

About Parents Inc.



The mission of Parents Anonymous of New Jersey, Inc. is to protect children by strengthening families through mutual support and parent leadership.

Parents Anonymous® was founded in 1969 through the extraordinary efforts of a courageous mother seeking help to create a safe and caring home for her family. Since then the unique model of professional and parent working in equal partnership, has been proven effective in helping parents find new and better ways to raise children.

Over 40 parent support groups statewide and a 24-hour Family Helpline provide families *HELP* in the present and *HOPE* for the future.

“My Parents Anonymous® Support Group helped me make changes in my life that helped both me and my family.”

A Parents Anonymous Parent

Parents Anonymous of New Jersey, Inc. provides:

- **PARENT SUPPORT GROUPS:**
Free weekly parent-led, professionally facilitated mutual support meetings create a safe environment for parents to support and learn from one another.
- **THE PARENTS ANONYMOUS® FAMILY HELPLINE**
(1-800-THE-KIDS):
24-hour Listening Line providing information, referral and crisis intervention
- **TRAINING AND COMMUNITY EDUCATION:**
Speakers to schools, churches, community groups and others to educate about issues affecting families and parent engagement
- **VOLUNTEER SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES:**
All training is free of charge, professionally facilitated by PA of NJ, Inc. staff and includes comprehensive training materials. All volunteers receive supervision and continuing educational opportunities.

127 Route 206 South, Suite 10
Trenton, NJ 08610
Tel: (609) 585-7666
Fax: (609) 585-7686
www.pofnj.com
1-800-THE KIDS

Parents Anonymous® of New Jersey, Inc.



JOLLY K.

PARENTS ANONYMOUS FOUNDING PARENT

If you don't already know the story of how Parents Anonymous® got started, you should. It's the story of two people who had an idea that worked and is still working, that helped and is still helping thousands of people around the world.

Born in 1940, Jolly K. was the product of 38 foster homes and had the equivalent of an eighth-grade education. Following her release from the California Youth Authority's jurisdiction at the age of 18, she became a prostitute, convinced that this was the only way she could stay alive. She soon learned that it wasn't. Over the next 11 years, she lived a hand-to-mouth existence and had three children, a boy and two girls. Jolly gave her son up for adoption and kept her two daughters. The youngest, Faith, bore the brunt of the anger her mother had been carrying around since her own childhood.

In Jolly's words, "Whenever Faith misbehaved, it came into my head that I would have to straighten her out like I had been straightened out when I was a child. She was nothing but another me anyway, a damn little brat who shouldn't have been born acting like me."

In December, 1969 after nearly strangling Faith, Jolly sought help at a local child guidance clinic. She was told that Faith's name would be placed on a six-month waiting list. This wasn't the first time Jolly had asked for help and come to a dead end. But it was the first time she fought back. "If something happens to my child" She threatened the woman at the clinic, "You are as responsible as I am because you could help and you won't."

The agency staff were frightened by the scene and called protective services. The worker decided that a psychiatric evaluation was needed. So, the next day Jolly was put in touch with Leonard Lieber, a psychiatric social worker with a public mental health agency. His responsibility was to do an evaluation and determine if she was a candidate for hospitalization. In Leonard's word, "Jolly really didn't

seem to be much crazier than most of the rest of us. However, she had some various emotional problems and potentially dangerous child abuse problem, as well.”

Jolly agreed to become involved in therapy twice a week with Leonard. Faith, the target child, saw him once a week. Over the next couple of months, the therapeutic process did not progress as well as might have been expected. According to Leonard, “She was playing a lot of games and throwing roadblocks into the therapeutic process. Finally, she told me point blank that I was failing; I hadn’t stopped her from abusing her daughter.

Leonard admitted that he was fresh out of ideas and would welcome anything Jolly might come up with. “If I could sit down with someone who had problems like mine,” Jolly offered, “maybe we could sort things out together and come up with a better way.”

For over a week Jolly held back and Leonard realized that Jolly was terrified of doing something good for a change. She wasn’t at all sure she could handle it. But Leonard refused to let Jolly off the hook. He had another patient who was experiencing abuse problems, and he arranged for Jolly to meet her in his office. Together the three of them decided to give the organization which they named Mothers Anonymous a try. They began by agreeing on some basic guidelines:

1. The two women would start controlling their abusive behavior immediately—even before they began searching for causes and understandings.
2. They would all exchange phone numbers and be available to one another day and night.
3. They would meet in one another’s homes and under no circumstances charge fees or dues.

The fledging group moved from Leonard’s office to Jolly’s home and eventually to a Sunday school annex at St. Paul’s Methodist Church in Redondo Beach, California. Convincing the church to give Mothers Anonymous meeting space meant that Jolly had to make an emotional and, for her, harrowing plea to its board members.

