature of other activities on site should not conflict with the confidentiality and anonymity required by Parents Anonymous groups. Any parking areas and walkways should be well lit and free of hazards. There should be a telephone available on site or facilitators should be encouraged to bring a cellular telephone. If the site is in a high risk community, facilitators may be trained in personal safety techniques, and there should be a group rule that individual members do not leave separately but that the group leaves together at the end of the meeting. Other safety precautions include providing a siren blaster for the facilitators to carry as the group is leaving, and selecting a time of day for the meeting that will help assure safety. These items are for consideration and, of course, their use will depend upon the safety needs of each particular neighborhood setting. The primary goal is to ensure the safety of participants, to the degree necessary, and to provide an inviting atmosphere.

Cultural Issues: Parents Anonymous groups meet throughout the country in diverse settings such as Head Start centers, prisons, community centers, YMCAs/YWCAs, other social service agencies, public health clinics, WIC (Women, Infants and Children) nutritional programs, and in any setting where parents will be safe and comfortable coming together. The site should be one that is acceptable to parents of diverse cultures, or if the group is targeted to serve a particular population, it should be acceptable to the parents who make up that population. Some communities which are diverse and have multiple ethnic groups within a neighborhood may have sites that are identified with a particular ethnic group and others will not participate if the meeting is held in that location. If the goal is to serve a diverse group of parents, then the site should be acceptable to all of the ethnic or cultural groups.

Churches and schools usually have adequate space available to meet the needs of the group, and in churches there is usually the added benefit of having access to infant and toddler equipment through the church's nursery. There are no hard and fast rules but several common threads became apparent through the Best Practice Interviews. In general, Native American parents may not feel safe and supported in a school setting due to the long history of separating families by sending Native American children to boarding schools. In many African American communities, the church provides a strong social support network and will be a positive location for a Parents Anonymous meeting. These generalities do not apply in every community, however, so it is always critical to work with local leaders who are helping to shape the development of the Parents Anonymous program, reflecting the values and standards of each particular community.

VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT

Volunteers in communities throughout the country assist in the development and ongoing maintenance of Parents Anonymous programs through volunteer roles as group facilitators, providing coverage on the telephone line, working in the children's program, and serving on advisory boards and governing boards of directors. Other important volunteer roles include public education and outreach for the group and garnering the necessary resources, both tangible and in-kind, to support the group. Each year, about 30,000 volunteers help provide Parents Anonymous programs to families.

A Parents Anonymous group must have a professionally trained facilitator who will commit to participate each week in a specific group for at least one year. The facilitator fills an important and specialized role and many facilitators remain in their roles for many years. All facilitators should be trained on and receive a copy of The Parents Anonymous Group Facilitator Manual, which is available from Parents Anonymous, Inc. and from chartered affiliate organizations.

Parents Anonymous group facilitators are recruited through numerous strategies and represent diverse backgrounds. The most common educational or experiential backgrounds of Parents Anonymous facilitators are listed below in descending order:

- social work
- counseling or mental health
- teaching or education
- student interns
- health care professionals
- pastoral counselors

Others are from fields of business, law, criminal justice or related backgrounds.

Given the significant use of volunteers to support Parents Anonymous programs, a wide range of

methods are used to recruit volunteers throughout the Parents Anonymous National network.

- word of mouth
- public speaking
- outreach to students in colleges and universities
- newspaper ads or notices
- recruitment through volunteer banks and United Way systems
- direct mail
- outreach through religious organizations
- outreach through business newsletter or kiosks in business settings
- outreach to social service, health and educational organizations
- outreach to high school students
- outreach through television and radio
- on-line announcements placed on electronic bulletin boards
- speaking to civic groups
- recruitment through local resource fairs
- distribution of Parents Anonymous brochures, flyers and other materials describing the need for volunteers in the community
- developing partnerships with individuals in the community who will recruit among their friends and colleagues
- VISTA and AMERICORPS

Other strategies include outreach through professional organizations; through volunteer guilds such as Junior Leagues; and through the use of billboards.

Volunteerism in communities with limited resources

All aspects of volunteer recruitment, screening, training and appreciation apply to working with Parents Anonymous programs in communities with high needs and limited resources, but it can sometimes be a challenge to identify and retain a bank of qualified individuals. Responses to this

issue include working closely with a Black Ministerial Association in developing services for an African American community and working closely with the elders and chiefs in developing Parents Anonymous programs in Native American communities. In all communities, it is clearly important to gain the support of key leaders in order to recruit volunteers. These leaders may be the informal leaders who are viewed as decision makers by others in their community and whose support for Parents Anonymous will encourage others to lend their time and support to the program.

Another strategy for developing volunteer support in any community is to ensure that the Parents Anonymous program is identified as part of the community, rather than as belonging to others outside the community. It is important that the Parents Anonymous staff and volunteers be viewed as "rolling up their sleeves and working with the community." It is particularly advantageous to draw upon the partnerships and collaborative agreements Parents Anonymous organizations have developed with local organizations serving families and children living in the community. Local organizations can provide strong linkages to potential volunteers in the community.

Even though there are multiple avenues for recruiting volunteers, all volunteers with Parents Anonymous should have common characteristics. They must have the ability to work with diverse populations, to be non-judgmental and to celebrate the differences among individuals. Volunteers with credibility in the community are a valuable asset to Parents Anonymous and their involvement will attract others to support the program. Individuals who are stable in their own lives, mature, dependable and sensitive to the needs of others make excellent volunteers. All volunteers must demonstrate respect for parents as individuals and for their role and responsibilities in caring for their children. Above all, volunteers must have a strong philosophical compatibility with the Parents Anonymous Principles.

Some cultural groups have a stronger history of volunteerism than others, and specific communities may present particular challenges. Most cultures have some traditional methods of

informal helping, and it is important to identify those and base the outreach and recruitment of volunteers on those existing informal strategies. Key leaders in the community can help identify these strategies and lead the way in working with volunteers in a given community.

SUCCESSFUL OUTREACH STRATEGIES IN DIVERSE COMMUNITIES

Parents Anonymous groups are valuable and effective resources for families in diverse communities. Successfully reaching out to recruit parents requires creativity and a good understanding of the unique cultural aspects of a community and the people who live there. For example, many Latinos and Asian Pacific Islanders look similar to one another, and in the case of Latinos, may also speak the same language. However each of these two ethnic groups represents people from many different countries and a wide variety of cultures. Similarly, Native Americans are also a heterogeneous group and represent many different Indian Nations.

Learning about the parents' culture and the community will help ensure any outreach strategies employed are culturally respectful and successful. There are several valuable sources for this information and key individuals whose involvement will also lend credibility to the Parents Anonymous program and who can be a source of on-going parent referrals.

Agencies that have been in a community for a number of years and are an established part of the community are often rich sources of information and support. This is particularly true if the agency has community outreach programs whose employees work side by side with community residents.

Religious organizations are an important source of information about their community because many religious leaders are actively involved in community affairs. This is often true in the African American community. In addition, parents often seek help from their religious leader when they are troubled. Some Parents Anonymous affiliates work closely with religious organizations to develop Parents Anonymous groups and/or reach out to parents. Inter-faith Councils provide an effective method of initiating contact with numerous religious leaders, seeking their support and gathering information.

Medical clinics and public child welfare or food stamp offices are often viewed as resources by the community's residents. The staff and volunteers in these settings can provide useful information about the strengths and needs of the community and can help identify informal community leaders. For example, in Milwaukee, WI., a Parents Anonymous group developer met with a physician based in a local health clinic which serves the Latino community. The physician recommended that she develop a partnership with a local Latino social service agency and this contact led to the development of a new Parents Anonymous group in that community.

Additional information about communities is available through **community newspapers and newsletters, on library bulletin boards and through your own observation.** It is well worth the time to find out about community events and attend them to gain more understanding of the people who live there. However, none of these strategies will replace the value of having close partnerships with key people within a community who know it well and are part of it.

Parents Anonymous programs will most often need to use multiple, on-going strategies to continually reach out to parents and to encourage professionals to refer parents. **The Parents Anonymous, Inc. video, *Strengthening America's Families*,** is an excellent outreach tool for programs throughout the country. In addition to the specific strategies identified below, most Parents Anonymous affiliates use **brochures, posters and flyers** to ensure visibility and public understanding of the program. Of course, these should display culturally representative photos and symbols and all information should be written in the appropriate language(s).

Parents Anonymous of Washington reports that most Parents Anonymous groups require about 80 referrals per year to average 8 - 10 parents attending the group each week over the course of a year. This means that outreach must be on-going and must result in 6 - 7 referrals each month. They recommend that referral sources be contacted at least every three months, reminded of the Parents Anonymous group and encouraged to refer parents who might attend and benefit from it.

Examples of Successful Outreach Strategies

Parents Anonymous National Network members have used a variety of successful strategies to reach out to parents, including the following:

- ▶ **Going door to door to met individual parents**, listening to their concerns about parenting, and building a relationship is a successful strategy in recruiting parents to a Florida Parents Anonymous group which meets in a housing project. This activity allows parents to meet the group facilitator and/or the parent leader and to learn about Parents Anonymous. Because of depression, disorganization or a sense of being overwhelmed, some parents did not respond immediately and she made many follow-up visits and contacts before some parents ever attended their first Parents Anonymous group.
- ▶ **Going to locations where parents are involved in other activities** is another excellent method for recruiting parents. For example, in Connecticut, at the beginning of each month one group facilitator visits the local public social services offices. She talks with parents as they wait for their appointment with their caseworker. In addition, she goes to Laundromats and other places where parents have to sit and wait. In both of these examples, the facilitators were of the same ethnic background as the parents and this helped them build an initial rapport.
- ▶ **Parent education classes** in local communities are excellent recruiting and outreach sources for Parents Anonymous groups. Parents Anonymous parents and facilitators often visit these classes to provide information on the Parents Anonymous group, conduct "mock" groups with the parents, and invite parents to join Parents Anonymous.
- ▶ **Identifying and gaining the support of elders** in a community helps Parents Anonymous group coordinators recruit parents to groups. In many communities of color, older people

or elders are revered and respected. Parents look to elders as having gained wisdom through their life experience and seek their guidance in solving their concerns about parenting. Depending on the community, an elder may be a family member who is respected and trusted, or someone who is always willing to help their neighbors and share advice that is non-threatening and non-judgmental. Elders may help plan the development of a Parents Anonymous group and may even attend the first group meeting. This sanction by an elder puts parents at ease and they are much more inclined to attend and to encourage other parents to attend.

In Miami, FL, the facilitator invites an elder from ~~with~~ the Cuban or Haitian community when she is beginning a Parents Anonymous group. This helps the parents feel more at ease in a group. Similarly, in Minnesota, the group coordinator meets with an elder from the Mexican community when he is exploring the possibility of starting a group in the elder's community. In the Native American communities of Arizona and Montana, elders are an important resource to the group coordinators because they help identify with the needs of their community.

- ▶ **Teachers, principals, school counselors and school nurses** have frequent contact with parents under stress and will often refer parents to Parents Anonymous groups. Teachers and school officials are often strong partners in developing new Parents Anonymous groups. They should always be kept informed regarding the development of Parents Anonymous programs and encouraged to refer parents whenever appropriate.

Recruiting parents in a rural community can present a challenge. Since most communities are small and people know one another it is important that Parents Anonymous groups maintain a strong focus on the non-judgmental, confidential aspects of the program. Parents may need to be reassured that their right to privacy will be protected, even if they know other parents in the group in other settings. Parent to parent outreach and outreach through schools, religious organizations

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and other places where parents come together will be most effective. One barrier to attendance is often transportation. Wherever possible, Parents Anonymous groups meeting in rural communities are attempting to use buses to assist with transportation needs, especially if one can be made available specifically for use by the group on the day or night of the meeting. On one reservation in Montana, the facilitators transport parents or parents car pool to and from the group. In the rural California community of Palmdale, the Parents Anonymous affiliate agency is able to provide taxi cab tokens to parents who are involved with the local public child protective services agency. Other parents share car pools whenever possible.

RESPONDING TO PARENT CALLS

Of course, outreach activities that result in a referral or even an immediate contact from a parent can only be as successful as the response the Parents Anonymous program provides. It is an act of courage and strength to ask for help and parents may not call again if they do not receive an inviting response. The initial step in assuring an effective response to parent calls is identifying an existing telephone number or developing a new system that will ensure extended coverage by trained volunteers, parents or staff who can provide information about Parents Anonymous and encourage callers to attend a group meeting if appropriate. This telephone system should be answered by a person, rather than a recording and should be one that allows those answering the calls to talk with parents in an uninterrupted and unhurried setting. An effective telephone response system will require the support of many individuals, or may be incorporated into an existing service with a compatible mission and an interest in promoting Parents Anonymous.

Parents should receive all pertinent information about the Parents Anonymous group during their initial call. The parent caller will usually base their initial impression of Parents Anonymous on the response to their telephone call so this critical role should be filled by well-trained staff or volunteers. If parents have to make a second call, such as to a local contact person after calling the statewide hotline, there must be a system of coordination between the two contact telephone systems so that the parent's request is easily addressed.

For example, some organization will provide a second, more local, telephone number, but will ask for the parent's number so they can also give it to the local contact person to ensure timely follow-up. When parents leave a telephone number and a Parents Anonymous representative calls them with more information or to renew the invitation to the group, the caller must observe careful confidentiality in leaving messages on a machine or with another person. Usually, the caller will leave their first name, a request that the parent call them back and no additional information.

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Sometimes, broad outreach strategies will result in calls from parents living in a community where there is no current Parents Anonymous group meeting. In that situation, the Parents Anonymous representative should invite the caller to leave their name and telephone number and/or address. This information should be filed with that of other callers from that area and may lead to the development of a new Parents Anonymous group.

Parents Anonymous group members have found creative ways to make the initial visit to a group inviting. A friendly sign giving clear directions to the specific room in a building helps new parents easily locate the group. Best of all, sometimes the parent group leader or another parent will talk by telephone with a parent prior to their first meeting and plan to meet them at the door of the building or in some other easily located area. It is also important that the parent easily locates the children's program and that the children are welcomed and made comfortable right away.

Finally, those parent, staff and volunteers who respond to parent calls should always ask how the parent found out about Parents Anonymous. This will help evaluate the effectiveness of various outreach strategies and referral sources in each community.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Parents Anonymous facilitators are mandated reporters in all states, therefore when working with a Parents Anonymous group, there will be times when it is necessary to contact child protective services (CPS) regarding specific actions of a parent participant in the group. This need to make a CPS report may stem from:

- The self report of a parent to the group concerning his/her particular behaviors or plans which are of concern.
- An emerging pattern of behaviors and statements and general overall affect that lead to concern about the parent's ability to cope in a healthy way with the stresses of their parenting role.
- A child attending childcare either exhibiting signs of abuse or verbally reporting abuse.

At Parents Anonymous, Inc. we recommend the following process for making a CPS report. First, as in all aspects of Parents Anonymous, the need to make a report provides an opportunity to promote the parent's role, responsibilities and power in managing their interaction with their children. With that approach in mind, the preferred method for making a report to CPS is that the parent initiates the contact and makes a self-report giving all the necessary information to the child protective services intake worker. Except in rare circumstances, this will always be the initial approach. Of course, the strategy for making a CPS report should always take into account the immediate safety of a child and, if sharing of responsibility for reporting increases the danger to the child, then the child's safety will always take precedence.

When a report seems necessary, the parent should be told immediately that the group's priority is his or her child's safety and informed of the necessity to involve child protective services. This can be stated in a non-judgmental and supportive way by indicating awareness of the parent's own commitment to protecting his or her children and providing a safe environment for them. If a parent originally revealed information leading to a CPS report, this is a very important action and

should be acknowledged. Parents sometimes need multiple supports from the community and the facilitator and parents should provide information and assistance in locating these if appropriate. However, a report to CPS is not a debatable option if child abuse or neglect is suspected.

If the determination to contact CPS occurs during a Parents Anonymous group meeting, this discussion with the parent may be held within the full group or the group leaders and/or facilitator may talk with the parent immediately following the meeting. It is not unusual for Parents Anonymous groups to make use of a telephone in or near the meeting room so that parents can make an immediate call to CPS while the topic is under discussion. If a parent calls any of the group leaders during the week and indicates an incident of abuse has occurred, the parent still can be offered the opportunity to make an initial call to CPS and then to confirm with the group leader that they have done so. If the group leaders are not with the parent when the call is made, then it will be their responsibility to confirm with CPS that the call took place. Sometimes group leaders will tell a parent that they will wait a particular period of time, perhaps an hour, before making a report in order to give the parent time to do so.

Throughout the history of Parents Anonymous, many parents have elected to make a self report to CPS themselves. If the parent is unwilling to make this call, or feels unable to do so, then the second approach is for the group leader or facilitator to call the CPS intake worker. This should ideally take place in the presence of the parent so that the parent hears all the information that is shared; or, if the parent and facilitator are not together in a common space, the facilitator should call CPS and then make every effort to contact the parent to tell him or her about the contents of the report, the response from CPS and the next steps that the parent might anticipate.

The parent is offered ongoing support throughout the process. For example, if CPS staff will be visiting the home in the near future, in many Parents Anonymous groups one or more parents will offer to spend the day with the parent being reported so that they will not be alone when the visit takes place.

It is the Parents Anonymous model to approach a CPS report as a recognition that additional supports and services are needed, rather than as a recognition of failure. Particularly when parents self-report to the group, the need for CPS can be viewed as a request for more help and a reaffirmation of the parent's commitment to protect their children.

Throughout the years, parents have continued to self-report incidents of child abuse and neglect, or fears that such incidents might occur, when these issues would not be easily identified by others outside the home. Parents have indicated that they so value the closeness, support and sense of connectedness to the Parents Anonymous group, that they do not want to jeopardize that by keeping a "secret" from the group, which will force them to constantly monitor their statements and behaviors. The fact that many parents value their involvement in the Parents Anonymous group more than they value the personal comfort of keeping their behavior a secret, is one of the strong indications of the value of Parents Anonymous to parents who are seeking changes. The need to involve CPS, or to make a follow-up contact with them if the parent is already involved, can be viewed as a growth opportunity for parents. For this reason, we never recommend that a reduction in CPS reports be identified as a benchmark for success in evaluating Parents Anonymous programs. Often, a report, particularly a self-report, may be an indication of success.

In some instances, parents may be angry that a report needs to be made and may refuse to have further involvement or discussion with any of the group members about this issue. They may even stop attending the Parents Anonymous group. This, however, is not the usual outcome and even when such an incident occurs, it is still necessary for the facilitator to contact CPS. If the parent is angry and does not want to communicate, the facilitator should make every effort to keep the parent informed about the report and the anticipated outcomes.

