

TITLE: Leadership Practices in Family Support Programs

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OBJECTIVE: To explore leadership practices in family support programs.

METHODOLOGY: The sample was selected from a membership list of the direct service agency members (N=400+) of the Family Resource Coalition; stratified by gender, job title, and geographic region. One hundred and seventeen family support leaders completed the LPI-Self and they requested three members of their staff to complete the LPI-Observer (N=268).

The typical family support leader was between 41-50 years old (54%), either the executive director (44%) or program manager (33%), with an average of 13.5 years of experience, and holding a graduate degree (74%).

KEY FINDINGS: Family support leaders rated themselves in the 60th (plus) percentile on Modeling and Encouraging, and the 70th (plus) percentile on Challenging, Inspiring and Enabling leadership practices compared to the Kouzes Posner normative sample. The percentile rankings were slightly lower for the LPI-Observer. Enabling showed the only statistically significant difference between Self and Observer assessments (Self > Observer). Family support leaders perceive of themselves as effective leaders, as do their subordinates.

"There were no significant differences between the respondents and nonrespondents on any of the five leadership practices" (121), nor were there "significant relationships between any of the leadership practices and the demographic variables [age, education, years of service or location]" (125).

Interviews with eight nationally prominent family support leaders (five females and two males), using the "personal best" leadership experience case study approach, revealed patterns (leadership actions and behaviors) quite consistent with the Kouzes Posner leadership framework.