

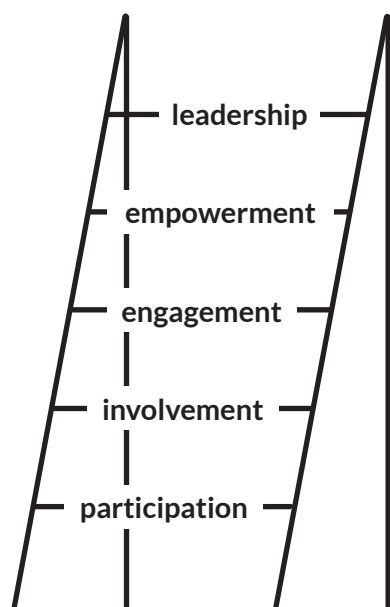
Parent Participation Ladder

Each of us may be a parent or caregiver: someone who has, or had, primary responsibility for the care of a child of any age. We may also be a practitioner (professional or not), provider or staff person: an individual, in a paid or volunteer position, affiliated with a program or organization offering a parenting program.

Parents and practitioners –very often parents themselves– can see a natural progression in their interactions with a parenting program. Individuals may move up or down the ladder as their time allows and interests dictate.

Ideally, parents' needs are met, our voices heard and our confidences respected, at each level. Similarly, good management practices in parenting services respect the needs and foster the career development of practitioners, providers and staff as well.

These are the steps on the ladder, bottom to top.



1. **As participants** we receive the benefits of the program: education, training, support.
2. **We may become involved** more regularly and take a more active role.
3. **We may then become engaged** in a wider variety of activities and make a longer-term commitment to the parenting program.*
4. **Ideally, the steps above lead us to becoming empowered:** more confident and more competent in our family roles as well as in our roles in the larger community.
5. **Last, we may decide to become parent leaders,** taking responsibility as workshop facilitators, advocates or advisors. Our work may be within parenting programs, on issues of program planning, policy and evaluation, or in the community, in sports, arts or other programs that benefit children and adults.

We offer the above schema as a contribution to the national and international dialogue on parenting resources in education, human services, medicine, public health, public safety and workforce development. We hope it will serve to raise awareness of the importance of a strengths-based approach to parenting services that recognizes parents as most knowledgeable about their families and communities. Our goal is for Parents Forum to play a significant role improving the health and wellbeing, educational attainment and life success of all our children.

This ladder was created by Eve Sullivan as a follow-up to the FRIENDS Network for Action Meeting held June 21+22, 2011, Alexandria VA and is based on the Parent Leadership / Partnership Working Document presented there.