It has always been the practice of Parents Anonymous to provide parents with as much information as possible about all aspects of our work. The issue of reporting to CPS is no different. Parents

should never be surprised that the Parents Anonymous group has a policy of reporting child abuse and neglect when necessary. Each parent attending a Parents Anonymous group should receive the blue booklet, "I Am A Parents Anonymous Parent" when they first attend the group and be encouraged to read it. This booklet highlights the policies about reporting child abuse and neglect. In addition, each Parents Anonymous group should begin with a statement that reiterates that the only time the anonymity and confidentiality of the Parents Anonymous group will be broken is when the safety of a child is an issue of concern and a report must be made to CPS. In general, there should be no surprises for parents. Even CPS reports can and must be handled in a caring, supportive and respectful manner.

IN SUMMARY

The Parents Anonymous group development strategies discussed in Section IV are included here to provide a range of options from which to select those that best fit individual communities. There are many other strategies that have been adapted throughout the country and this manual will be revised periodically to include new successful methods as they are developed and identified.

Section V, which follows, contains several examples of specific Parents Anonymous programs. This information was collected through telephone interviews and site visits with the individuals identified and we have briefly outlined the strategies they found to be most useful in their community settings.

SECTION V.

SUCCESSFUL EXAMPLES OF PARENTS ANONYMOUS PROGRAMS IN DIVERSE COMMUNITIES

PARENTS ANONYMOUS AND LATINO FAMILIES

Approximately 18 percent of the families attending Parents Anonymous programs throughout the country are Latinos. Latinos are defined as individuals who are from Latin American countries. Parents Anonymous group members are from Mexico, Puerto Rico, El Salvador, and Nicaragua, as well as other countries in Latin America. Members could be American citizens whose parents are from these countries, legal immigrants or undocumented immigrants. The two groups highlighted in this discussion, one in Arizona and one in California, work primarily with Mexican nationals. Salvadoran parents also attend the Parents Anonymous group in California. Honduran, Salvadoran, and Guatemalan parents also attend the group in Arizona.

Parents Anonymous, Inc., staff conducted site visits with Parents Anonymous programs in California and Arizona, and interviewed key staff in both locations. The following information provides a brief description of the programs in those two sites.

Arizona

Parents Anonymous Affiliate:

Parents Anonymous of Arizona

Primary Person Interviewed:

Bérta Carbajal

Description of with the Community:

Phoenix, Arizona is home to a large community of Mexican Nationals. Many residents are immigrants, both established and recently arrived. Though a large number are documented immigrants, an equally large number are not. This is a community that respects and values older people or elders. The community recognizes elders as having gained wisdom through their life experience. Many parents consider elders to be experts in child rearing. An elder may be a family member who is respected and trusted or a member of the community who helps their neighbors and gives advice that is supportive and useful.

Program Development:

To gain entry into this community, program staff earned the trust and respect of the elders, who then sanctioned the Parents Anonymous group. Parents Anonymous staff demonstrated a willingness to be nonjudgmental and open minded and to focus on issues that affect the entire family. Many Latinos' definition of family includes extended family members and very close friends. To gain trust for Parents Anonymous, staff demonstrated that their main concern was the family and that they were not involved with the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS).

Group Location:

Parents Anonymous groups meet in schools. This setting works well because most parents there view schools as safe and supportive environments and as working in partnership with them on common goals for their children.

Collaboration:

Parents Anonymous of Arizona works closely with grassroots community leaders, including the community's elders who can sanction a new service in the community. In addition, Bérta works with the Mexican Consulate in Phoenix. The Consulate has an advocacy program for Mexican

families living in the United States, and Bérta has developed relationships with key individuals there who support parents' involvement in Parents Anonymous.

Outreach:

Parents Anonymous of Arizona reaches out to parents in the community through the local media. Bérta has developed strong ties to the Latino media and works closely with the local radio stations and newspaper. As a result of media coverage, Parents Anonymous reaches out to many parents who want to improve their parenting skills. In addition, the court system mandates many parents to attend parent education classes. Through these classes, parents develop connections to other parents and learn the value of mutual support. This promotes greater interest in attending Parents Anonymous groups.

Parent Leadership:

Latino parents in this group report discomfort with formal parent leadership roles and titles. Many believe they are not capable or experienced enough to be a parent leader. However, the Parents Anonymous staff include all the parents in ongoing trainings and other activities hosted by Parents Anonymous of Arizona. Through these training activities, parents take on numerous leadership roles.

Staffing and Volunteers:

Parents Anonymous of Arizona provides Parents Anonymous groups for Latino families with the help of a large cadre of volunteers. The volunteer facilitators working in the community are primarily teachers, including teachers who were trained in another country. In addition, local community business people also volunteer to support Parents Anonymous.

California - East Los Angeles

Parents Anonymous Affiliate:	Bienvenidos Family Services
Primary Persons Interviewed:	Noemi Corral Parents Anonymous Facilitator Rosemarie Mollinedo Coordinator of Center Based Services

Description of the Community:

The majority of people who live in East Los Angeles are Mexicans, and this community of Mexicans is one of the oldest in with the United States. Residents include recent immigrants (documented and undocumented), and members of families who have been in this country for two, three, four or more generations. Many families settled in this area long ago and remained here, often with several generations living in the same community. Many Salvadorans live in the Pico-Union District of Los Angeles, but a smaller number live in East Los Angeles, and many more come to East Los Angeles for services.

Some of the parent who migrated here do not understand the laws regarding child protection and may become involved with child welfare agencies or law enforcement officials regarding their treatment of their children, particularly around the use of disciplinary practices. This creates resentment and a sense that their role as parents is being undermined by outside influences. Because many immigrants are undocumented, there is the additional fear that the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), will deport them if they are involved with public social service agencies or law enforcement.

Poverty is another issue facing many families in East Los Angeles. Parents who are undocumented immigrants often must work in jobs that pay below minimum wage levels. In many families, including immigrants and long-term residents, both parents are wage earners but the family income remains at or below the poverty level. It is not unusual for older children to also have jobs to help support their families. To stretch scarce resources, it is not unusual for several generations to live together in one house.

Program Development:

Bienvenidos Family Services is located in East Los Angeles. Most of the employees are bilingual and bicultural, and many are intimately familiar with the community. The commitment of Bienvenidos Family Services to strengthen and support families led them to develop a Parents Anonymous group. Based on the needs of the families in the community, Bienvenidos determined the greatest need to be for a Spanish speaking group.

Bienvenidos offered parent education classes and staff members observed that some parents attended several sequential series of classes. After talking with parents, the staff realized that the parents were using these classes to meet their long term needs for support as they made critical changes in their lives. Parents reported they preferred not to repeat parent education classes, due to the structure and fixed curriculum, but it was their only option for involvement with others. Bienvenidos recognized the need for a Parents Anonymous group and contacted Parents Anonymous, Inc. for help in developing a group at their location.

Group Location:

The Bienvenidos Parents Anonymous group is located in their agency. It is near public transportation and has ample room for with the parent group and the children's program. The children's program is provided by Bienvenidos staff.

Collaboration:

This group is a collaboration between Bienvenidos Family Services and Parents Anonymous, Inc. Bienvenidos provides the basic support for the Parents Anonymous group and Parents Anonymous, Inc. provides training, outreach and referral, and on-going support for the Bienvenidos staff.

Outreach:

Other program staff at Bienvenidos Family Services refer parents they work with to the Parents Anonymous program. In addition, the agency has also developed culturally appropriate outreach and recruitment materials and distributes them in schools and the community. All materials clearly state that the Parents Anonymous program is conducted in Spanish.

Parent Leadership:

Parents Anonymous, Inc. provided initial training to Bienvenidos staff and to two parents. These two parents became the first parent leaders for the new group. Though Noemi, the group facilitator, recognized the importance of parent leadership, initially she and the parents had to adjust to their new roles. In parent education classes, the educators prepared the curriculum, led discussion, and if any event was planned, took the lead in planning and implementing it. Because of the Parents Anonymous principle of parent leadership, Noemi learned to share leadership of the group. To strengthen their shared leadership role, she and the parent leaders met on a regular basis. Noemi helped the parent leader learn how to facilitate the group and feel more comfortable taking the lead. In her role as facilitator, Noemi is a resource to the group, shares information about other community resources and assists the parent leader as needed.

Staffing and Volunteers:

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Bienvenidos Family Services provides release time to Noemi and the children's program workers. This is part of their overall programmatic commitment to the families in the East Los Angeles community.

PARENTS ANONYMOUS AND NATIVE AMERICAN FAMILIES

Native Americans account for approximately three percent of the participants in Parents Anonymous groups. Many Native American parents meet in Parents Anonymous groups based on reservations.

Parents Anonymous, Inc., staff conducted site visits with Parents Anonymous programs in Montana and interviewed key staff. The following information provides a brief description of the Parents Anonymous program in Montana.

Parents Anonymous Chartered Affiliate:

Montana Council for Families

Primary Person Interviewed:

Emily Salois, MSW

Member of with the Blackfeet Tribe

Project Director of with the Native American
Family Empowerment Project

Description of with the Community:

Montana has seven reservations that are home to several different Native American Tribes. Unemployment on these reservations is as high as 89%, with the result that most families live far below the poverty level. To pursue greater job opportunities, parents often have to leave the reservation and their extended family, so the cost of remaining close to family members can be very high.

Inadequate housing is another major issue facing many families. Sometimes, several generations of one family live in a small house that may not have indoor plumbing, electricity or other conveniences that are common outside the reservation. Given the high level of stress, it is not

unusual for families to become transient and move from house to house because of intra-familial conflicts. In addition, as in the general population, issues regarding substance abuse cause stress in the Native American community.

Program Development:

Initial development of the Parents Anonymous program began when Emily identified key leaders in the community and invited them to a two-day conference to develop responses to the many needs faced by families on Montana reservations. Emily worked closely with tribal chiefs and elders. She utilized her own familial contacts and those of her colleagues to build stronger connections between attendees. Emily, at age 56, is considered a respected elder and this increased her credibility. Thus, development of the Parents Anonymous program gained significant benefit from the support of elders, chiefs and tribal councils. More than 250 participants attended the conference and agreed to work together to create additional programs to help strengthen families.

Group Location:

Emily works closely with tribal councils to develop local Parents Anonymous groups. The tribal councils help identify locations that will be most inviting for parents. On the Flathead Reservation, the health care clinic sponsors the Parents Anonymous group, through the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The group meets in a local Catholic church, but the facilitators are employees of the clinic. According to Emily, schools are often poor choices for group meetings due to the negative experiences of many Native American people in boarding schools. Often, schools are not safe and comfortable settings for parents.

Collaboration:

The Montana Council for Families works closely with tribal councils to develop, maintain, and promote Parents Anonymous groups on the reservations. They also collaborate with other agencies that are working with Native Americans families. Most of these are government agencies, because there are not many nonprofit agencies on the reservation. Staff of other agencies are excellent referral sources for families and Parents Anonymous also helps families utilize other services. Because of these close relationships, staff work cooperatively with each other and with families to help coordinate services available to families and to ensure that Parents Anonymous continues to be recognized as a vital community resource.

Outreach:

By their involvement, the tribal councils sanction Parents Anonymous groups in their communities. In addition, Emily and the facilitators join with families who are in the group to ensure the group responds to the interests and needs of the parents attending and the parents encourage their friends and family members to attend. For example, the Parents Anonymous program provides meals for both parents and the children. This use of the traditional "breaking of the bread" is an excellent strategy to recruit and retain families who participate in Parents Anonymous.

Parent Leadership:

Cultural norms create discomfort regarding formal identification as a parent leader. Natural group leaders emerge from the Parents Anonymous groups. They often help begin the group session and offer strong encouragement and support to other parents. In Montana, many informal parent leaders become recognized and accepted as helpers because of their experience and personal connection in the tribal community.

Staffing and Volunteers:

The high level of poverty makes it hard to recruit volunteers. Many members of the community are so focused on meeting their basic needs that they have little time or energy to commit to volunteer work. Mostly, agency staff and tribal councils staff facilitate each group. Moreover, paid staff provide child care and limited transportation to the Parents Anonymous groups and to other family oriented cultural events on the reservations.

Other Pertinent Information:

Among the Native American families living on reservations in Montana, it is sometimes considered too intrusive to maintain eye contact with another person. To encourage parents to attend Parents Anonymous and to lessen the need for constant eye contact, Native American groups in Montana incorporate many creative activities into their meetings. For example, a group on the Blackfeet Reservation quilts and sews together. This activity gives parents something to look at, lessens eye contacts and thereby avoids feelings of shame. A Parents Anonymous group may be made up of parents quilting together while they discuss their children and families.

Also, since many people know each other so well, they are often already aware of the primary issues each family is facing and may know each other's family members. For example, a parent may make a brief statement, sometimes stating only a name, "Georgie." Another parent may acknowledge they understand what the first parent is thinking and support them by saying, "Ah, that Georgie." Still another parent might join in the conversation and say, "My Michael is doing the same thing." Each member of the group may be fully aware of the concerns felt by the other parents. Then, a fourth parent might say, "When my child had this problem, this is what I did..." Thus, because the Parents Anonymous group meets in a very small community where people know a lot about each other's lives, they do not need to say much to each other to share their feelings and information. The ability to focus on crafts in this setting helps parents hold discussion while

avoiding intrusive eye contact.

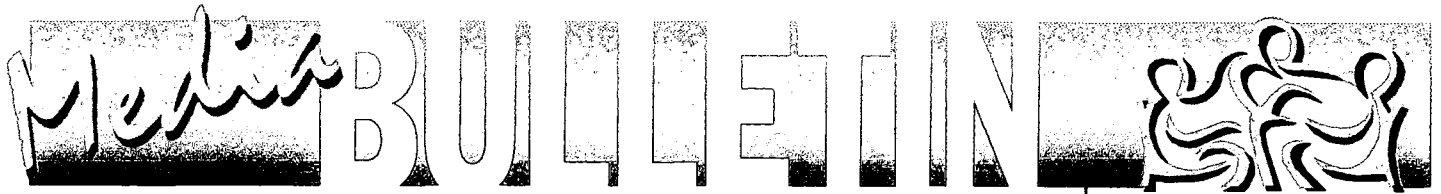
Until recently, Montana Council for Families received funding from the Department of Agriculture to support Parents Anonymous as a vehicle for reaching out to high risk youth. The funds supported staff to provide Parents Anonymous programs. This funding also supports some of the coordinators that work directly on the reservation to help organize collaborative efforts to support Parents Anonymous groups and other programs. Each reservation has 13-14 collaborators who work on the issues of parenting and high risk youth.

SECTION VI.

APPENDIX - RESOURCES

Parents Anonymous Washington State, *Get A Group Grip: Tips and Tools for Great Groups*, Seattle, Washington, 1995.

People of Color Leadership Institute, *Annotated Bibliography of Resources on Cultural Competence and Cultural Diversity in Child Welfare/Child Protection Services*, Prepared for the People of Color Leadership Institute by the American Humane Association, Children's Division, Englewood, Colorado, 1994.



PARENTS
Anonymous

Parent Leadership: A Voice for Change

This Media Bulletin is designed for parents, professionals and community volunteers who want to use the media and public speaking opportunities to reach out to other parents, educate the community and help shape public policies affecting families and children. It is the responsibility of all of us to ensure the important voices and perspectives of parents are included in these public forums.

Parents Anonymous, Inc. promotes the voice of parents through print and broadcast media to advocate for policies and practices that strengthen and support families, and to reach out to other parents seeking help in creating safe and caring homes for their children. The powerful message found in the successful life stories of parents who have changed their lives through Parents Anonymous is also a critical aspect of all Parents Anonymous, Inc. training and public speaking activities.

The expertise of parents, combined with the expertise of professionals, is a dynamic example of the Parents Anonymous principle of shared leadership. Parents Anonymous parents work with policymakers and profes-

sionals to successfully impact the decision-making, planning and evaluation of human services programs, and to shape front-line practices affecting their lives and the lives of their children.

Parents Anonymous, Inc. is dedicated to fostering the voice of parents who have experienced difficulties and, from the expertise of their own experience, have valuable insights regarding the most effective strategies to strengthen and support families. This goal is accomplished by providing technical assistance to professionals, policy makers and community organizations in recruiting and training parent leaders and creating opportunities for meaningful parent leadership, in partnership with professionals, to develop and implement responsive programs to meet the needs of families.

Parents Anonymous is enriched nationwide by the commitment and dedication of parents who found help and support and remained to "give back" to others. Through the courage and tenacity of Parents Anonymous

Our Mission:

Parents Anonymous, Inc. is a national organization that promotes mutual support and parent leadership in order to build and support strong, safe families.

"I needed to decide how much I felt comfortable sharing so that my message would encourage other parents to ask for help but would still fit into the goals of CNN Presents."

Micky, Parents Anonymous National Parent Leadership Team Member

"I realized while preparing for a one-minute interview on The Today Show that I had to focus my thoughts and practice what I wanted to say—and still, I knew they could ask me anything."

Elizabeth, Parents Anonymous National Parent Leadership Team Member

parents who speak out through the media and in other public arenas, thousands of human service professionals, policymakers and other community members throughout the country have gained valuable insight into the broad range of issues affecting families. Their personal stories of strength and success not only offer hope and inspiration, but provide insight and expertise to help shape programs and policies affecting families across the country.

Parents Anonymous, Inc. was the first national family strengthening organization to identify the importance of parents speaking publicly about their life experiences, to provide direction to these efforts and to make a significant commitment to shaping the agenda for change. In the early 1970s, Parents Anonymous parents were the first in the country to speak out about the prevention of child abuse from the perspective of parents working to overcome difficulties in their lives. In 1973, when Jolly K., the founding parent of Parents Anonymous, appeared before the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Children and Youth to share her personal experiences, the extensive media coverage generated by her powerful testimony reached every corner of the nation. Jolly's moving story helped ensure passage of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) in 1974 and

put a human face to a complex social issue. CAPTA was the first federal law that focused on the *solution* to abuse and neglect. It established a federal leadership role in promoting community-based prevention efforts such as Parents Anonymous. This important legislation was reauthorized in 1996, once again through the strong support of Parents Anonymous parents, volunteers and staff.

Parents Anonymous parents who have demonstrated their ability to resolve personal issues and concerns provide a valuable resource for the media. Parents Anonymous, Inc. is frequently contacted by national media and policymakers who are seeking expert information, from both parents and professionals. Many of these speaking opportunities offer valuable access to key decision-makers, outreach to other parents, and broad community education possibilities. The power of parents speaking from their own experience is unequalled as a mechanism for demonstrating the success of Parents Anonymous programs.

This bulletin contains strategies to help parents, staff and volunteers of Parents Anonymous affiliates throughout the country work effectively with local media and utilize public speaking opportunities to educate and reach out to others. Parents

Anonymous parents and staff can use this bulletin to gain valuable insights and information to help them evaluate media and public speaking opportunities, determine their objectives and achieve the results they want.