“God, I was scared,” she recalled later. “I can remember gripping the edge of the pulpit and being so grateful it was there for me to lean on. I think I would have fallen down without it. When I was all through, I realized I had sweated through my blouse from my armpits to my waist.” Jolly subsequently went on to become one of the best known speakers in the field of child abuse, giving hundreds of radio, television, and newspaper interviews.

The media became aware of Mothers Anonymous soon after it moved into St. Paul's. Jolly helped; she ran an ad in the local paper which began, "For Moms Who Lose Their Cool with Their Kids". After years of having nothing to report but bizarre and horrible cases of child abuse, the media seemed glad to have something positive to present to the public. Mothers Anonymous was a totally new approach. Jolly and Leonard began receiving invitations to speak to citizens' groups and reporters.

A Board of Directors comprised of professionals and parents from the Los Angeles area was formed, and Jolly started getting paid to talk about the developing program. In 1971, another chapter was established at the California Institute for Women. The women in that group saw themselves as the lowest of the low. Their children had been abused so severely that some had died. To Jolly and Leonard, the new chapter was a real challenge and the acid test. If Mothers Anonymous could work with a prison population, then surely it could help anyone else who was willing to admit she had a problem and wanted to do something about it. In late 1971, Mothers Anonymous was renamed Parents Anonymous in recognition of the fact that fathers as well as mothers could have abuse problems.

March of 1973 brought a tremendous breakthrough. Jolly was asked to testify in Washington, DC before a subcommittee chaired by Senator Walter Mondale. The Subcommittee was hearing testimony for the first piece of child abuse legislation in America's history. Leonard accompanied Jolly to Washington. Jolly's testimony was filmed by network news and she became heralded as the first child abuser to publicly admit to the problem on national television. The Senators were duly impressed with her; she broke the stereotype about child abuse. She was articulate, forthright, middle-class, and bright. She was worth their time and commitment.

Ultimately, the Mondale Committee hearings led to the enactment of Public Law 93-247 which eventually resulted in the establishment of the National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect in Washington. As the media began giving Parents Anonymous nationwide coverage, chapters formed in states other than California and by mid-1973 numbered somewhere around 30. Beginning in early 1974, private, then federal funding was secured, a national office was established, a staff was hired, and under Leonard's guidance, the task of developing an administrative support structure was begun. Jolly provided what the grant termed "On-site technical assistance," traveling around the country to perform speaking engagements and media presentations.

By 1981, Parents Anonymous® had become one of the largest self-help programs in the nation. The Board of Directors has expanded from a few people from the Los Angeles area to individuals from many states and walks of life. The Parents Anonymous® Advisory Council includes judges, doctors, and people of international repute.

In the years since Jolly presented Leonard with her revolutionary idea, Parents Anonymous® has blossomed into a worldwide organization. Through caring people like Jolly and Leonard – and you – it has shown parents that they can acknowledge their problems and set about solving them. Parents Anonymous' parents find that they have the power within themselves to provide their children safe, nurturing homes. The shared leadership modeled by Jolly and Leonard has been proven to be effective in reducing risk factors and increasing protective factors for strong safe families.

But there was one tragedy Parents Anonymous® could do nothing about. It struck close to home. In the early morning hours of November 18, 1980, Jolly K. died of an apparent suicide. Perhaps her childhood finally caught up with her – no one can say. We miss her, and we remember her daily by continuing to live the legacy she left behind.

Parents Inc. Services

Parenting is probably one of the most difficult jobs in the world and we receive little or no training! The pressures of everyday living added to the demands of raising children can cause a great deal of stress and frustration. Parents Anonymous® can help. It is a private, non-profit organization that offers the following *free* services statewide.

- ❖ **Parent Support Groups:** These *free*, professionally facilitated self-help groups create an environment in which parents help each other develop methods of coping with stress and learn alternative methods of discipline. Groups are facilitated by volunteer professionals but are actually run by parent leaders. Groups meet weekly throughout the state.
- ❖ **Online Parent Support Group:** Available to any parent with access to a computer and an internet link, this group “meets” once a week on the Parents Anonymous website, www.pofnj.com. The online group adheres to the same principles as a traditional Parents Anonymous support group.
- ❖ **Father Time™:** A three-pronged program for fathers who want to deepen their connections with their children, families and communities. Fathers participate in the 12-week 24/7 DADS curriculum with an added support group component based on the shared leadership model of all Parents Anonymous groups. All Father Time group members extend their leadership into their communities by planning and executing exciting family-friendly community activities.
- ❖ **The Family Helpline (1-800-THE-KIDS):** The only 24-hour statewide phone line dedicated to family issues. This line offers a place to vent, information and referrals and crisis intervention.
- ❖ **Teen Pregnancy Prevention Initiative:** This initiative opens the Family Helpline to teens who fear they may be pregnant and need a confidential resource for help. Staffed by trained volunteers, this line is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
- ❖ **H.O.P.E.S. (Healing Ourselves Physically, Emotionally and Spiritually):** Professionally facilitated self-help groups for adults (who may or may not be parents) wishing to deal with the trauma of physical, emotional or sexual childhood abuse.
- ❖ **Training and Community Education:** Speakers are available to schools, churches, community groups and others to educate about the issues of parenting, parental stress and child abuse prevention, and advocacy.