Identifying Parent Leaders

Talking with the media and speaking in public are excellent opportunities for parents to build leadership skills and the invitation to participate in these activities should be offered to many different parents. Parents Anonymous organizations need to strategically work with parents in local Parents Anonymous groups to ensure that parents are aware of the possibilities for public speaking and media involvement. Parents should be encouraged to identify issues of relevance to their expertise, experience and personal interests. It is important to have multiple parent leaders who are prepared to speak publicly in order to effectively portray the many issues facing families. For example, parents managing concerns related to divorce, single parenting, recovering from substance abuse and any of the myriad other issues facing families will all have different but equally valuable perspectives. The common issue for parents in Parents Anonymous is that of growth and change to create more positive outcomes for their families.

Having numerous parent leaders who want to speak publicly helps avoid over-working any one parent, allows many parents to experience the benefits of public speaking and helps ensure that parents who speak publicly will have experiences that are relevant to the particular topic under discussion. Periodic surveys of Parents Anonymous participants regarding their interest in public speaking is an excellent strategy for recruiting parent leaders for this role. This encourages a broader number of parents to participate in such activities, resulting in more diverse ethnic, cultural and gender representation.

Before parents take on this public role, there are issues that are important for both parents and professionals to consider. A parent's personal growth and life situation plays a critical role in determining readiness to speak publicly about sensitive personal issues and to manage the attention resulting from media exposure. Parents who have achieved stability in their lives—yet remain emotionally connected to the issues that brought them to Parents Anonymous—are very effective public speakers. This balance between the passion of their struggle and the wisdom of hindsight is a valuable combination.

However, parents who are in the midst of crises or are still trying to manage stressful issues may be

Avenues for Speaking Out:

- ◆ *News, talk shows, and public service announcements on television or radio.*
- ◆ *News, feature stories, advice columns, letters to the editor, and public service advertising in newspapers and magazines.*
- ◆ *Articles in organization or association newsletters.*
- ◆ *Testimony before a legislative or other policy-making body.*
- ◆ *Training for professionals or other parent leaders.*
- ◆ *Speeches at public meetings such as United Way rallies and Child Abuse Prevention Month events.*
- ◆ *Workshops or presentations at professional conferences.*
- ◆ *Participation in focus groups and teleconferences.*
- ◆ *Use of electronic communication, such as the Internet or World Wide Web.*
- ◆ *Placement of ads on billboards and in public transit systems.*
- ◆ *Submission of an article to The Parent Networker, c/o Parents Anonymous, Inc.*

Often Asked Questions

- ◆ *How did you learn about Parents Anonymous?*
- ◆ *What is unique about the Parents Anonymous Program?*
- ◆ *How and why is Parents Anonymous effective in improving parent/child relationships?*
- ◆ *How long has Parents Anonymous been in existence?*
- ◆ *How did you decide to get involved in the program?*
- ◆ *What would you say to other parents who feel they are losing control and may need help?*
- ◆ *What happens in a Parents Anonymous group?*
- ◆ *What if a member is hurting their child and the group finds out?*
- ◆ *What is the Parents Anonymous children's program?*
- ◆ *How can I find Parents Anonymous if I am a parent and want to attend a group?*
- ◆ *How can I volunteer my time or donate to Parents Anonymous?*

putting themselves and their families under even greater stress. It is essential for Parents Anonymous staff to discuss information relating to the parents' current circumstances, the present family situation and how media exposure might impact it before deciding with the parent whether the time is right to talk with the media or to participate in other public speaking opportunities.

Once a parent decides to take on a public role, Parents Anonymous staff should offer ample preparation, orientation and support. Parents will need information about how the media works and general guidelines about public speaking. This advance preparation can help parents develop the skills necessary for managing public appearances.

When the media calls ...

Parents Anonymous organizations often receive calls from representatives of the media or from members of the community seeking contact with a parent as a public speaker or for commentary on a timely issue. When such requests are received, the Parents Anonymous staff member should first explore:

- The main purpose of the story or event.
- The role of the Parents Anonymous

parent and the level of disclosure required.

- The key issues to be raised.
- The size and focus of the audience to be addressed.
- The format and scope of the opportunity (panel discussion, question/answer, etc.).
- Other individuals and/or organizations that may be involved or interviewed.
- The need for Parents Anonymous staff to participate, debate or answer questions on broader program issues.

Based on the responses to the above areas, the Parents Anonymous representative will determine whether the proposal is a good fit for the organization. If so, the next step is to identify parents who want to take on this role and have expertise in the topic being addressed.

Cultivating and supporting positive involvement with a variety of media and public speaking sources is best accomplished through the development of relationships based on cooperation, candor and responsiveness. Parents Anonymous organizations can present themselves and parents most effectively by designating a primary contact person for their organization who will respond to media inquiries consistently and accurately.

Steps to ensure success

When discussing a potential public speaking opportunity that involves a Parents Anonymous parent the following steps should be considered.

- *Set the ground rules for the interview.* The Parents Anonymous representative should state at the beginning of a public speaking or media interaction that it is OK to ask the parent any reasonable question, **excluding any areas the parent has specifically identified as off limits.** It is equally OK for the parent to decline to answer any particular question. *These ground rules can help dramatically reduce the awkwardness and discomfort some parents and media people may feel around each other as they discuss very serious personal issues.*
- *Discuss and set forth the degree of privacy required.* Privacy limitations should be addressed prior to agreeing to an interview because some of these ground rules may be unacceptable to various representatives of the media and may prohibit reaching agreement. For all types of media, it is often possible to negotiate the use of a pseudonym or first name only identity. Sometimes the Parents Anonymous representative will need to involve the parent in these discussions. In any event, it is

important to ensure that privacy is protected to the extent that is acceptable to the parent, while always remaining aware that public speaking and working with the media automatically involves some loss of privacy.

- *Negotiate for tangible support in the form of reimbursement for travel, child care, lost wages and other costs, as well as for stipends in recognition of the time and expertise the parent is providing.* Financial support is important in helping to ensure that parents are able to participate in media and public speaking activities. These expenses are often provided by the organization making the request for parent speakers. It is less likely that the media will provide financial support. These costs may need to be covered by the Parents Anonymous organization. Affiliates should establish guidelines

Maintaining Good Media Relations

- ◆ *Ask a media professional to serve in an advisory capacity to your organization.*
- ◆ *Respond immediately and assertively to insensitive or inaccurate media coverage of child and family issues.*
- ◆ *Commend editors and reporters when stories about child abuse are thoughtful and educational.*
- ◆ *Offer to be a resource on local issues related to preventing child abuse and neglect, and strengthening families.*
- ◆ *Never, never lie to the media. A "temporary" lie will be permanently remembered by your interviewer.*
- ◆ *Always give the media something — statistics, general information about child abuse and neglect, a statement of personal concern or sadness, a substitute story that had positive outcomes.*

Source: NCCAN

for reimbursing expenses and paying stipends depending on the types of events.

If the above issues are resolved satisfactorily and the activity is planned, the Parents Anonymous staff member or volunteer should:

- *Accompany parents to all media activities and be available to provide the professional perspective.* This is especially important when the parent is new to public speaking and/or the topic is particularly volatile. The model of

“shared leadership” helps guide our decision making in this area. We find the best outcomes are achieved when parents speak from their own experience about their own progress, and professionals speak about broader issues affecting parents and children. This use of the shared leadership approach successfully reaches out to parents who may wish to seek assistance, and encourages professionals to make referrals and become more familiar with Parents Anonymous as an important resource in their community.

- *Be available for parents immediately following any public activity.* This will not only provide important emotional support; it will allow for debriefing and discussion of any successes or concerns resulting from the public speaking event. This debriefing should take place as soon as possible following the experience, and follow-up contact should continue for at least three to four weeks afterward. This ongoing support is important, and when parents are new to this role, it may need to occur more frequently and over a longer period of time.



Dressing for the Small Screen

- ◆ *Clothing worn on camera should be attractive, yet comfortable. You may be sitting one hour or longer.*
- ◆ *Avoid wearing clothes with small patterns. Tiny checks, herringbone and other detailed line patterns cause an undesirable flashing effect on television, called a “moire effect.”*
- ◆ *Avoid wearing all white, all black or all red. Mid-range colors are your best bet. Under the bright lights in the studio, white or highly reflective surfaces can cause distracting “hot spots” on the screen.*
- ◆ *Avoid wearing decorative accessories such as large necklaces, pins or other jewelry. Such items may cause distracting glares, interfere with the use of microphones that clip on your jacket or blouse, or, worst of all, distract from your message.*
- ◆ *Bolder makeup. In order to have a normal, healthy appearance in which facial features are distinct and enhanced, makeup for television is a little more exaggerated than regular daytime wear. If possible, you may want to consult with the studio’s makeup department before a taping.*

Issues for parents to consider

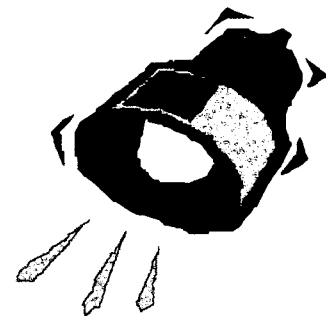
There are several issues for parents to

consider before deciding to become spokespersons.

- *Determine the extent of exposure you are comfortable with concerning the use of your name, face, or voice.* This will establish what form of media is best for you. You may be comfortable addressing a group of child protective services staff members in a training session, but may have more serious concerns if the presentation is to a local or national TV station in which your face, voice or name is exposed to anyone turning on the television. Specific details, such as descriptive 'labels' that might be used to describe you or your role, should be discussed in advance. Often, for example, a descriptive caption will appear on a screen under a talk show guest's face. You may not want to be introduced or referred to as a "Child Abuser." Once you decide on the extent of your exposure in a particular medium, it is important for the Parents Anonymous representative to clearly negotiate and agree upon this with the media contact ahead of time
- *Consider the effect your public exposure may have on your children, parents, siblings and other significant individuals.* You may be ready to share your life story and history in reaching out to help

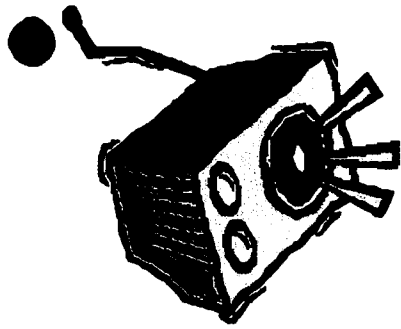
other parents, but it is important to remember that the consequences of such exposure may affect your extended family. Be sure to consult with family members before making this decision, and ask your children for permission to talk about them publicly. Your parents and children are likely to hear or read your story. Friends, colleagues and school mates also will likely hear or read the story. You may receive support and encouragement from family and friends, or you may find your testimony has created division and resistance. A valuable guideline is to focus comments on your individual story with minimal information about others in the family, and with care not to impinge upon the right to privacy of other family members.

- *Determine the topics that are a good fit for your personal experiences and your level of comfort in disclosing specific details about your life.* You may decide to publicize only specific aspects of your life story. You may believe that specific audiences or types of parents will receive the most benefit from your information and choose to participate in speaking opportunities that will directly impact that group. Always remember, you make the final decision in *what* and *how much* to say.



On-camera Interview Tips

- ◆ *Be aware of your body language. Communicate comfort and confidence by sitting forward in the chair with both feet on the floor. Do not try to "retreat" from the situation by sitting to the back of the chair.*
- ◆ *Exude warmth by smiling often.*
- ◆ *Look directly at the interviewer; the camera will find you.*
- ◆ *Speak clearly and avoid jargon.*
- ◆ *Assume you are always on camera.*
- ◆ *Most importantly, be yourself.*



The Guest Editorial

Radio stations often invite "equal time" guest editorials to respond to breaking news.

There may be priorities for those given an opportunity to reply; people named in the news, organizations named, then private citizens speaking for themselves. The station will have standards and regulations for guest editorials. Once you have been accepted, here are some guidelines to make your editorial most effective:

- ◆ Present one basic point.
- ◆ Make every word count.
- ◆ Be forthright — say what you mean.
- ◆ Rehearse.
- ◆ Stay within the allotted time frame.
- ◆ Be on time for taping.
- ◆ Review your tape; if it isn't right, ask to do it over.

Source: NCCAN

After considering the above broad issues, each individual speaking opportunity should be reviewed to ensure the topic and context of the presentation is a good fit. Be aware that media representatives may change their focus and story content as they speak with you and others. You may have an opportunity to influence the direction of the story in a positive way or the focus may become one that is no longer a good fit for you or Parents Anonymous. **Remember: It is always possible to end your participation at any time, even minutes prior to air time on television or radio, if the circumstances have changed unfavorably.**

If you decide to participate in the public speaking activity, the following steps become important:

- **Plan the message to be conveyed and be prepared for the possibility of being misquoted or quoted out of context.** It is always important to answer questions in complete sentences that can stand alone and are not misleading. However, realize that once you have said something there is often no control over the media's use of the information and, to some degree, the context in which the information is shared. For example, a sound byte on radio or TV news may not give the

full perspective of a statement because it has been taken out of the broader context. The use of quotations, in either print or electronic media, can create varied meanings, depending upon the story topic and the way in which the quotations are used.

The best defense against being misquoted is to plan your message ahead of time and rehearse possible responses to anticipated questions. Also, prior to beginning any contact with the media, be sure you clearly understand the topic of the story and the intended use of the Parents Anonymous perspective.

- **Choose your words carefully.** Be aware of connotations, jargon, slang meanings, flippant remarks, and hostile responses. Help others hear your important message by avoiding anger, or defense-provoking language and tones. It is often hard for professionals and policy makers to feel comfortable speaking with or hearing from parents when the parent's anger and frustration at policies or past experiences surface, creating an adversarial atmosphere. This is a concern that is commonly expressed by policy makers and one that can become a hindrance to open dialogue. However, when parents speak passionately about

issues of personal importance to them, this can be very effective.

- *Say what you want to say, first.* If you simply respond to questions, you may not have an opportunity to convey the message that is most important to you. So either volunteer the information, or fit it into your response as soon as possible. For example, if the goal is to say there are ten weekly Parents Anonymous groups meeting in your community, and the question is never asked, you might fold the information into your response as follows:

Question: "Why did you join PA?"

Answer: "I joined to gain support and skills to improve my parenting ability. You know, there are ten different groups that meet weekly in our community. We hope other parents with similar interests will call Parents Anonymous and attend one of these groups."

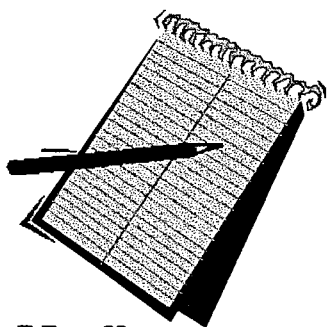
- *Include a call to action.* In educating and informing the general public or policy makers or in reaching out to other parents, the effort always should include a call to action. After describing the impact of the issue, on parents and/or on the broader community, ask your audience to take action. Describe the action and list the benefit of acting. This may

involve seeking passage of particular legislation or policies, for example. Or you may ask parents to examine their parenting skills and to call Parents Anonymous if they wish to have support and assistance in becoming the best parents they can be. In addition, all community members can be

In Preparation for Public Speaking or Media Interviews...

- ◆ *Write out the key elements you want to cover, but do not read from your notes.*
- ◆ *For TV or radio, be sure to think about how your words will sound, not just what they say.*
- ◆ *Draw verbal pictures for your audience, using words that are descriptive and evoke feelings as well as intellectual responses.*
- ◆ *Carefully define the message you want to impart and repeat it throughout your presentation to ensure it is clearly understood.*
- ◆ *Know what you want your audience to do as a result of what you say.*
- ◆ *Use facts or anecdotes to emphasize points and analogies to explain them.*
- ◆ *Set a time limit when providing a presentation; if there is not already a scheduled time frame (20 minutes is a good length).*
- ◆ *Prepare a 5-10 second description of Parents Anonymous programs (e.g., "Parents Anonymous groups provide a mutual support environment in which parents learn and practice positive parenting skills, and develop leadership abilities to help them become more successful parents.") Once you've developed a speech, give the same speech over and over again. Simply customize it to fit your audience.*

**Special thanks to Bob Rackleff,
Parents Anonymous National Parent Leadership Team Member.**



Media Relations Resource List

An Advocate's Guide to the Media

Children's Defense Fund
25 E Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20001
(202) 628-8787

How to Tell Your Story: Media Resource Guide

Foundation for American Communications
3800 Barham Blvd., Suite 409
Los Angeles, CA 90068
(213) 851-7372

Media How-To Notebook

Media Alliance
814 Missions Street, Suite 205
San Francisco, CA 94123
(415) 546-6334

Strategic Communications for Nonprofits

Benton Foundation
1634 I Street, NW, 12th Floor
Washington, DC 20006
(202) 638-5770

invited to contribute their volunteer time and other resources to support Parents Anonymous programs in their community.

- *Maintain a focus on the positive message to be delivered.* Sometimes, an audience member or even the interviewer will want to focus on a single controversial issue, such as the pros and cons of spanking, religious education for children, or welfare costs. An entire interview or public speaking opportunity can be lost debating these issues. Remember that at Parents Anonymous we are interested in helping parents make wise and healthy choices for themselves and their children. *Therefore, it is more important to emphasize the exciting success of parents attending Parents Anonymous programs and the hope these programs offer for other parents in need.* And in reality, it is unlikely any single discussion will change someone else's perspective, and these debates can be an unproductive use of your time.
- *Remember the Parents Anonymous story is one of hope, success, courage and strength.* That is one reason why Parents Anonymous speakers have been diligently sought out over the years. In providing public information, it is important to acknowledge the grim realities of child welfare

problems, but not without stressing that Parents Anonymous offers hope. You want to leave your audience with the assurance that individuals can successfully change their lives. Remind them it is a sign of strength to ask for help.

Getting the message out...

Working with the media and other public speaking venues is a two way street. Sometimes the media will initiate the contact. Other times the Parents Anonymous organization will initiate media and public speaking activities in order to inform the community about important issues and to reach out to parents who may benefit from Parents Anonymous programs. Press releases, press conferences, letters and calls to editors and public offers to provide speakers and training can all result in opportunities to tell the Parents Anonymous story to others. Several factors to consider in determining the best course of action are:

- *Choose the media that best fits your story.* Detailed information may be best served in print media; a dramatic visual opportunity may be better suited to television.
- *Analyze your targeted audience.* Who is your audience and what outlets reach them? Be sure to consider print and electronic media

targeted to specific cultural audiences, such as a Spanish-language radio station for outreach to Latino families.