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Workshop Descriptions

1. Preventing Parent Burnout

Raising kids is tiring work! Parenting is a 24-hour job with no pay raises or time-off for good behavior. It's no wonder that moms and dads get "burned-out". This exciting workshop explores the symptoms of burn-out and offers effective stress management techniques for parents.

2. Time-Out for Parents: Coping with Anger

Everybody has heard of the dreaded "time-out chair" for kids: a safe place to cool down. Doesn't it make sense for parents to have a "time-out"? This fast-paced workshop address anger in a humorous light using experiential exercises and some lecture. Parents will have the opportunity to look at the roots of anger, to discover their personal anger triggers, and learn some practical methods to control anger.

3. Child Abuse and Neglect Training

An in-depth training for staff which addresses behavioral indicators of child abuse and neglect and child sexual abuse, dynamics of abusive and neglectful parents, adult manifestations of child abuse and neglect, and treatment options.

4. The Parents Anonymous Program

A half-hour presentation describing PA history, philosophy and program services in New Jersey.

5. Prevention Standards

Parents Anonymous of New Jersey, Inc. has designated staff available to provide training for Standards for Prevention Programs: Building Success through Family Support developed by the Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect. Compliance with the Standards may be necessary for State prevention grants. This comprehensive training offers a new approach to child abuse and neglect prevention by placing emphasis on family strengths and a partnership of parents, professionals and community.

6. Leadership Training

Leadership training is designed for individuals who are committed to developing, supporting, facilitating, or leading a Parents Anonymous Support Group. Social Service professionals and parents interested in co-leading a Parents Anonymous Support Group are invited to attend. This comprehensive two-day training includes the nuts and bolts of group development, common group dynamic, shared leadership principles, and crisis intervention and recruitment techniques.

All workshops include training materials. For more information call:

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Parents Anonymous®

New Research Results Demonstrating Evidence-Based Program

As the nation's premier family strengthening program dedicated to preventing child abuse and neglect, Parents Anonymous® has helped millions of parents and their children in neighborhoods all across America creating positive long-term changes in their lives. Parents Anonymous® Groups serve mothers, fathers, grandparents and caregivers in community centers, schools, religious institutions, and childcare centers in partnership with public and private agencies involving thousands of volunteers.

We are pleased to announce the exciting results of the new National Outcome Study of Parents Anonymous® conducted by the National Council on Crime and Delinquency funded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, U.S. Department of Justice. This ground-breaking longitudinal study is the only independent outcome research conducted nationwide to assess the impact of parent mutual support-shared leadership groups on child maltreatment prevention. This research includes a national representative sample of diverse parents new to Parents Anonymous® who participated over a six month period. All of this evidence is based on standardized scales measuring key child maltreatment outcomes, risk and protective factors and was confirmed in a qualitative study with Latino parents who attended Parents Anonymous® groups. Moreover, a comparison group was utilized to measure the difference in outcomes between parents who did and those who did not attend Parents Anonymous®.

Results for Parents who participated in Parents Anonymous®:

Reduced Child Maltreatment Outcomes

- ❖ 73% of Parents decreased their Parenting Distress
- ❖ 65% of Parents decreased their Parent Rigidity
- ❖ 56% of Parents reduced any form of Psychological Aggression towards their children
- ❖ For those parents who reported any form of Physical Aggression, 83% stopped physically abusing their children

Reduced Risk Factors

- ❖ 86% of the High Stressed Parents Reduced Their Parental Stress
- ❖ 71% of Parents reduced their Life Stressors
- ❖ 40% of Parents reduced any form of Domestic Violence
- ❖ 32% of Parents reduced their Drug/Alcohol Use

Increased Protective Factors

- ❖ 67% of Parents improved their Quality of Life
- ❖ For Parents Starting Out Needing Improvement:
 - 90% Improved in Emotional and Instrumental Support
 - 88% Improved in Parenting Sense of Competence
 - 84% Improved in General Social Support
 - 69% Improved in Use of Non-Violent Discipline Tactics
 - 67% Improved in Family Functioning

Conclusions:

- ❖ Parents who continued to attend Parents Anonymous® Groups over time showed improvement in Child Maltreatment Outcomes, Risk and Protective Factors compared to those who dropped out.
- ❖ Strong evidence suggests that parents benefit and strengthen their families through Parents Anonymous® regardless of the participant's race, gender, education or income.
- ❖ Participants reported that they shared a sense of purpose, belonging and community and were able to give and get help from other parents.