- *What is the timeliness of the story?* Is it immediate, responding, for example, to a public policy

issue that calls for quick action? Or does your story have a shelf-life? Can you piggyback your story to breaking news? If it is a story about Parents Anonymous programs in general and the benefits that can be achieved when parents participate, is it one that could be

TIPS FOR MEDIA SAVVY:

- ◆ Prepare, prepare, prepare. Think through the message you want to communicate and the extent to which you are willing to share personal information.
- ◆ Define your key messages to be sure that, even in a limited time frame, you have the opportunity to say those things most important to you.
- ◆ Anticipate difficult questions and come prepared with responses that you are comfortable with, even if the response is that this is not an area you wish to discuss or it is one for which you have no answer at this time.
- ◆ Have a friend ask you impromptu questions before the interview to prepare yourself. Practice responding with your key points.
- ◆ Always assume anything you say to a representative of the media is "on the record." It is the job of any media representative to "flush out" a story. By being likable, friendly and interested in what you have to say, interviewers may create a false sense of security, causing you to reveal confidential information. Always remember that the reporter is your microphone to the world, and anything you say may end up in the public domain.
- ◆ Be aware that your story, or the headlines or promotional for it, may be portrayed in a more dramatic way than you intended. News organizations make a profit by producing stories that attract audiences—and advertisers—and it is often the sensational story that does this best.
- ◆ Speak within a framework that is comfortable to you. Members of the media are not experts in family and child issues, and may not always be sensitive to your concerns of confidentiality, privacy or how this situation applies to others.
- ◆ Share only the information that you are willing to have edited and interpreted by others. There is a great potential to lose control of your message as it is edited to fit space or time constraints of the news. Even the most supportive and helpful media representatives can make errors rushing to meet tight deadlines.
- ◆ Speak to what you specifically know. Don't feel you need to volunteer information just to fill in uncomfortable silences. This is a strategy interviewers often use to elicit comment that fits their story or is designed to elicit additional information. Along those same lines, do not feel you need to answer hypothetical questions some interviewers pose to elicit comments that fit their story or are designed to address another situation.
- ◆ If you don't know the answer to a question, then it is perfectly acceptable to say so or to refer it to someone else.

"I joined a Parents Anonymous group twelve years ago and now serve as the Chair of the Board of Directors of Parents Anonymous, Inc. One of my greatest pleasures is "giving back" some of the help I received. Recently, my entire family and I made a conscious decision to share our story in our local newspaper. We were so proud when many people who didn't even know us called to ask where they could find a Parents Anonymous group. I knew I had succeeded when strangers stopped me on the street to tell me that my honesty and openness inspired them to reach out for help."

— Freddie Gardner, Chair, Board of Directors, Parents Anonymous, Inc.

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CORPORATION and its
employees.

effective anytime.

- **Build relationships with key gatekeepers.** It is important for Parents Anonymous staff to build relationships with local media and with those who plan training and public speaking opportunities. For example, the editorial page editor at your local newspaper and the assignment editor at your local television or radio station will be valuable assets in getting the word out about Parents Anonymous. In addition, the public agency staff who plan training for front line workers and the Rotary Club member who plans the speakers' calendar for the year can also be your allies.

Parents who have the courage to share their expertise and life experiences are giving a valuable gift to others, and are helping to make their community a better place. Parents can speak with confidence because they are the greatest experts regarding their personal experience. Celebrate and respect their courage, care and concern for others. Respect parents' privacy and the need to maintain control over their own stories.

Parents Anonymous, Inc.

Founded in 1970, Parents Anonymous, Inc. is the oldest and largest national program dedicated to strengthening families and preventing child abuse through mutual support groups for parents and specialized programs for children.

Each year, more than 100,000 parents and children participate in Parents Anonymous groups all across America. In the mutually supportive environment of Parents Anonymous, parents can end their social isolation, share their frustrations about parenting, build self esteem and gain sound child-rearing skills. Specific programs for children encourage them to positively address their emotions, respect themselves and others, and learn positive social interaction skills. The support and commitment of almost 30,000 community volunteers helps ensure groups are ongoing and services are free of charge.

Parents Anonymous reaches out to all parents, whatever their problems are, with special groups for teen parents, grandparents, incarcerated parents, and for families of diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Parents Anonymous, Inc. provides consultation and training to community-based organizations, state and local child welfare agencies and youth-serving entities to prevent child abuse and curtail juvenile delinquency; promotes parent leadership; and assists parents and professionals with advocacy efforts that will generate better outcomes for parents and children.

INNOVATIONS

Strengthening Families All Across America

Spring 1996

Vol. I, No. 3

Late Breaking News

PA, Inc. has been invited to present a workshop at the Federal Conference on Strengthening the Role of Fathers in Families. The conference is being sponsored by the Office of the Vice President, as part of the National Performance Review, and the Department of Health and Human Services. It will be held on May 3, 1996 at the National Institute of Health in Bethesda, Maryland.

In addition to PA Inc.'s workshop on incarcerated fathers and their role in early child development, a PA father may participate in an interactive conversation between a panel of fathers and Vice President Al Gore. Secretaries Peña, Riley, Shalala, Perry and Reno also will be present.

April is Child Abuse Prevention Month

by Lisa Pion-Berlin, Ph.D.
National Executive Director

Parents Anonymous (PA) organizations throughout the country will devote the month of April to increasing the public's awareness of the problem of child abuse and neglect. With an emphasis on *prevention*, PA will address issues beyond mere awareness, urging people to stand up for what they believe and to take action.

Most of us are aware of the problem of child abuse on some level: we have read about a child's tragic death at the hands of a parent; observed an unhappy child in our neighborhood, alone and unsupervised; heard a friend recount a personal experience with sexual abuse as a child; or may have felt the frustration and rage that makes parents lash out at their children. But some of us still may not be aware of the magnitude, scope and complex nature of the problem.

PA's job is to remind communities, cities, state officials and Congress that the annual number of abused or neglected children has more than doubled in the last decade, to 2.9 million from 1.4 million. To ask why, when the number of children seriously injured by abuse has *quadrupled* in that time, plans are underway to cut back or eliminate altogether many services critically needed to protect these children. And to urge Congress that now, more than ever, we need to preserve the protections put in place by the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act of 1974 by maintaining the federal government's leadership role, not by cutting and consolidating funding into block grants which eliminate an emphasis on vital community-



Lisa Pion-Berlin, Ph.D.

based prevention efforts.

Once we have challenged people to go beyond "awareness" of the issue, and have helped educate them so they understand the complex dimensions of the problem of child maltreatment, we must channel their concerns into action that will result in the *prevention* of child abuse and neglect. *Prevention* needs to be the focus of our efforts with professionals and the community at large. Our best chance for *prevention* is to create an environment in which parents can break through the barriers of shame and blame, and reach out to ask for help early on, before or as soon as they realize they have a problem.

Prevention through PA

PA has 26 years of experience in effectively preventing child abuse and neglect. Since 1970, more than 500,000 families and 1.5 million children have learned how to resolve conflicts, support each other and build on their strengths through PA. By teaming parents and professionals together, more than 2,000 mutual support groups across the country offer par-

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CELEBRATING 25 YEARS OF
STRENGTHENING FAMILIES
ALL ACROSS AMERICA



PARENTS
Anonymous

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PION-BERLIN: CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH *continued from page 1*

ents a non-punitive environment in which they can end their social isolation, share their frustrations about parenting, build self esteem and gain sound child-rearing skills. PA's specialized programs for children teach them how to positively address their emotions, respect themselves and others, and take responsibility for their own actions, thereby breaking the intergenerational cycle of abuse and neglect.

Because these PA groups are neighborhood-based and culturally sensitive to the communities they serve, concerned volunteers are given a way to make a difference for themselves, their communities and their country. This community-based model extends beyond the traditional social and mental health service delivery system. It represents the collaborative efforts of social service, legal, health, mental health and education professionals; concerned members of civic, religious and business organizations, as well as resilient parents and families successfully coping with stressors.

A system on overload

High profile child deaths over the past year have raised serious questions about the efficacy of the child protection system in preventing child deaths. In a March 17, 1996, *New York Times* article by Robert Pear entitled "Many States Fail to Meet Mandates on Child Welfare," the author lists 21 states whose child welfare programs are operating under court orders or consent decrees because they failed to take proper care of children who had been abused or neglected.

At the state level, many child welfare systems are struggling to address the ever increasing demand for effective prevention and treatment of child abuse and neglect. Protective service workers are so swamped, given the high number of reports and caseloads, they often can't keep up with meeting the needs of children already identified as abused and ne-

glected. Oftentimes states themselves have difficulty providing the necessary services needed to keep families together or to reunite them. It should be no surprise, then, that abuse and neglect are the leading cause of death for children under 4 years old.

Time to act

Now, when we so desperately need to support *prevention* efforts, Congress—specifically, the House of Representatives—has chosen to reshape the federal government's responsibility to protect these children by repealing the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA). Even though the Senate has passed a reauthorization bill for CAPTA, no action has been taken by the House to pass this vital bill and send it on to the President to be signed into law.

Since 1974, CAPTA has emphasized *prevention* and set forth some measure of accountability from states to ensure child safety. Without the federal government's role in establishing and maintaining standards for child protection, and specific federal mandates and supports for the prevention of child abuse and neglect, *prevention* may become a luxury few states can afford.

The child protection system was designed to respond to the problem of child abuse and neglect *after* the fact—not to *prevent* it. With reductions in the funding available for child welfare investigation and placement services, state funds previously earmarked for prevention are likely to be spent covering excessive caseloads, investigating an escalating number of reports, and responding to the ever-increasing costs of foster care. We appeal to Congress to focus on the *prevention* of child abuse and neglect by committing federal dollars to effective community-based *prevention* programs—programs on a national basis, like PA.

Child Abuse Prevention Month helps remind us of the problem we face in our *continued on page 12*

Freddie Mac Foundation builds on success of the PA organization

PA, Inc. is pleased to announce a National Organizational Capacity-Building Project, funded in part through a grant from the Freddie Mac Foundation, to further enhance the organizational and programmatic aspects of PA affiliates. Building on the strengths of PA's National Network, PA, Inc. will function as a clearinghouse for the analysis, synthesis and transfer of strategies addressing key organizational issues to provide even more effective services to families. Significant outcomes will include new best practices program standards, public awareness tools, and greater opportunities for training staff and volunteers throughout the National Network.

"We are grateful for the Freddie Mac Foundation's commitment to replicating effective child abuse prevention programs," said Lisa Pion-Berlin, Ph.D., National Executive Director of PA, Inc. "The Foundation's goals parallel our commitment to providing training, technical assistance and educational materials to enhance our affiliates' capacity to promote, develop, expand and maintain neighborhood-based, mutual-support PA programs."

PA, Inc. has created a National Capacity-Building Advisory Council, composed of leaders from within the Network, to assist in identifying key issues, strengths and needs of the National Network. Council members are Maureen Blaha, Illinois; Frank Blanton, Maryland; Angela Fogle, Pennsylvania; Suzann Eisenberg Murray, Minnesota; Maureen Rozee, Oregon; and Karen Schrader, Virginia.

"Each week, PA helps more than 15,000 parents effectively address the stresses of raising a family and strengthen their relationships with their children," said Terri Lee Freeman, V.P./Executive Director of the Foundation. "We are pleased to be a partner in PA's efforts to prevent child abuse and neglect all across America."

A page from our history

Jolly paved way for better understanding and treatment of child abuse and neglect

Editor's note: Roland Summit, M.D., is Head Physician of the Community Consultation Service of the Department of Psychiatry, Harbor-UCLA Medical Center, Torrance. As the first board member of Parents Anonymous Inc., he credits Jolly K. and other Parents Anonymous parents with drawing him into the role of a pioneer in the professional recognition, treatment and prevention of child sexual abuse. The first of what became a succession of Dr. Summit's influential writings on this topic appeared in the original Parents Anonymous Chairperson/Sponsor Manual. His Child Sexual Abuse Accommodation Syndrome, first published in 1980, is considered fundamental to the understanding of child victimization. Dr. Summit is active as a consultant to agencies, and as a resource to government, courts and the media. He is the recipient of career achievement awards from Parents Anonymous and the California Professional Society on the Abuse of Children (CAPSAC), the California Governor's Pioneer Award and the Brandt F. Steele Award for outstanding contributions in the field of child abuse. Today, he remains a member emeritus of the Parents Anonymous National Board of Directors and a lifelong supporter of PA.

The day that changed the direction of his career

Dr. Summit vividly remembers the first time he met Jolly K. He was working as a "community psychiatrist" at Harbor UCLA (then called Harbor General Hospital). The position represented a new concept in "preventive psychiatry"—working closely with the community to prevent conflicts and help local agencies better address concerns about mental illness.

"I became acquainted with various self-help programs," Dr. Summit said, "and during consultations with these programs, I discovered something I had never learned in my psychiatric residency: most people don't solve their biggest problems by going to a psychiatrist. They have their own networks and resources, and their own idiosyncratic style of coping with stress. I developed a new respect and admiration for people's intrinsic problem-



Roland Summit, M.D.

solving skills. So self-help programs made a lot of sense to me."

Perhaps that's what prompted a newspaper reporter who knew Dr. Summit and Jolly K. to suggest he might be a potential member for the Parents Anonymous board Jolly was creating. Jolly arranged to visit Dr. Summit, along with another PA parent, to talk about PA. That was October 29, 1970.

"Jolly was a tremendously magnetic and galvanizing individual," Dr. Summit said. "She passionately believed in PA as a way to understand and effectively deal with child abuse. Her energy, enthusiasm and hope were contagious."

Dr. Summit responded to Jolly's willingness to expose her fears and share her struggles. He recognized in PA's unique concept of parents helping parents in partnership with a professional facilitator the same dynamics he was observing in his position as community psychiatrist. PA was recreating a support network similar to the ones resilient families had come to rely on. Instead of the traditional legal response of tearing families apart by removing children from abusive homes, Jolly had found an effective way to *prevent* child abuse and *strengthen* families.

As early as 1962, C. Henry Kempe, a pediatrician at the University of Colorado Medical School, had identified and coined the phrase "The Battered Child Syndrome." Yet the response to child abuse and neglect in 1970 remained more a legal issue than a social one, with an emphasis on punishment rather than prevention and treatment.

"When I look back at various turning points in my life—being born was one of them, and selecting medicine may have been another—meeting Jolly was the turning point in my professional life," Dr. Summit said. "She opened the door to the realities of child abuse and neglect, dispelling all my preconceived assumptions about abusers and victims of abuse."

"I had been doing consultations with protective service groups, and even had been involved in consultations about child abuse, but I was ignorant of anything but the most superficial kinds of stereotypes," admits Dr. Summit. "Jolly explained things to me that afternoon in a way that made sense of this human real-

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National Network News:

Getting the word out about child abuse prevention

April showers may bring May flowers, but for the Parents Anonymous Network, April is a time to remind communities all across America that it's also Child Abuse Prevention Month. Among the events planned for April, many PA affiliates include Blue Ribbon campaigns, a tradition since 1989 (see below). In addition, PA, Inc., the national organization and our PA affiliates in the following states and regions have many other activities planned. Here are some of the highlights:

Parents Anonymous, Inc.

PA, Inc. works throughout the year to increase national awareness about child abuse and neglect, and

the need for an effective prevention program. In April, a variety of media activities will bring the PA message to the public.

◆ "Southland Today," a half-hour community affairs program on KDOC-TV (channel 56) in Orange County, California, will broadcast a special show on PA. Two parents from the Southern California area will share their personal stories about their struggles with child abuse, and how they were helped by Parents Anonymous.

"These parents were extremely courageous coming forward the way they did to tell their stories," said Lisa Pion-Berlin, National Ex-

ecutive Director, PA, Inc. "They have learned that asking for help is a sign of strength, and in sharing how they overcame obstacles to provide nurturing homes for their children, they offer hope to other mothers and fathers struggling to be better parents. We are very grateful for their contribution."

◆ *The Los Angeles Times* will publish two articles on PA based on interviews with Dr. Pion-Berlin, Program Associate Juanita Chávez, and a PA parent. One article focuses on the PA organization, while the other describes the family's struggle with the stresses of parenting. According to the father, "The last eight months with PA have made a big change in all our lives."

◆ In light of February's successful Internet chat on "Parenting On-Line" (see "News in brief" on page 10), *Parenting Magazine* will include PA, Inc. in their resources directory for America On-Line, beginning in April. The listing will carry a brief description about the Parents Anonymous program, along with PA, Inc.'s telephone number for information and referrals. Also in April, PA, Inc. will participate in another "Parenting On-Line" hour to answer parents' questions via the Internet.

◆ A complete list of Parents Anonymous affiliates will be mailed to thousands of individuals and organizations across the nation interested in the prevention of child abuse and neglect, as part of NCCAN's National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect Information packet.

◆ PA, Inc. will host a national teleconference training, April 17, 1996, on "Dynamic Strategies for Promoting Parent Leadership," featuring two exciting speakers, Linda

Editor's note: Many PA affiliates conduct Blue Ribbon Campaigns in April during Child Abuse Prevention Month. Here's how the tradition began.

Blue Ribbon Campaign shows how one person can make a difference

In the spring of 1989, Bonnie Finney took a stand against child abuse in Norfolk, Virginia. She tied a symbolic blue ribbon to the antenna of her van to remind her community of the hidden bruises and scars that abused and neglected children carry. It also was a symbol of her personal battle against child abuse. Bonnie's grandson, Michael Wayne "Bubba" Dickenson, was a tragic victim of child abuse—one of thirty-four Virginia children who died in 1989.

"The blue ribbon serves as a constant reminder that we must fight to protect our most precious gift of all—our children," Bonnie said. "Please wear a blue ribbon. Put one on your car. Give one to your friends. Tell them what it means. You may save a child's life."

The spirit of her blue ribbon grew, and it inspired a statewide, community-based effort to prevent and stop child abuse in every town, every community, every city and county. In 1989, thousands of Virginians tied blue ribbons to their cars and wore blue ribbons on their clothes to alert others to the increase in the numbers of child abuse incidents and deaths in Virginia. Today, the Blue Ribbon Campaign has stretched across America, reminding us to protect our country's most precious asset—our children.

McDaniels, M.S.W., State Program Coordinator of Parents Anonymous of Washington, and Emily Matt Salois, M.S.W., A.C.S.W., Director of the Native American Family Empowerment Project for the Montana Council for Families.

Arizona

In a statewide blue ribbon campaign, PA of Arizona will distribute 11,000 blue ribbons. The 8 inch ribbon strip carries the message, "Parents Anonymous: I proudly wear this blue ribbon as a symbol of my determination to work towards a brighter future for all children." Various media also will be used to promote Child Abuse Prevention Month, from mayoral proclamations and a special emphasis in the affiliate's newsletter, to PSAs on the radio. PA of Arizona also will have a message each night for a week during the Channel 10 evening news in Phoenix. The spot will show clips of PA groups and volunteers answering phone calls to Family Lifeline, PA's crisis hotline in Phoenix.

Colorado Springs, Colorado

A display on PA at the El Paso County Health Department will highlight various aspects of PA services, such as group meetings and the Nurturing Program for children. County Commissioners and the mayor of Colorado Springs will proclaim the week of April 15 as Child Abuse Prevention Week, and PA will distribute blue ribbons along with its newsletter, *Families Matter*.

This Colorado PA affiliate also will participate in a Doll Drop campaign sponsored by the Pikes Peak Movement, a coalition of businesses and individuals dedicated to bringing public awareness to children's issues. In the Doll Drop campaign, placards

around the necks of 2-foot-high cardboard dolls carry stories about real children (first names only) with real-life issues—abuse or neglect problems, poor health, special needs, etc. On the backs of the placards are suggestions about what people can do to help: donate money, become a volunteer, be an advocate, get involved



PA's Children's Program in Wenatchie, Washington

with children's issues. The dolls will be displayed at local businesses, schools, churches and the state legislature.

Denver, Colorado

The PA affiliate will distribute blue ribbons to the Board of Directors, volunteers and parents who participate in PA support groups, as well as to all media contacts asking them to help educate the public on the significance of Child Abuse Prevention Month. In addition, a local high school will distribute blue ribbons attached to a bookmark explaining the origin of the campaign.

Delaware

PA of Delaware will hold a press conference to honor Senator Joseph Biden for his leadership and support of programs that prevent child abuse and neglect. A longtime friend of children and families throughout the country, Senator Biden was instrumental most recently in the passage of a bill providing aid for victims of crime. For Legislative Action Day, Delaware also will give a presentation on child abuse and the Parents Anonymous program, and ask for a resolution from the General Assembly to support the prevention of child abuse and neglect.

PA of Delaware will conduct a run/walk fund raiser, and promote the "Shaken Baby Syndrome" PSA produced by the International Order of Foresters and distributed by PA, Inc. In addition, volunteers and staff members will ask shoppers at the Market Street Mall to "Be a Life Saver" as they distribute information on child abuse along with packs of LifeSavers candy.

Florida

PA's Florida affiliate will send 1,000 packets of public awareness materials to professionals, agencies and civic groups to reproduce and distribute locally. Also this year, 2,500 copies of a specially designed resource packet will be sent to public schools throughout the state. Both packets contain information on child abuse, prevention and positive parenting. This major annual outreach effort educates thousands of Florida's parents and professionals on how they can prevent child abuse and neglect.

Stephanie Meincke, President of the Florida affiliate, will be addressing attendees at a Regional Child Abuse Prevention Recognition Lun-

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NETWORK ACTIVITIES *continued from page 5*

cheon. In addition to the activities of the state organization, many local PA groups have planned to distribute materials and provide information to parents at community fairs and forums.

Georgia

PA's Georgia affiliate's collaborative efforts during April will include public awareness campaigns with Nabisco/Planters, Winn-Dixie's Georgia stores, Border Books' three metropolitan-Atlanta stores and the Atlanta Journal/Constitution. Scarlett's of Atlanta Inc., an organization for single professional women (whose namesake is Scarlett O'Hara), will host a "Sneaker Ball" (ball gowns worn with sneakers) to benefit abused children in Atlanta.

Sports events will include the first statewide *Trot for Tots* 5K race and one-mile walk, as well as the 4th annual Glavine's All-American Field of Dreams golf and tennis tournaments.

Illinois

PA of Illinois is planning a major Blue Bow campaign in collaboration with the prestigious Chicago Children's Museum. During the month of April, the museum will be decorated with blue bows, and PA will be providing information on the program, holding a training session for volunteers, distributing flyers with positive parenting tips, and giving magnets with PA's phone number to all parents visiting the museum.

PA of Illinois also will hold a press conference explaining how parents, professionals and concerned citizens can "Be Part of the Solution" in the campaign to prevent child abuse and neglect.

Maine

PA of Maine is involving restaurant patrons and coffee-drinkers across the state in their "Share the warmth" campaign. Proceeds from the first 2000 cups of coffee sold by each par-



PSAs on the prevention of child abuse and neglect punctuate PA of Georgia's on-air auction conducted by Tom Glavin and local sportscaster, Fred Kahlil. Here the pair are auctioning off a football autographed by Joe Montana.

ticipating restaurant over a four-day period in April will go toward the prevention of child abuse and neglect. Customers of a statewide chain of Shop 'n Save markets also are being offered a chance to participate in this worthy cause by donating the proceeds from their bottle returns.

Minnesota

PA of Minnesota will distribute 40,000 blue ribbons through churches, corporations, youth groups and libraries, for people to wear or tie on their automobile antennas. In addition, the affiliate is encouraging groups to distribute blue ribbons statewide through booths at shopping malls. At press time, PA of Minnesota was negotiating with a Twin Cities TV station to highlight the issue of child abuse and neglect during the month of April by airing a weekly series of stories on family strengthening.

Albuquerque, New Mexico

Presentations on the PA program will be made at local agencies and schools in Albuquerque. Parents will help distribute materials on parenting

tips to local businesses for their customers. Everyone connected with the campaign will tie blue ribbons on their automobile antennas.

Ohio

The PA affiliate in Columbus, Ohio will conduct an essay contest for eighth graders on "If I were a parent, what would I do to make my children feel good about themselves." The grand prize winner will be honored in a Proclamation signed by members of the House of Representatives and will receive a \$100 savings bond. In addition, the winning essay will be read on a local television news station.

PA of Columbus also is partnering with Childrens Hospital in a "Child Watch" tour. Various community decision makers (a State Representative, a judge, a city commissioner, school board representatives) will tour services for children and families. At a mock PA group meeting, tour members will experience, firsthand, what it's like to attend a Parents Anonymous group. In addition, the affiliate will conduct Child Abuse and Neglect Recognition Training for more than 200 early education teachers.

A PAGE FROM OUR HISTORY: ROLAND SUMMIT *continued from page 3*

ity. She taught me about the dynamics of abuse, about her own abusive upbringing, and how these learned behaviors had been repeated by herself, as a parent.

"Jolly had been sexually abused as a child and lived most of her life degrading herself as a female. When she became a mother, she could not stop herself from degrading and abusing one of her two daughters, even though she knew it was undeserved."

Early on, Dr. Summit and Jolly disagreed on how PA should address the issue of sexual abuse. "Sexual abuse had been Jolly's prime source of pain as a child, and she argued that it should be part of the structure and treatment agenda of Parents Anonymous," Dr. Summit recalled. "As 'the psychiatrist,' I insisted that it didn't belong in the PA lexicon. I had heard only one lecture on sexual deviations in three years of psychiatric residency, but I had the audacity to face off against Jolly who had lived through 15 years of sexual abuse. I believed the choice to have sex with a child was a character disorder, a life-long aberration that wasn't going to change and couldn't be approached in a superficial way like putting people together in a self-help group.

"I probably also sensed that sexual abuse was too emotionally troubling to be included in an otherwise positive agenda of helping parents understand their feelings and develop more positive relationships with their children."

But many of Dr. Summit's assumptions about parents with abuse problems were challenged by what he learned from Jolly and other PA parents—including his convictions about sexual abuse. He came to realize that PA could not ignore the issue of sexual abuse. Parents were struggling to make sustainable changes in their lives and were finding the strength

through mutual support. In fact, PA groups could best help those parents who were victimized themselves by providing a supportive environment in which to deal with this aspect of their childhood, as well as refer them to other, more specialized services.

PA provided a unique learning experience for Dr. Summit. He was seeking parents out to learn from them, treating them as teachers and experts. He had found a new way of listening to people, and respected what they had to say.

"PA gave me the chance to get close in a truly trusting relationship with parents who could share with me things they were reluctant to tell anyone else for fear of losing their children, shaming themselves or being labeled as pathological," Dr. Summit said. "I learned early on not to think in diagnostic and psychopathological terms in dealing with these social, human, and terribly personal problems. It was not only through Jolly, but also through several other prominent PA leaders who had the grace to share their very personal abuse stories and insights with me, that I began to fully understand the impact and prevalence of abuse of children."

The PA model is a maverick

"The essence of what goes on in a PA group is that it is totally different from rigidly constructed treatment programs—it's a maverick," Dr. Summit said. "It's genuine and spontaneous, and it makes itself real through the respect it gives to those parents seeking help. In every sense, the parents rule, from presenting the agenda to working together to come up with their own collective and individual solutions.

"PA recognizes the fact that parents who attend groups may suffer from a lack of self-love, self-caring and self-esteem. When you abuse your own child—especially in the

case of a woman—you face the defeat of everything the stereotype says you should be as a mother. So when you lose control and take your frustrations out on your child, you hate yourself even more. You feel estranged and despised—even by the mental health, child welfare and other professionals you go to for help.

"PA provides an entirely different arena of empathy and understanding. People respond to being understood. They can feel the caring at PA groups, and begin to trust again. And they recognize that change isn't going to happen in a day."

In 1973, when PA put together the first national conference on child abuse engaging parents as part of the *solution*, people came to Long Beach, California, from all over the country. This was before there was a federal law or the establishment of the National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect. What made PA so distinctive *then* was its positive, constructive messages. The same is true today. PA offers hope.

Over PA's 26-year history, thousands of human service professionals and community volunteers have followed in Dr. Summit's footsteps—transforming their beliefs, perspectives and direct practice methods of strengthening families by being more responsive and mutually supporting to parents. They regard their involvement with PA to be among their most challenging experiences, and their rewards have been to share in the success of hundreds of thousands of parents overcoming significant obstacles to create safe, strong, caring environments for themselves and their children.

"When it comes to preventing child abuse and neglect," Dr. Summit concluded, "Parents Anonymous continues to be the most effective and gratifying resource ever developed for parents at risk."

Juvenile Justice Initiative

Latino/Hispanic families find “el calor de la familia” through Parents Anonymous

Raising a family is a hard job—but being a parent in a foreign country, removed from family and close friends, often separated by language and culture, can sometimes seem an impossible task. This is the challenge faced by many immigrant parents who have brought their families to the United States. Removed from a support system that is part of their culture, many parents feel socially isolated and yearn for “el calor de la familia”—the warmth of the family.

That’s what PA of Washington State is experiencing in its Hispanic/Latino population. Without their former family-support systems, many Spanish-speaking families have a difficult time dealing with everyday parenting situations. Language barriers may inhibit their ability to provide for their families, and economic factors may force them to live in at-risk neighborhoods. Distinct cultural differences may further isolate them. In times of crises, many believe they have nowhere to turn, and feelings of helplessness and rage arise. In this climate, families face increased risks of child maltreatment.

This scenario is typical for many immigrant families—whatever the nationality—and because abuse can significantly contribute to acts of aggression and delinquent behavior by some children, early intervention is vital.

Recognizing that strong families and healthy communities are the greatest deterrents to juvenile delinquency, PA, Inc. approached the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), U. S. Department of Justice, with a plan that would contribute to juvenile delinquency prevention efforts by

strengthening families in high-risk communities. Under this National Initiative, PA has been developing groups for Native Americans, African Americans, Cubans, Haitians, Mexican Americans, Vietnamese and South-east Asian immigrant populations from Florida to Washington State. Also, PA, Inc. has provided national trainings, technical assistance and resource materials, and hosted a special Task Force to help advance the objectives of this Initiative.

Building on the strengths of several

“Yo necesitaba un lugar a donde acudir, para poder salir de la casa y estar con otros adultos ... para estar con otros padres de familia que me comprendieran sin sentirse superiores.” — A PA parent

“I needed a place where I could seek help, to be able to go out of the house and be with other parents who would understand me, without feeling superior.”

affiliates in the National Network that had expressed a commitment to creating culturally responsive PA programs, PA, Inc. has been collecting and analyzing data regarding best practices, and has gained valuable expertise in planning and implementing programs that strengthen minority families in both urban and rural at-risk communities.

PA of Washington State is one of eleven PA affiliates participating in this National Initiative. The overall Hispanic/Latino population in Washington State has increased 70 percent in the past 10 years and includes residents from Mexico, Ecuador, San Salvador, Nicaragua, Guatemala and Colombia. Some areas of Washington have experienced even greater increases. Over the same time period, for example, Snohomish County (North Everett and Monroe) had a 95 percent increase in its Hispanic/Latino population.

In response to this significant change in demographics, one out of five PA groups in Washington serves Spanish-speaking parents. More than 500 Spanish-speaking parents and children attend the groups, and PA of Washington plans to add another three support groups this year.

The first phase of an independent evaluation, funded by the Stuart Foundations, shows Washington’s Hispanic/Latino PA program is successfully diminishing social isolation among parents, providing peer support, improving parenting skills, minimizing marital discord and domestic violence, and preventing incidences of child abuse and neglect in the participating families.

“Thanks to the support of organizations such as Deaconess Children’s Services, the King County Children &

Family Commission, and the Stuart Foundations, we’ve been able to make a difference for Latino families settling in Washington,” said Sylvia Meyer, Executive Director, PA of Washington.

“We also have benefited from the support and counsel provided by Parents Anonymous, Inc., and its National Initiative for strengthening families of color in high-risk neighborhoods. Their program development ideas, Spanish language literature and effective strategies for recruiting families have been invaluable.”

“El calor de la familia”

Providing a sense of extended family through group participation and dedicated facilitators is an essential element in any PA program—and it is especially critical in securing the trust and participation of minority families in high-risk neighborhoods. For Washington’s Hispanic/

Latino communities, the values emphasized in the PA programs are easy to accept because they hold a similar importance in the Latin culture. For example, the PA program emphasizes relying on one another (*mutualista*); respecting each individual's dignity and strength (*respeto*); maintaining a sense of worthiness (*dignidad*); and personal and cultural pride (*orgullo*).

These mutual values help to open doors in communities often difficult to reach. Parents feel comfortable coming to meetings and find having another parent to talk to one of the most helpful aspects of the program. They begin interacting positively with peers, supporting each other, encouraging each other, even alternating child-care services for one another. The groups provide tangible assistance for parents. They learn about community resources and how to use them, what bus routes to take for health and human services, and translation assistance if a parent speaks only Spanish. Sometimes groups will provide food, furniture, shelter and transportation for parents in need.

As members of the communities they serve, Spanish-speaking, PA professional group facilitators (most of whom are immigrants themselves) provide a critical and empathetic link to local community agencies, programs and resources beyond group meetings. They help parents complete applications, respond to letters received from human service agencies, or study for driving tests. These life skills are critical in meeting family needs. Facilitators may encourage parents to use the Women, Infants and Children Program or attend English as a Second Language classes. They may even accompany parents to health clinics.

In one case, for example, the unbiased advocacy and cultural familiarity of a native, Spanish-speaking facilitator prevented a misunderstanding that could have resulted in the tragic

separation of a baby from his mother. The baby had been reported to Child Protective Services (CPS) because of what appeared to be extensive bruises on his neck. Despite the mother's insistence that she never hits her child, CPS threatened to remove the baby from the mother's custody. The mother was referred to PA. The PA facilitator believed the mother's claims were sincere and ar-

Parents Anonymous group. After several sessions, he acknowledged, "What I did to my wife and kids was wrong, and I am scared of losing them." He now uses more positive communication instead of physical violence, is reunited with his wife and children, and continues to attend the group. Currently, he is providing support to another PA father in a similar situation.

"Ser padre es un trabajo difícil. Hay otros padres que se sienten igual que usted, quienes entienden lo difícil que es. Ellos están compartiendo sus historias, sus temores y sus esperanzas. Y sus vidas están cambiando." --- A PA parent

"Being a parent is a difficult job. There are other parents who feel the same as you, who understand just how difficult it is. They share their experiences, their fears, and their hopes. And their lives are changing."

ranged for the baby to be seen by doctors at Children's Hospital. The doctor's examination revealed that the marks were not bruises, but a massive and severe reaction to mango juice that had dribbled down the baby's neck. As a result of PA's efforts, all charges against the mother were dropped.

The effectiveness of the PA program in preventing real abuse and neglect has been just as dramatic. Parents who had previously used physical discipline with their children are learning alternatives to spanking, such as limit setting, time outs and loss of privileges. Many parents report deeper trust and better interaction with their children by giving them positive encouragement, increased eye contact, immediate feedback and positive role modeling. Also, parents are identifying what makes them upset, what to do when they are upset, and constructive ways to cope with stress.

PA groups also help reduce marital discord and domestic violence. In one family, for example, the father was abusive to the mother after his drinking episodes. As a result of charges brought against him, he was ordered by family court to attend a

The evaluation of PA of Washington's program revealed an even more viable "hard" outcome measure. In tracking 20 families either referred to PA by CPS or the judicial system, or identified as at-risk by school, medical, welfare, or domestic violence agencies, research confirmed no new referrals of abuse, neglect, or domestic violence for any of the families. In fact, in two cases, children were returned home from foster care as a result of parents' attendance at the support groups.

The Washington State program is an excellent example of the many sites throughout the country where parents (of all nationalities) living in high-risk communities are finding "el calor de la familia"—the warmth of the family—in Parents Anonymous groups. Through PA's mutual support model of encouragement and guidance, parents are finding ways to prevent violence and abuse, and are creating nurturing homes for themselves and their children.

As one Washington PA parent put it, "El mundo sería diferente si cada hogar tuviera respeto, amor y paz." *"The world would be a different place if homes were filled with love, respect, and peace."*

Training to focus on Juvenile Justice and Parent Leadership

Parents Anonymous, Inc. will hold two regional conferences focusing on promoting parent leadership and working with families of color in high-risk communities to enhance the successful outcomes of PA services to families and their children.

High-risk neighborhoods are not conducive to raising children when people are enveloped by rampant violence, extreme economic hardships, excessive hunger, poor health, inadequate housing, family violence and chronic unemployment. For parents, these factors lead to a hopelessness, hostility and despair that may result in abuse and neglect of their children. Moreover, evidence has shown a strong association between child maltreatment and juvenile delinquency. Child abuse can significantly contribute to acts of aggression and engagement in delinquent behaviors by some youth, and adolescents who exhibit antisocial behavior can be targets of abuse from their parents.

Conference participants will learn about program models used successfully throughout the PA National Network to strengthen families and prevent juvenile delinquency. Training will focus on community assessment and readiness to implement effective parent leadership strategies. Professionals and volunteers will share their experiences with successful program implementation, outreach and recruitment strategies for families of color who reside in high-risk communities.

These conferences also will focus on the valuable contributions PA parents can make when they participate in the planning, implementation and evaluation of local programs. Members of the National Parent Leadership Team will share their experiences, and professionals and volunteers will learn how to identify, recruit and

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News in brief:

PA, Inc. goes on-line to discuss parenting concerns

PA, Inc., in collaboration with *Parenting Magazine*, went on-line in February with parents across the country to discuss ways to deal with stress. "Parenting On-Line," an hour-long Internet chat line, presented "Keeping Your Cool When Things Get Hot With Your Kids," a follow-up to an article on "Parental Meltdown" which appeared in February's *Parenting Magazine* and featured PA.

Teresa Rafael, National Director of Programs for PA, Inc. shared important information regarding Parents Anonymous and provided strategies for parents to use in their daily lives to reduce stress and become more effective in achieving their goals with their children.

The landmark event provided an opportunity to apply the principles of Parents Anonymous in an entirely new setting—using computer technology to address the common concerns faced by parents across the country. The interactive on-line communication network offers the same anonymity and mutual support experienced through group meetings, while enabling parents to focus on their own needs in a medium they feel comfortable using. It also offers the convenience of accessibility at odd hours, without the need for child care or transportation. Another "Parenting On-Line" chat was held on April 15, 1996.

NBC's "Real Life" spotlights PA

One of the first segments to debut on NBC's new television program, "Real Life," featured the reunion of a PA mother and daughter who were trying to heal family relationships that had been destroyed by child abuse. Jackie had lost custody of her children when physical discipline went too far.

"You don't get an owner's manual when you bring a baby home from the hospital," Jackie said. "So what do you do? You do what your parents did."

Jackie credits Parents Anonymous for turning her life around, helping her learn ways to be a more nurturing parent and begin the healing process for her and her children.

At the end of the segment, Real Life displayed the number for the national organization of Parents Anonymous. At PA, Inc., telephone lines were flooded with people looking for Parents Anonymous groups in their neighborhoods, and hundreds of calls were referred to Network affiliates.

"Real Life" did not sensationalize the issue of child abuse and neglect, but rather focused on PA's positive outcomes for parents seeking a better life for their families. From the number of calls PA, Inc. received, parents across the country were grateful for this message of hope.

PA parent speaks at major national conference

As part of PA's commitment to educating professionals on successful parent leadership strategies, Teresa Rafael, PA, Inc. National Director of Programs, co-presenting with National Parent Leadership Team member Susan George, will conduct a workshop at the Family Resource Coalition National Conference on parent leadership. The conference, to be held in Chicago, May 1-4, 1996, draws more than a thousand professionals from child welfare, education, family support, health care and other systems that

News in brief: continued

support and strengthen families. Because PA, Inc. is the recognized expert in parent leadership, the Parents Anonymous presentation will be an important component of the conference. The workshop will provide a unique training experience to professionals searching for methods to achieve positive outcomes for families. Ms. Rafael will discuss the valuable perspective parents, as consumers, bring to effective system reform activities, and Ms. George will relate her personal experiences with parent leadership.

PA, Inc. endorses Stand For Children Day

Parents Anonymous, Inc., in collaboration with numerous national organizations, wholeheartedly endorses Stand For Children Day, June 1, 1996, as a celebration of children and a national commitment to improve the quality of life for children and their families. This special day of recognition will culminate in a gathering at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. as parents, teachers, health and social service professionals, religious and civic leaders gather to remind every candidate and officeholder in our country's Capitol that their help is needed by families struggling to raise safe, healthy, and educated children.

PA, Inc. featured at NCCAN Conference

Lisa Pion-Berlin, Ph. D., National Executive Director of PA, Inc., will be a featured speaker at the Eleventh National Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect, which will be held September 16-21, 1996, in Washington, D.C. The conference theme is "Weaving a National Commitment: New Challenges and Strategies for Protecting Children." During a workshop, Dr. Pion-Berlin will discuss the critical need for parental involvement and leadership in planning, implementing and evaluating child welfare services for families.

"We are faced with the realization that our child welfare systems are in need of reform to allow them to more effectively meet the goals for which they were designed," Dr. Pion-Berlin said. "The active involvement of parents who have been consumers in these systems will make planning and reform efforts more responsive to the real and critical needs facing families and communities today, and will lead to better outcomes for children."

During PA, Inc.'s workshop, "Parent Consumers as Agents of Change: Partnerships in Shaping New Directions in Child Welfare," Teresa Rafael and several members of the National Parent Leadership Team will provide concrete examples of the valuable roles parents can play in community planning and system reform efforts. Professionals will gain expertise in defining these roles in their local activities, in recruiting parents and in negotiating a shared-leadership model of interaction with consumers.

In addition, PA, Inc. will host a PA caucus and provide opportunities for advocates to inform and educate their congressional representatives and senators on Capitol Hill on the importance of reauthorizing CAPTA and the Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention Act. These vital pieces of legislation maintain the federal government's role and responsibility in the protection of children and the prevention of juvenile delinquency.

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PION-BERLIN: *continued from page 2*

country. Our goals now must be to take action, become involved, understand the issues, demonstrate compassion and support effective programs. People *can* make a difference—either formally or informally. Listen to a co-worker's problems, offer to babysit for a new parent, become a PA facilitator or hotline volunteer, join the board of a community-based prevention organization, advocate for children's issues, or help raise dollars to sustain needed support groups for parents and their children.

There is hope for families who want to provide safe and caring homes for their children. Child abuse prevention does not begin and end in April. The protection of children is not the sole responsibility of the public child welfare system. It is up to each one of us—federal, state and local governments, communities, concerned citizens, you and I—to accept responsibility for the well-being of our nation's children. And the time to act is now.

TRAINING: *continued from page 10*

support parent leadership roles in the group and in communities across their state. Parents will learn how to be even more successful group leaders, improve public speaking skills and become advocates for issues which affect families and children.

The first conference, "Community Partnerships to Strengthen Families," will be held May 31–June 1, 1996, in Phoenix, in collaboration with PA of Arizona. A second conference will be held June 17–19, 1996, in Atlanta, in conjunction with the Georgia PA affiliate. At both conferences, PA, Inc. will conduct workshops on issues of serving families of color and on Parent Leadership. In addition, there will be a four-hour institute in Atlanta on developing PA programs in local communities.

To register or receive more information about the conferences, please call Juanita Chávez, at (909) 621-6184.

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The Parent Networker



By parents, for parents

SUMMER, 1996

Learning to be a father

by Al Gore, Vice President of the United States and father of four

How does a man learn to be a father? I believe, if he is lucky, he learns from three sources: from his own father, from his children and from other fathers.

My father's dedication to the public good made a deep impression on me. He led many fights for what he believed. As a child, I watched him pass the first Medicare bill ever to win approval in the Senate. As a college student, I was intensely proud of his courageous decision to fight for civil rights and against the Vietnam war, even though it virtually guaranteed his re-election defeat. By standing up for what he believed was right, my father taught me that principles are more important than winning elections.

And by growing up and working on a farm in Carthage, Tennessee, I learned what it means to be a good steward of the earth. On long walks through the woods and along the Caney Forest River, by growing crops and raising animals, my father showed me what it means to respect the environment that sustains us. His influence is still with me today in my work to protect and preserve the environment.

Most importantly, however, my father taught me to love unconditionally. Seeing his respect and admiration for my mother, and the partnership that they formed, I learned the meaning of a strong and loving marriage. My father and mother always made time for each other, and for my sister and me. He had high expectations of his children, but my father never pushed either my sister or me to follow any particular career path. In fact, my father's greatest advice to me has been to follow my dreams

and work hard at whatever I do. His energy and enthusiasm for life, even at the age of 88, continue to amaze me.

I know I didn't realize what I was learning at the time, but these lessons from my father are reinforced daily in my life with my own children.

The lessons I'm learning from my children are very much in the moment. The times that are most crucial to them don't necessarily fit easily into a busy parent's schedule. As parents we may



Learning from his children: Vice President Gore with his wife, Tipper (seated left) and their children (clockwise) Sarah, Karenna, Albert and Kristin.

be determined not to miss milestones in our children's lives, such as their first steps, their first words, their first day in school. Later, it's the departure for the senior prom and starting a first job.

But our children may be even more anxious to have us there after losing a close game, on a long weekend bike ride, or for a serious talk about a friend in distress. At times like these, I learn more about them as individuals and about the experiences that outrage or inspire them, their feelings about themselves, their friends and the troubling issues that all of our children face these days.

Tipper and I have learned that if we are open to learning from our children, we will be amused, worried, exhausted, delighted, frustrated, filled with pride and greatly humbled. Each of our four children—three girls and one boy—has helped us understand our roles as parents in different ways. I try to spend the proverbial "quality time" regularly with each of them alone, as well as quality time together as a family. But "quantity time" also is important. I've learned to take my cues from them, and I've learned that I can't necessarily plan or predict when I will be needed most.

A question we often don't consider is how we can support other men in their attempts to be good fathers. I believe fathers can provide invaluable information and support when they reach out to each other.

Two years ago, my wife Tipper and I hosted an annual family reunion conference on fatherhood and reconnecting men in the lives of children. What came out of the conference was a national program called "Father to Father" which helps men reach out to each other to become better fathers. Many of the country's leading fatherhood or-

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News in brief

Vice President Al Gore supports roles of fathers in children's lives

PA, Inc. was recently invited to participate in the Federal Conference on Strengthening the Role of Fathers in Families, sponsored by the Office of the Vice President. The goal of the conference was to learn more about the pro-active approaches being taken by federal employees to strengthen fathers' involvement with their children, and to encourage fathers' meaningful participation in the development of initiatives that impact children and families.

Workshops addressed the changing roles of fathers as more mothers enter the work force, as well the positive impact a loving and caring father can have in a child's life. Teresa Rafael, PA, Inc. Vice President of Programs, was part of a panel presentation on "Fathers in Early Childcare" which focused on how to get fathers involved in their children's lives, and how to create specific strategies that increase opportunities for fathers' involvement.

Parents Anonymous, Inc. has always demonstrated a strong commitment to supporting fathers and mothers in their efforts to be effective parents, and we will continue to contribute our experience and expertise to support any efforts to further strengthen the role of fathers.

Southern California parents reach out to other parents

Julie and Becky, two parents from the Los Angeles area, recently shared their personal stories on "Southland Today," a half-hour community affairs program on KDOC-TV (Channel 56) in Orange County, California. They described the important role their Parents Anonymous group plays in helping them cope with the stresses of being a parent. The *Los Angeles Times* also published two excellent articles on PA: one was based on interviews with Julie and her family, as well as PA, Inc. President and Chief Executive Officer, Lisa Pion-Berlin, Ph.D., and Juanita Chávez, Program Associate; and the other featured PA volunteer Shirley Mangini.

"These parents were extremely courageous coming forward the way they did to tell their stories," said Dr. Pion-Berlin. "They have learned that asking for help is a sign of strength, and in sharing how they overcame obstacles to providing nurturing homes for their children, they offer hope to other mothers and fathers struggling to be better parents. We are very grateful for their contribution."

Spanish-speaking radio station broadcasts PA interview across country

Satélite Radio Bilingüe in Fresno, California, featured a Spanish-speaking PA facilitator and parent on its one-hour "Linea Abierta" (Open Line) segment, broadcast live and nationwide by 200 public radio stations. Maria Vera, a Latina Washington State facilitator, and a Seattle, Washington, PA parent discussed specific cultural issues and concerns of Latino mothers and fathers in developing stronger families. Program host Samuel Orozco also asked PA, Inc. Vice President of Development and Communications, Elba Bautista Smith, to explain the Parents Anonymous program and its mutual support, shared leadership philosophy.

PA parents organize state conference in Oregon

PA's strong parent leadership commitment was demonstrated in our Oregon affiliate's annual PA conference—organized by parents, for parents, to celebrate and share their knowledge, experiences and successes in creating healthier, stronger families. The conference helped to create a sense of community, and reinforce participants' commitment to positive parenting and family support.

PA, Inc.'s National Parent Leadership Team member, Mickey Hartshorn, other PA parents, and PA, Inc. Program Associate, Juanita Chávez, presented a workshop on parent leadership offering strategies for parents to become leaders not only in their PA groups, but in their communities and states, as well. The conference also included workshops on anger management, preventing youth drug and alcohol abuse, and nourishing one's spiritual side for a fuller, more meaningful life.

Domestic Violence takes its toll

- Battering results in more injuries to women than rapes, car accidents and muggings, combined—affecting nearly 4 million women a year.
- In 70 percent of households in which women are abused, children also are abused.
- More than 3 million children each year may suffer hearing, speech and learning difficulties, low self-esteem, hyperactivity, nightmares, bed wetting, violent behavior, and/or drug and alcohol abuse as a result of family violence.
- Individuals who grow up in violent homes are more likely to reproduce the aggressive behavior they were exposed to as children.

Sources: National Conference on Family Violence: Health and Justice, March 11-13, 1994; *Social Work*, January 1994

New National Domestic Violence Hotline:

1-800-799-SAFE
(1-800-787-3224 TDD)

PA, Inc. encourages mothers and fathers who are in violent domestic situations to call this new national hotline. Hotline telephones are answered 24 hours a day, seven days a week, by both English and Spanish-speaking staff who provide crisis intervention, referrals and information to battered women, their friends, families and others seeking assistance. Callers also have access to translators for 139 languages. Services are located via a nationwide database system which stores up-to-date information on domestic violence and emergency shelters, legal advocacy and assistance, and social services programs like Parents Anonymous, available across the country.

Being a father in shared custody

by Bob, Tallahassee, Florida

Editor's note: Bob came to PA seven years ago because he realized he wasn't spending enough time with his children. Self-employed, he worked long hours and felt overwhelmed by the demands of his career and his responsibilities as a father. A family counselor suggested he try Parents Anonymous and, as you will see by his story, the parenting skills he achieved through PA have helped him remain an important part of his children's lives even after he and his wife divorced.

Because divorce can be a wrenching experience for everyone, it's important for a father to stay involved with his children. I learned that, firsthand, because my parents separated when I was eight; my father moved three states away and I seldom saw him. When I was 13, they divorced, and he visited me only twice in the next five years. He never telephoned or wrote. I vowed that, whatever happened, nothing would ever make me reject my children.

After 22 years of marriage, my wife and I divorced. I remembered my vow and was determined to remain a strong presence in our three children's lives. That was three years ago. Our daughter is now 17, and our sons, 15 and 12. The children's mother and I have joint custody (Florida law calls it "shared parental responsibility"). And fortunately, because I am self-employed and work at home, I can be available for my children more than most fathers.

Still, it wasn't easy making the adjustment to being a "shared parent." Along the way, I learned a lot about how a father can help minimize the impact of divorce and sustain a strong relationship with his children.

Quantity time counts, too

One of the most important things I found for me was that *quantity* time is as important as *quality* time with my children. My ex-wife and I try to share my children's time as equally as possible. My children alternate nights between homes, and I usually feed them dinner if

their mother is working late.

Quantity time means being involved daily: taking my daughter to a doctor's appointment; enforcing my son's midnight curfew on weekends; helping with homework and school projects; and chaperoning an overnight school field trip. It's doing these everyday things that counts.

My children also need times when they can be alone with me. My youngest son likes to have me accompany him to school, a daily 15 minutes that has become very special to us both. My other son likes to walk with me to a nearby newsstand to buy newspapers and magazines on weekends. My daughter and I act in a community theater group.

Being flexible has helped reduce the friction that can arise from shared parenting. The custody provisions of our divorce agreement are deliberately vague because we wanted to be free to adjust to the inevitable changes that occur in people's lives. My former wife and I have continued to be cooperative and cordial. We keep in touch regularly and agree in advance on who is responsible for the children on what days. This helps our children plan their activities, and lets us know what to expect.

Shared parenting isn't a power struggle

Every now and then, I may be tempted to feel my children's mother is taking advantage of me. That's

when I have to remind myself that parenting isn't a power struggle, I don't always have to have my way, and "giving in" on a custody detail does not mean I've lost any rights as a parent. I try to remember that winning or losing isn't the point—it's helping your children grow up secure in your love that's important.

Living in two separate homes can be confusing for children—especially when it comes to discipline. Children need to know what their parents expect of them, and they shouldn't have to follow two separate sets of rules. They need consistency and predictability, so it has been important for their mother and I to agree on a code of behavior and method of discipline. Whether they're at home with their mother or me, our children know the ground rules and the consequences.

The novelist Pat Conroy once wrote, "Every divorce is the death of a small civilization." Divorce causes enormous changes in children's lives. That's impossible to avoid. My children have to live with the consequences of my divorce just as surely as I do. But they don't have to be involved in my personal conflicts, criticisms or petty grudges.

I tell my children every day how much I love them. I've always been generous with hugs and kisses, even now that they are teenagers. I know I can remain a vital part of my children's lives, and despite ups and downs, they know I will always love them.

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Frieda's story: Advocacy begins at home

Her first experience with advocacy was a difficult one for Frieda, a PA parent in Des Moines, Iowa, because it personally involved her and her children. Frieda had been subjected to 10 years of physical and emotional abuse before divorcing her husband. When she began to suspect that he was now abusing her sons during his court-ordered visitation with them, she reported it to Child Protective Services (CPS). By taking a stand to protect her children, Frieda had become an advocate.

"I didn't know it then, but that was the beginning of a long process to convince the courts that my husband was maltreating my children," Frieda said. "Iowa is usually generous in granting visitation to fathers, and my ex-husband's visitation allowed him to see the boys one night a week and to keep them overnight every other weekend."

While the divorce was in process, Frieda had come to Parents Anonymous because she knew she needed to regain her self-esteem and take control of her life. She wanted to learn coping skills that would help her overcome the emotional trauma she and her children had been through. Eventually, the other parents in the group became an extension of her family support system.

The Child Protective Services worker classified Frieda's child abuse report as "undetermined," and she was forced to allow her ex-husband visitation again. She began to realize it would be an uphill struggle if she wanted to protect her children.

"My oldest son was only 5 years old and he was suffering from nightmares, bed wetting and behavior that at times was uncontrollable," Frieda said. "The youngest was only an infant. Both of my boys suffered mental retardation as a result of the battering I had re-

ceived from my husband while I was pregnant with each of them."

When Frieda decided to fight the family court decision, her attorney was not optimistic. But Frieda was confident that with the support of her mother and father, and her friends at PA, she would be strong enough to give it a try.

"I began documenting every suspicious incident," Frieda said. "I kept a journal, took pictures, reviewed court records, and collected reports from everyone involved with the case—

She had transformed herself into a confident individual, a better parent and an advocate for her children.

A busy advocate

Today, Frieda is actively involved in advocacy work for Parents Anonymous at the state and national level. She is learning how laws are made, how federal policies are decided, and how educational and human services can become more responsive to the needs of children and families. As a member of the Parents Anonymous National Parent Leadership Team, Frieda has made important contributions in discussions with Congress, the federal administration, and state and local governments on system reforms affecting parents and children. She has written letters to Congressional members stressing the importance of the Children-at-Risk clause in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and served as a resource for a state

legislator's Children At Home bill to educate parents and teachers on various forms of abuse. She also is working hard in her home state in support of pending legislation which will improve service delivery systems for children with disabilities by providing public transportation, respite and child care, occupational training and physical therapy.

"Advocacy isn't complicated," Frieda reminds us. "It begins on a small scale, with a desire to improve life for yourself and your family. Becoming a member of your PTA. Attending city council meetings. Joining the boards of organizations for family-centered services. Raising money to sustain PA support groups for parents and children. It may not seem to add up to much, but the result is a better world for all of us."



From left: Frieda and her sons, Raymond and Mick, celebrate the Fourth of July with a friend.

physicians, therapists, psychiatrists, psychologists, teachers and police. When CPS finally verified that the children were being abused by their father, I went back into court to stop him. I came prepared with all my notes, documents, expert testimony and photographs, but deep down, I was scared. I thought I would lose."

Frieda didn't lose.

Her victory that day was a victory for all parents. She had questioned a system that was not protecting her children, and had made a difference in how that system responded. Thrown into advocacy by circumstance, Frieda discovered how important it is to speak up for what you believe is right and that one person can make a difference.

Are you an advocate?

In the normal course of our daily lives there are many times when we take a stand, support people and ideas we believe in, or seek clarification on an issue. We may not think of ourselves as advocates, but as you will see by answering the questions below, our actions might fall well within the definition of advocacy.

Can you imagine yourself doing any of the following?

- | | YES | NO |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Getting together with other parents to start a PA group in your community? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Helping a neighbor who gets a confusing letter from school about his or her child's behavior in class? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Making a presentation at your church about how you overcame your parenting problems through PA? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Responding when your child's school says they may change the rules about whether pregnant teens can stay in school and they want to hear from parents? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. Testifying as part of a panel before a state legislative committee on the importance of community-based prevention of child abuse and neglect? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

If you answered "yes" to any of these questions, then you are an advocate, because each one is an example of advocacy.

- ✓ The first is "self-advocacy," something we do all the time when we speak up for ourselves or our families.
- ✓ The second is an example of "case" advocacy, which often involves helping someone resolve a concern with a complicated bureaucracy.
- ✓ The third is an example of "public (or community) education," which is another form of advocacy.
- ✓ The fourth is an example of "administrative" (or regulatory) advocacy, which includes responding in writing when a governmental unit proposes a change in its rules and invites public comment.
- ✓ And the fifth is an example of "legislative" advocacy. This type of advocacy includes taking steps to educate and influence a legislator's position, such as testifying or writing a letter.

For more information about how you can be an advocate for families, complete and mail in the form on page 8.

Source: OMB Watch, "So You Want to Make a Difference," Nancy Amidei, 1995

Keeping your cool at the library

Your public library is the perfect place for you and your children to spend those hot summer afternoons. There are special reading programs, storytelling, puppet shows, computer programs for children, movies and crafts. While your children are busy having fun, you'll have time to check out these great parenting books:

Battles, Hassles, Tantrums and Tears: Strategies for Coping with Conflict and Making Peace at Home, by Susan Beekman

Making it as a Stepparent: New Roles/New Rules, by Claire Berman

Kids Are Worth It!, by Barbara Coloroso

Pick Up Your Socks ...And Other Skills Children Need, by Elizabeth Crary

How to Talk So Kids Will Listen and Listen So Kids Will Talk, by Adele Faber

I'm On Your Side: Resolving Conflict With Your Teenage Son or Daughter, by Jane Nelsen

Love and Anger: The Parental Dilemma, by Nancy Samalin

When Caring Parents Have Problem Kids, by Finley Sizemore

Helping Children Cope With Divorce, by Edward Teyber

Stop Struggling With Your Teen, by Evonne Weinhaus

Sharing and Caring: The Art of Raising Kids in Two-Career Families, by Margaret White

Good Kids, Bad Behavior: Helping Children Learn Self-Discipline, by Peter Williamson

We hear from you

Queridos Padres,

Hola, mi nombre es Paula y yo asisto a Padres Anónimos en los Servicios de Familia Bienvenidos en Los Angeles, California. Yo quiero compartir con ustedes como Padres Anónimos me ha ayudado en mi vida. Nada menos ahorita me siento deprimida, pero sigo asistiendo a Padres Anónimos para mejorar mi vida y la de mis hijas. Quiero seguir aprendiendo cosas positivas ya que antes en mi vida hice cosas negativas, por ese motivo siempre necesito el apoyo de Padres Anónimos ya que allí encuentro las personas adecuadas que pueden ayudarme y darme un consejo, y por la privacidad en el grupo. Yo he pasado en mi vida por experiencias negativas y malas. Tengo muchas cosas que aprender porque tengo un trabajo por delante y ese trabajo son mis hijas, una de 16 años y otra de 4 años de edad. Mis dos hijas son muy exigentes y yo no puedo hacer ese trabajo sola. Aquí en Padres Anónimos encuentro todo el apoyo como persona, mujer, esposa y como madre. Por que ser madre es muy difícil. Los invito a que se unan a nosotros para que tengan mejores hijos/as, y sean mejores personas. Porque lo importante es empezar a cambiar uno mismo como persona para poder entender los otros problemas que surgen o necesitan ser resueltos. Les deseo suerte y bienvenidos a Padres Anónimos.

Sinceramente,
Paula, California

Editor's Note: Parents Anonymous reaches out to all parents, regardless of ethnicity, socioeconomic status, geographic locale, religious beliefs or age. All across the country, groups are held in English, Spanish and French, as well as several Asian and Native American languages. This letter came to us from a parent in one of our Spanish language groups in East Los Angeles, California. An English translation follows.

PARENTING TIPS

1. Notice when children make an effort; not just when they do it right.

Fíjese cuando los niños estén haciendo un esfuerzo; no solo cuando lo hagan bien.

2. Give attention to good behavior and you will get more of it.

Préste atención al buen comportamiento y habrá mas de él.

3. Compliment, encourage and hug your children every day.

Elójie, aliénte y abráze a sus hijos cada día.

Dear Parents,

Hello, my name is Paula, and I attend the Parents Anonymous program at Bienvenidos Family Services in Los Angeles, California. I would like to share with you how Parents Anonymous has helped me in my life. At times I feel depressed, but I continue to attend Parents Anonymous to improve my life and that of my two daughters. I want to continue learning positive behaviors inasmuch as I used to do negative things before. That's why I need the support from other parents in Parents Anonymous, as it is through participating that I have found other positive people who help me and give me advice in confidence. I have gone through many negative and bad experiences in my life. I have many things yet to learn because I have an important job ahead of me. That job is taking care of my daughters, one 16 years old and the other 4 years old. My two daughters are very demanding and I can't handle parenting by myself. At Parents Anonymous I have found the support I need as a person, a woman, wife and mother, as it is very difficult to be a mother. I encourage other parents to attend Parents Anonymous to learn better parenting and teach their children new behaviors. What is important is for us to change as individuals in order to better cope with and understand problems that come up and need to be resolved. I offer my best wishes to other parents and extend a welcome to those wishing to join Parents Anonymous.

Sincerely,
Paula, California

A Parent in Recovery

Now I'm not afraid to love my children

by Susan, Olympia, Washington

One day, when I went to pick up my kids after school, I saw a child care worker down on the ground playing a game with them. I never could do that. I was good at providing the basic needs for my children, but I was never able to show them much affection. The image of the worker having fun with them replayed over and over in my head. I wanted to be closer to my children, but I was always afraid they would grow up and leave me. My husband had left me. My mother had died. I didn't want to be hurt again.

I had become quite good at shutting people out. I did it with alcohol. When things didn't go right, I'd take a drink. Pretty soon, I found myself with a drink in my hand by 4 p.m. each day.

I didn't seek help for my substance abuse problem until I started dating someone who drank more than I did. We were coming home from a party one evening and the kids were in the car. We had both had a lot to drink, but I was sober enough to realize he was driving on the wrong side of the street. Unfortunately, I was too drunk to do anything about it. We were lucky we didn't have an accident that night. But it made me realize my drinking was putting my children in jeopardy. I decided I needed help.

I went to a community mental health clinic and was enrolled in an outpatient treatment program for substance abuse. One of the women in the treatment program talked about her experience with Parents Anonymous, so I thought I'd give it a try. I had suffered from bouts of anger and depression. When I had a problem, I would get 'tunnel vision,' and couldn't cope with anything until my problem was resolved. Meanwhile,

I would take my frustrations out by yelling at my kids.

My Parents Anonymous group has a special child care program for the children, which is held while the parents are meeting, so my PA meetings have become a family night out. We love going to PA. My son has developed a "big brother" relationship with an older boy in his group, and my daughter is learning to deal with the roller-coaster emotions brought on by puberty.

The parents at my PA group are caring and understanding. They make me feel safe enough to put my problems on the table for discussion. I finally realized why I turned to alcohol and became suicidal. I didn't want to hurt myself, I just wanted to kill my feelings of hopelessness and helplessness. As I talked about things that would upset me during the week, I discovered that many things my children were going through were issues I had not been able to resolve in childhood. Having other parents to talk to, who could understand what I was feeling, enabled me to confront these issues and let them go.

Through Parents Anonymous, I learned how to channel my anger and energies into something positive, like bicycling with my kids. I sought medical help to control symptoms of early menopause. And I decided to go back to college to become a medical assistant.

Now, my kids and I can talk openly about things that concern them, and I don't have to take a drink when things get rough. Best of all, I'm no longer afraid to show my children how much I love them.

"I finally realized why I turned to alcohol and became suicidal. I didn't want to hurt myself, I just wanted to kill my feelings of hopelessness and helplessness."

An open invitation to all parents

by Arlene, Utica, New York

If you are overwhelmed by the responsibilities of being a parent, frustrated with your inability to cope with your child's behavior, or alarmed by feelings of anger and resentment toward your child, there is a group of parents in your neighborhood that knows exactly what you're going through, and they are ready to offer support and advice. They're the mothers and fathers of Parents Anonymous, and they understand your struggle better than anyone can because they've been there. They are facing the same challenges you are, and are committed to providing each other with friendship, support, understanding and insight.

You may be finding it difficult to admit a problem exists. I understand, because I felt the same way. For a long time, my feelings of shame and embarrassment for my inadequacies as a parent kept me from seeking help. Finally, I realized that no one is perfect. We all face some kind of personal problem. We all have good days and bad. Some of us simply handle them better than others. For the ones that don't—me, included—it's important for us, as well as our loved ones, to find help.

At Parents Anonymous, you'll find someone to talk to who not only accepts and understands you, but is willing to *listen* to what you have to say. In our mutual support groups you can feel free to discuss anything that's on your mind. We tackle a wide range of parenting and family issues in many different cultural environments. We are here to help each other, and our door is always open.

Admitting I had a problem wasn't the end of my chance for a happy life—it was only the beginning. I learned to respect myself, be a friend to others, and gratefully accept their care and support. I found peace of mind through Parents Anonymous. I know you can, too.

Gore: Learning to be a father (continued from page 1)

ganizations collaborated on the project, and "Father to Father" is now providing information and support to fathers across the country.

A crucial place to strengthen fatherhood is in the workplace. That's why this year Tipper and I focused on balancing work and family at our fifth annual family reunion conference in Nashville, Tennessee. The conference explored different strategies for dealing with the conflicts between work and home, and took a close look at workplace initiatives, benefits and programs, research, and changes in the workplace culture and technology.

As managers and employers we should make it clear to employees that we value their commitment to fatherhood. We must be sure men have the flexibility to attend the school play, the teacher's conference, the pediatrician's exam. Understanding a father's need to leave in time to pick up a child from day care helps support and strengthen families.

Above all else, the strongest statement we can make as fathers is the

example we set. To be good fathers, we must learn from our parents, even if they made mistakes. We must talk to our children, and make them a priority. And we must reach out to each other in ways that will support fatherhood and strengthen families.

Our children are too important for anything less.

Since 1970, fathers have been reaching out to other fathers through Parents Anonymous mutual support groups in thousands of locations across the country. Last year alone, more than 25,000 fathers attended these free groups to share their fears and frustrations, and learn ways to become better parents. For more information about Parents Anonymous, call (909) 621-6184 or use the form below.

I would like to receive *The Parent Networker*. Please add me to your mailing list.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Where did you receive this copy of the newsletter?

PA Support Group Friend Other _____

I would like to learn more about: Parents Anonymous programs
 Advocacy for families

Please return this form to: Parents Anonymous, Inc., 675 W. Foothill Blvd., Suite 220, Claremont, CA 91711.

CELEBRATING 25 YEARS OF
STRENGTHENING FAMILIES
ALL ACROSS AMERICA



The National Organization
675 W. Foothill Blvd., Suite 220
Claremont, CA 91711
(909) 621-6184
(909) 625-6304 fax

Address Correction Requested

The Parent Networker



By parents, for parents

WINTER, 1996

A second generation of parents still benefiting from PA

by Julie, Texas

Now that Parents Anonymous is 25 years old, a second generation is having children of their own. This is a story by the child of a PA parent who is now grown and a mother, herself. Julie's story offers living proof that the benefits of PA are passed down through generations, and for Julie, it means her story will have a happy ending.

As a child, I lived with my family in a trailer park in Fort Worth. My mom would take me, my brother and my sister to the pool to swim, to the park to play and to the zoo to see the animals. Just before my fourth birthday, my parents moved us to Boyd, a small town northwest of Fort Worth. Our only neighbors lived up the hill from us. I was the youngest child, so when my brother and sister started school, I was alone with my mom. My mom and I would explore the land around us, collecting rocks and bones. Once, I even found an Indian arrowhead. We were all very happy during this time because we would play and have fun.

When I started school, things began to change.

Now that we were older, my mom assigned each of us chores to do around the house. We also took turns doing the dishes. If we didn't do the chores to her satisfaction, she would get angry. My mom was a "clean freak." Most people spring clean once a year—

not my mom. She would do spring cleaning *once a week*. A clean house was so important to her that she would paint the ceilings every year.

My mom's anger controlled our household. I can remember how she would scream at my brother, my sister and me. For a long time I thought that I had done something to make her angry, but I couldn't figure out what it was. I didn't like it when she was angry, so I wouldn't argue with her the way my brother and sister did. I tried to do everything in my power to make her happy.

But not being able to control her temper only made her more angry.

I remember one time when my mom was mad at my dad. She was in their bedroom, screaming at him. My sister and I were going to go outside so we wouldn't have to listen to them fight. My mom started throwing things. There was a pair of scissors on her dresser and she threw them at my father just as we were leaving our bedroom. They stuck in the doorjamb of the bedroom, narrowly missing my sister.

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Taking the first step in parent leadership

by Lee, Massachusetts

Since its inception, Parents Anonymous has recognized the importance of parent input, establishing parent leadership and mutual support as two essential components in strengthening families, and preventing child abuse and neglect. Today, under the mandates of the family preservation and family support movement, parents, as consumers, are becoming increasingly involved in decision-making processes for state and local child welfare services. The reason is simple. Getting parents' perspectives on services that directly affect them and their children is the best way to ensure that those services are effective and responsive to the diverse needs of families.

For example, this newsletter will reach many audiences, but the readers I care most about are the parents who are overwhelmed by feelings of depression, isolation, hopelessness,

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INSIDE ...

- We never stop growing as parents
- Parent leadership checklist
- Recipe for a rainy day
- Parenting Tips on discipline

News in brief

Parent leadership training dates set

Parents Anonymous Inc. provides technical assistance and training on a variety of leadership skills for parents. This year, we will hold two regional conferences, in collaboration with two state PA affiliate organizations, for parents who want to learn how to be successful group leaders, serve on planning committees, improve their public speaking skills and become advocates for issues which affect families and children. The conferences also will offer training for professionals who want to support parents as leaders. One training session will be held in late May, in Phoenix, Arizona, and the other will take place in June, in Atlanta, Georgia. For more information, call Juanita Chávez at (909) 621-6184.

PA parent speaks at major national conference

As part of PA's commitment to educating professionals on successful parent leadership strategies, Teresa Rafael, PA National Director of Programs, co-presenting with National Parent Leadership Team member Susan George, addressed attendees of the 1995 conference for the National Association for Family Based Services. This conference, which hosts human service professionals from across the country, is one of the largest annual social service conferences in the nation. The topic was "Parent Consumers as Agents of Change: Partnerships in Shaping New Directions in Child Welfare."

Teresa discussed the valuable perspective parents, as consumers, bring to effective system reform activities. Susan related her personal experiences with parent leadership, including her participation with the National Parent Leadership Team.

Several days after their presentation, Parents Anonymous of Illinois received a call from a local public official recruiting PA parents to help plan future services for families and children. Thanks to Susan's work and PA's promotion of parent leadership, parents in Illinois will have a stronger voice in shaping their public child welfare system.

First for Women reaches out to moms in need

Some months ago, a writer for *First for Women*, a national magazine addressing women's issues, contacted Parents Anonymous Inc. seeking parents who would be willing to tell their story about overcoming problems related to child abuse and neglect. The author lived in the Southwest, so we put her in touch with PA of Arizona.

A courageous mom and PA parent, Kim Nobel, came forward to share her story of personal change so that parents across the county would be encouraged to seek help. The December issue of *First for Women* featured Kim and her daughter, Tori, in an article called, "Now I Know I'm Not a Bad Mom."

In the article, Kim describes her frustrations as a new mom with a colicky baby who wouldn't stop crying. Shocked by her anger, frightened she would harm her baby and desperate for answers, Kim turned to a counselor who suggested Parents Anonymous.

"As the other parents shared their stories in my first PA meeting, I was touched by their honesty," Kim told author Deborah Bebb. "In the weeks and months that followed, those meetings became my lifeline. I learned that there are healthy alternatives to lashing out in anger. I learned not to isolate myself from others and to vent my emotions before they overwhelmed me. I also learned that asking for help is a sign of strength, not a sign of weakness."

Over the years, Kim said, her group became like a "family," supporting her through tough times, such as Tori's "terrible twos."

"I'll always be grateful that Parents Anonymous was there to help me keep the promise I made to (my daughter) when she was just a newborn," Kim said. "I'm proud I've become the mom she deserves."



A second generation

continued from page 1

My mom tried to find help after that. We didn't have much money, so she went to the Mental Health Department in Decatur. They gave her anti-depressants, told her she was crazy and that she could control her anger if she wanted to.

Then my mom found Parents Anonymous. Parents Anonymous is a non-profit organization that focuses on strengthening families by providing an environment in which people can ask for help, whatever their parenting problem is. Through the mutual support of other mothers and fathers, people learn how to become the parents they want to be—providing safe, nurturing homes for their children.

At PA, my mom found other parents who were trying to cope with anger, frustration, feelings of depression and hopelessness. She realized she wasn't crazy and she wasn't alone.

But it wasn't until my aunts asked my mom to go to Austin with them to make a video for Parents Anonymous about their childhood, that she realized how much the abuse in her family had affected her. There were eight children in my mom's family; she was the third youngest. She had to take care of her younger brother and sister. Her father died when she was 4. Her mother was a nurse and worked all day, so my mom's grandmother took care of all eight children.

My mother remembers her grandmother as a woman with many problems, including alcohol abuse. She would tie my mom up to the kitchen table all day long. She wouldn't let her go to the bathroom, get a drink of water or have anything to eat. At times, she would even kick my mom. My mom never had a chance to have a normal childhood.

One day, when I was much older, my mom told me about the abuse she had suffered as a child. Finally, I understood why she had so much an-

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We never stop growing as parents

by Elizabeth, Texas

A PA parent describes how learning to work with other people's children helped her improve her relationship with her own.

When I joined PA five years ago I was a parent on the verge of sinking and had pretty much given up participating in activities other than taking care of my family. As I learned new skills and grew stronger through participation in PA, I developed an interest in "giving back" to my group in a significant way. I knew my husband, Stan, was ready to be involved too.

So when my PA group needed someone to manage the children's program during meetings, we volunteered. Stan had coached Little League baseball and PEEWEE football, and both of us had been involved with church youth groups. We felt pretty confident that after going through the training program we'd be equipped to run the children's program. We didn't realize, however, how much working with other people's children would teach us about parenting our own.

We set up the children's program following some basic concepts we'd learned in training. The program flourished, and my husband and I found it ironic that we seemed to do a better job at caring for *other* people's children than our own. The truth was, we were giving our childcare charges more attention than our children.

In the children's program, when a child had something to say, we'd listen. When he talked about his nightmares, we'd take him seriously. We'd think of creative ways to inspire him, teach him, encourage him.

At home, with our own children, we were usually too busy or too tired to listen. We'd shrug off their nightmares, and forget that they needed inspiration and encouragement too. When we realized what

we were doing, we decided to try some of our classroom skills at home.

☐ Structure

Kids feel comfortable in a structured environment. That's why, in the children's program, it was important to have the same leaders each week, and the same classroom setup. There was no need to test the abilities of new leaders or explore the limits of an unfamiliar setting. They were able to focus on mastering the tasks at hand.

Some of the behavior problems we were experiencing at home were reactions to the lack of structure in our children's lives. When I joined Parents Anonymous, my children expected things to change overnight. They may have been ready to give up the old structure, but they wanted a brand new one in place immediately. Each new idea I brought home, each unexpected response, kept my children in constant upheaval.

Once we acknowledged we were going through a time of change, my children were more willing to accept gradual reforms, and we did what we could to help them.

☐ Their own space

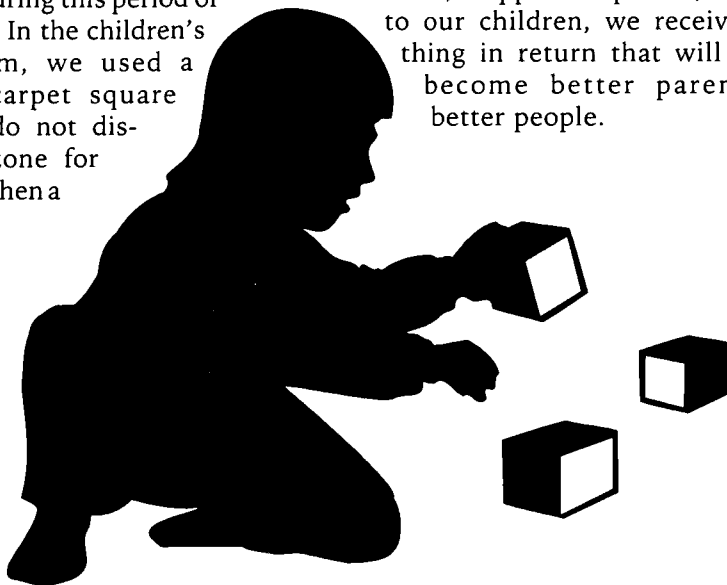
We needed to respect our children's apprehensions and anxieties, especially during this period of change. In the children's program, we used a large carpet square as a "do not disturb" zone for times when a

child needed to sort things out for himself. We set up a similar "do not disturb" zone at home, so that when our children were confused or needed to adjust to a new situation, they would have a place to go—and we would respect their privacy.

☐ Democracy

Rules and responsibilities are an essential part of any structure, but their effectiveness may depend upon who creates them. When rules are handed down autocratically by an adult, kids may try to sabotage them at every opportunity. We gave our children the opportunity to set their own rules, responsibilities and consequences. We were proud to see how well they understood their limits as they carved their own boundaries—and sometimes surprised by the severity of the consequences they chose. (We soon learned which acts were more serious than we thought just by the kind of consequences they received.)

Most of all, we realized that we never stop growing as parents. Each stage our children go through presents a new set of circumstances to challenge our patience, knowledge, compassion and wisdom. We also learned that every time we reach out to share our experience, teach a child, support a parent, or listen to our children, we receive something in return that will help us become better parents and better people.



Parent leadership continued from page 1

anger and frustration—many of whom are on the “receiving end” of social services, as I was when I first came to PA. Collectively, we parents have been on welfare, sought refuge in shelters, faced our addictions and fought them in rehabilitation centers across the country. We have struggled with serious parenting problems and may have suffered the inefficiencies of unresponsive family services.

Our expertise as consumers of these services is extensive, and of tremendous benefit to those responsible for creating, delivering and evaluating effective strategies to support and strengthen families. Agencies are seeking parents like us to serve on their boards, to help in planning programs, and to evaluate the effectiveness of their organizations, because we can help them bring about positive changes in services directly affecting us and our children.

That means many PA parents, as well as parents who are consumers or participants of other agencies, are going to be in the same position I was in 15 years ago, when I was asked to join the Department of Social Services’ (D.S.S.) area board, as a parent participant. I was scared and not really sure I wanted to do it. I wondered what was the “real reason” behind the invitation. How would the other people react to me knowing I was not a social services “professional”? Would I be merely a “token parent,” or could I make a difference?

Then there were those mundane concerns—like what should I wear (a dress? nylons? makeup?). After all, this wasn’t going to be like PA.

At PA I knew it didn’t matter how I looked. Everyone at PA went by first names—a practice that not only preserved our anonymity, but put us all on an even playing field. Everyone was encouraged to take part, sharing opinions not only at the group meetings, but at the state office and on the board. I always felt respected for my individual exper-

tise and appreciated the non-judgmental aspect of Parents Anonymous.

Although my first board experience turned out to be less than ideal, I’ve never regretted taking that first step. Today, I’m a member of the D.S.S. Multidisciplinary Assessment Task Force, along with Kathy, another PA parent. In early 1995, I joined the National Parent Leadership Team. The Team promotes parent leadership throughout the country, advises national policy makers on reforming systems that serve children and families, helps train professionals in new strategies for working with families, and advocates for community-based prevention of child abuse and neglect. Am I making a difference? I believe I am.

You can, too. If you have the opportunity to join a taskforce or board of directors, please do it. If no one asks you, volunteer. Your opinion is valuable, I encourage you to share it.

Now that you’ve made the commitment ...

If participating on a board is as scary to you as it was to me when I first started, here are three things I’ve learned that may be of help to you.

1. Believe in yourself

As a parent you bring a unique point of view, and the other members of your board need to hear from you. Don’t settle for being a token parent. If you feel that you’re not being taken seriously, let them know.

If you don’t understand something, ask. It’s typical, for example, for different industries and fields to have their own jargon. At the last D.S.S. board meeting, everyone was talking about “forensic intervention.” Neither Kathy (that other PA mom) nor I had heard the term before, so we asked what it meant. We learned that, in this case, forensic intervention referred mainly to sexual abuse cases that are turned over to the

District Attorney’s office and the courts. More importantly, our question illustrated how jargon can be a stumbling block to clear communication and as a result, the task force decided to include a glossary in whatever they published.

2. Value yourself

Your time is valuable and your needs matter. Let your board know at the onset if you will need child care, transportation or a special meeting time. If you aren’t comfortable asking for yourself, find someone on the board who can be an advocate for you or work in partnership with you.

3. Take care of yourself

You don’t have to share your personal story to provide credentials, or sacrifice your health for volunteer work. If participating on a board or task force demands more time than you can commit to, ask if there is a committee or temporary assignment you can work on, instead. Take on responsibilities gradually, or share the load by teaming up on a project with another PA parent. It’s always easier when you don’t feel all alone. Remember, your well-being and personal recovery are paramount.

Over the years, I have come to enjoy leadership experiences in the community, beyond my role in Parents Anonymous. I still get nervous, wonder what to wear, and worry I’ll do something that will make me feel awkward. But I’ve met a lot of interesting people and have learned many new things. Most rewarding of all, I know my involvement has made a positive difference for other parents.

If you are feeling that the time is right to stand up and voice your opinions, I encourage you to give it a try. I hope you will write to *The Parent Networker*, and share your experiences with me and other PA parents. We have a lot to learn from each other.

Parent Leadership Checklist

Before you take on a parent leadership role, you may want to review this checklist to be sure you fully understand the scope of the job you're undertaking and the extent of its commitment.

Know what the job is

- ✓ Do I have a clear understanding of the job requirements?
- ✓ Are the anticipated outcomes the ones I wish to promote?
- ✓ Will I represent a broad group of parents, or just myself?
- ✓ If I represent a larger group, do I understand what is involved in communicating with my group?
- ✓ To whom will I be accountable?

Understand the personal costs

- ✓ How much of my time will this require?
- ✓ How will the costs of travel, child care, food, and lost wages be paid?
- ✓ Will this work, combined with other things going on in my life, create more stress than is good for me and my family?
- ✓ Do I have strong self-care skills and a personal support system on which I can rely?

Evaluate your expertise

- ✓ Do I need to improve my communications skills, or need training in public speaking and working with the media?
- ✓ Do I need to learn more about the public policy process, and systems that serve children and families?

It's important to consider these questions, but unless the answers clearly reveal that this is not the right time to take on more responsibility, don't let them dissuade you. Skills can always be polished—or learned by doing. You have your own individual gifts and strengths to bring to this important job. In exchange for your leadership, you will find an opportunity for personal growth and the chance to make a difference in peoples' lives.

A second generation continued from page 2

ger, and I realized that she wasn't angry with me. She was angry because she never had a childhood. I also could see that she had tried to control her anger, and although part of my childhood was not so happy, I turned out pretty good.

I am 23 now, and have a child of my own. He's 6 months old, learning to crawl and demanding all of my attention. I know now that motherhood isn't as simple as people make it out to be. It can be very frightening and frustrating.

I can understand the pain that pushes some parents to the verge of hitting their children. It's when they come close to crossing the line from *thinking* about hurting their children to *doing it*, that they need to seek help.

Child abuse is a vicious cycle. Some families never escape it. I'm grateful mine did. If you choose to provide a safe and caring home for your child, and prevent anyone else from maltreating them, then you have taken the first step.

Because my mom had the courage to seek help and make changes in her life, our family was able to find the love and happiness we once knew. And now that I have a child of my own, I know I am better prepared to be the kind of parent I want to be.

Recipe for a rainy (or snowy) day

Here's an activity you and your children may enjoy when bad weather keeps you housebound. All you'll need to cook up this home recipe for "playdough" is a few common ingredients from your kitchen.

Once the dough is made, let your children's imaginations soar. Creations can be air dried overnight, or placed in a warm oven to dry. Tightly cover unused dough with plastic wrap and store it in your refrigerator for another day.

PLAYDOUGH

Mix together in pan:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------|
| 1 cup water | 1 cup flour |
| 1 tablespoon salad oil | ½ cup salt |
| 2 teaspoons cream of tartar | |

Heat on medium temperature. Stir until it clumps together. Let cool slightly. Knead in small amount of flour until it's no longer sticky. Separate and add food coloring. Knead until color is consistent.

Air dry overnight or place in warm oven to dry. Tightly cover unused dough with plastic wrap and store in refrigerator.

The importance of the absent parent

by Norm, Vermont

*Editor's note: Two years after a divorce, more than 80 percent of noncustodial parents have little or no steady visitations with their children. The majority of these "absent parents" are fathers between the ages of 20 and 49. Yet research has shown that children with involved fathers are more compassionate, socially competent, self-directed, more persistent at solving problems and more likely to be successful in their careers. What follows is the story of what one father learned about his impact, as an "absent father," on the future happiness of his children.**

I am a dairy farmer in Vermont and the proud father of six children. I am French Canadian and family has always played an important part in our culture. When my ex-wife and I decided to divorce after 18 years of marriage, the court granted her custody of four children. I received custody of our 11-year-old son. Our oldest son was allowed to choose which parent he wanted to live with.

I love my children—they are my life, my hopes, my happiness and my dreams. Yet now I was allowed to have them for only one weekend, every other week. The thought of living each day without them seemed more than I could bear. It was difficult for my children, too. They missed me and came to depend on the short visits I was able to make between weekend visitations.

Sometimes, I thought it would be best for my children if I just paid child support and stepped out of the picture entirely. My wife was bitter about our divorce and tried to keep the children from calling me. She accused me of wanting the children only because they could help with the work on the farm. My continued visitation only exposed my children to more conflict and confusion, but I felt I had to show them how much I loved them. My children needed me and didn't want me to give up on them. In fact, they asked me to go

back to court to seek custody of them.

My lawyer didn't think I had a chance of gaining custody of the children. And I wasn't sure how to continue being a parent to them when they were no longer living with me.

I reached out to Parents Anonymous for help. At the group meeting, the other PA parents told me I could be an absent parent *and* remain an important part of my children's lives. They promised to support me through the tough times and help me improve my parenting skills. Even though I was divorced, there was hope that I still could be an active parent and share love with my children.



Some of the skills I learned in Parents Anonymous made my life easier and much more efficient. More importantly, they helped me eliminate a lot of the confusion I was going through. I continued to keep in touch with my children's daily lives by writing letters and making short visits to them between their weekend stays.

While I was improving my parenting skills, I became aware of an opportunity for me and my children to attend classes together in PA's Nurturing Program. Fortunately, my ex-wife allowed me to bring the three youngest children (Jason, 10; David, 8; and Christine, 6) to class with me once a week.

My children and I learned how to work together. They understood more about what I was doing as a parent, and I discovered what I could expect from the children as they moved through the different stages of child development. I found out I wasn't giving them enough credit, that they were more capable than I thought. For my children, having a better understanding of their own strengths and limitations, and learning to master tasks before taking on new ones, helped increase their self-esteem.

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Top: Norm attended PA's Nurturing Program with his youngest children, Jason (top left), Christine and David.

Bottom: An "absent parent" still can be an active parent. After his divorce, Norm worked hard at remaining an important part of his children's lives. Pictured here with Norm one year after his divorce are his children (from left) Jason, Christine, David, Kevin, Mark (Mark's girlfriend), and Patrick.

The absent parent

continued from page 6

We all learned how to communicate effectively and become a more functional family.

At one point, my ex-wife and I had to return to court regarding concerns about the children. When I appeared before the judge, he asked me about my beliefs in raising children. I told him I had a lot to learn, but I was active in Parents Anonymous, and my children and I were enrolled in their Nurturing Program. I'm not sure what it was that swayed the judge, but he decided to grant me temporary custody of the children.

I was divorced in 1985. It took several years, but eventually all of my children were living with me on a permanent basis and could visit with their mother as they needed. At ages 18, 20 and 23, my oldest boys are now men. Two of them moved out on their own a few years ago and tried other jobs, but now all of them have chosen to live with me and help me run the farm.

Parents Anonymous has taught me so much about appreciating my children for who they are. The Nurturing Program helped my children feel better about themselves and what they can accomplish. They learned that they have rights, just as a parent does. We learned how to work together, as a team. Our family is the product of Parents Anonymous, and my children and I will always be grateful to PA for helping us find a happier way of life.

I wanted to give back to the people and the organization that gave so much to me, so for the past five years I've been a board member of Parents Anonymous of Vermont. At the beginning of last year, I became a member of the new National Parent Leadership Team, which is responsible for bringing this newsletter to parents all across the country. I hope it will be a first step in giving other concerned parents an opportunity to fulfill their hopes and dreams for their families.

*Source: "Father Love," by author and columnist Richard Louv

PARENTING TIPS

10 ^{Alternative} ways to discipline*

1. IGNORE BEHAVIOR WHEN POSSIBLE: Ignore behavior that will not harm your child—bad habits, whining, bad language, tantrums. It's hard to do nothing, however, this lack of attention takes away the very audience your child is seeking.

2. TAKE AWAY PRIVILEGES: Match the removal of the privilege to the action as closely as possible, i.e., fighting over TV results in loss of TV time. Take away the privilege for a short period; if it lasts too long, resentment builds, the child forgets the infraction and the lesson is lost.

3. LOGICAL CONSEQUENCES: Let the consequence make the point, e.g., misuse a toy—lose use of the toy for a period of time; write on the wall with crayons—wash it off; miss a curfew—lose same amount of time from next outing.

4. REARRANGE SPACE: Try creative solutions. If clothes and toys are left lying about, have baskets and low hooks for easier clean up; if school notes and homework are misplaced, assign a special table or counter for materials; if chores are forgotten, post a chart with who does what when.

5. REDIRECT BEHAVIOR: Substitute a positive behavior for one that's a problem: e.g., drawing on walls, have paper available; throwing sand, use a ball for throwing; trouble taking turns, add another toy or have them help an adult (to satisfy this need for power).

6. GRANDMA'S RULE/WHEN ... THEN: Tie what you want to what they need: e.g. when you pick up the toys, then you can watch TV; when you come home from school on time, then you can have a friend over.

7. WORK DETAIL: Post a list of jobs that need to be done, such as washing the car, weeding the garden, etc. Let the child choose a "work detail" as a way to "make up" for rule violations. This is especially effective for children 8 years and older.

8. "HIRING" A SUBSTITUTE: A child may choose to "hire" someone to do his/her chore (e.g., by paying a wage of 25¢) or mutually agree to trade chores.

9. MODEL CORRECT BEHAVIOR: Patiently show the child the "right way" to behave or do a chore.

10. TIME OUT: Use "time out" to respond to dangerous and harmful behaviors such as biting, hitting and purposeful destruction.

- Have the child sit in a boring place.
- Explain what he/she did wrong and what the proper behavior is.
- Keep time out to one minute for every year of age (use a timer).
- After time out, acknowledge correct behavior as soon as it is displayed.

Source: I am a Parents Anonymous Parent

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We want to hear from you

The Parent Networker is a semi-annual publication of Parents Anonymous Inc. with the goal of providing a forum for parents all across the country. Almost all articles are written by parents, to parents. For more than 25 years, we at Parents Anonymous Inc. have been witness to the strengths of parents as they work to create the safe and caring homes they want for themselves and their children. In addition, more and more parents are becoming active in helping to shape the communities they live in and the systems that affect their families. *The Parent Networker* is a vehicle for sharing those experiences, gaining new information and learning new ways to lead your family and your community in positive directions.

We invite you to contact us with your suggestions and ideas. If you

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