



*August 2016*

**Qualitative Report**  
Executive Summary

**The Triple P Implementation Evaluation**

**Cabarrus & Mecklenburg Counties, NC**

Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

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The purpose of the Triple P Implementation Qualitative Evaluation was to better understand findings from the initial Triple P implementation evaluation and to further improve the planning process for impact and sustainability in Cabarrus and Mecklenburg counties, North Carolina.



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## Executive Summary

From January 2014 through December 2015, the Triple P Implementation Evaluation (TPIE) examined the implementation and scale-up of the Triple P – Positive Parenting Program (Triple P) system of interventions in Cabarrus and Mecklenburg counties. Specifically, the purpose of TPIE was to evaluate capacity and infrastructure for the *active* implementation of the Triple P in Cabarrus and Mecklenburg counties to inform the planning process for impact and sustainability. The TPIE Final Report, which includes a detailed background about the project, evaluation findings, and a list of evaluators’ recommendations, is available on the North Carolina Implementation Capacity for Triple P (NCIC-TP) website at <http://ncic.fpg.unc.edu/lessons-learned-triple-p-implementation-tpie>.

In late winter and early spring 2016, the TPIE team added a qualitative evaluation component (TPIE-Qualitative) to better understand the findings from the initial implementation evaluation and further improve the planning process for Triple P impact and sustainability. The evaluation team returned to Cabarrus and Mecklenburg counties to interview county implementation teams, local Triple P agency leaders and implementation support staff, and key representatives from both Triple P America and the North Carolina Division of Public Health that were involved in supporting the scale-up of Triple P in Cabarrus and Mecklenburg counties. Interview questions explored stakeholders' perceptions of the TPIE findings, inquired about context factors that may have facilitated or hindered implementation, and explored key decision points that may have shaped each county’s direction during the original evaluation period. Respondents were also asked to discuss the roles of system partners in their implementation work. A summary of key findings for each area of inquiry, integrating different stakeholder’s perspectives through qualitative analysis, is provided below.

### Face Validity of the Initial Triple P Implementation Evaluation Results

Overall, TPIE-Qualitative respondents indicated agreement with the initial implementation evaluation findings at both county and agency levels in Cabarrus and Mecklenburg. Where disagreements existed, they did not exceed what might be expected given the nature of this evaluation and the way in which initial TPIE findings were categorized and presented to respondents. This strengthens confidence in TPIE results.

## Factors Influencing the Development of Local Implementation Infrastructure & Capacity

In addition to seeking participant perspectives on the TPIE findings, interview questions explored any context factors that may have facilitated or hindered implementation of Triple P. Five key themes emerged from responses about **organizational and system influences** on the development of county capacity and agency infrastructure to support the use of Triple P:

- (1) Well-resourced county implementation teams are essential for developing and nurturing implementation capacity and infrastructure across county Triple P coalitions.
- (2) Service agency leadership and implementation teams are key resources for developing agency implementation infrastructure to support practitioners' use of Triple P as intended.
- (3) Adequate funding and resources are needed to support and sustain Triple P implementation and service delivery.
- (4) Robust exploration and readiness processes at each level of the state system (state agencies, lead county implementation agencies, local service agencies, and local practitioners) are needed to set up and sustain healthy Triple P implementation initiatives. This includes ensuring goodness of fit between Triple P and county wellbeing needs, agency contexts, and family service preferences.
- (5) Ongoing support networks that serve practitioners' delivery of Triple P (i.e., peer support networks), local service agencies' implementation of Triple P (i.e. county Triple P coalitions), and counties as they work through challenges scaling Triple P (i.e., the North Carolina Triple P State Learning Collaborative) are important to sustain and enhance Triple P implementation and service delivery.

Five key themes emerged from responses about how **Triple P as a program or Triple P America (TPA) as a purveyor** may have influenced the development of county capacity and agency infrastructure to support the use of Triple P:

- (1) Triple P materials are high quality, usable, and accessible. Keeping them updated and reflective of cultural diversity is important.
- (2) Triple P has added value because of its evidence base.
- (3) There was variability in the perceived fit of Triple P, as a program, to agency needs. This again highlights the need for a robust exploration process to ensure fit and readiness for implementation.
- (4) TPA is a well-regarded and responsive purveyor organization, though there is a perceived need for more implementation support overall, and a particular need for locally contextualized implementation support.
- (5) There were concerns about the expense of Triple P training and materials, particularly having to pay for external trainers, and some respondents asked for consideration to

develop local Triple P trainers in order to mitigate agencies' challenges sustaining access to Triple P training.

## Key Decision Points Encountered While Implementing Triple P

The most consistently reported decision-points that stakeholders encountered while implementing Triple P revolved around how to build sufficient capacity to support local implementation. When decisions resulted in the availability of greater implementation resources and abilities to support counties, agencies, and/or practitioners, greater benefits were experienced. Examples of such decisions include developing and maintaining:

- (1) The North Carolina Triple P State Learning Collaborative.
- (2) State-level staff for data management and the management of Triple P Online.
- (3) County-level Triple P Coordinators and Implementation Teams.
- (4) Various forms of county and agency-level implementation infrastructure (e.g., peer support networks).

In addition, the following two decisions points were consistently voiced by respondents from local service agencies and may be targets of future support from TPA and other implementation technical assistance providers:

- (1) How many practitioners to train in Triple P interventions, and at what levels of the Triple P system.
- (2) How to best organize and sustain peer support networks for practitioner coaching.

Finally, it is clear from stakeholder interviews that agencies and counties prioritize differently the development of implementation infrastructure to support the use of Triple P. *Less than a quarter of local service agencies ranked it in the top quartile of their priorities and one of the two counties ranked it amongst its highest priorities.*

## System Partners' Support for the Local Implementation of Triple P

Regarding the role of **local county Triple P coalitions** and their member agencies, four key themes emerged from participants' responses:

- (1) Support and leadership from local county implementation teams was by far the most helpful aspect of the county Triple P coalitions.
- (2) Making Triple P trainings and opportunities for ongoing coaching support accessible for local agencies and practitioners was particularly beneficial.
- (3) There was a clear request for more opportunities for agencies to meet to share experiences and ideas, to problem-solve, and to increase the amount of feedback and information sharing between the county implementation teams and local agencies.
- (4) Local service agencies have unique capabilities to bring to the table partners with knowledge and experience about what local families need.

Regarding the role of **funders, particularly the North Carolina Division of Public Health (DPH), and policymakers**, five key themes emerged from participants' responses:

- (1) Far and away, the most helpful activity of funders and policymakers, such as DPH, is the provision of sustainable and flexible funding for county Triple P initiatives.
- (2) There is a need for more and more sustainable funding to support the existing county Triple P coalitions and to expand the number of Triple P rollouts statewide. Creating this funding will likely require a blending of public and private financial streams and organizing cross-sector support within the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services.
- (3) Another way in which DPH was particularly helpful was establishing and maintaining support for the North Carolina Triple P State Learning Collaborative.
- (4) More frequent and better communication from DPH to the county Triple P coalitions and their member agencies would be beneficial.
- (5) DPH's leadership of efforts to educate state legislators about the value of Triple P and its potential health and economic benefits for the state of North Carolina may be particularly important moving forward.

Regarding the role of **local community members, including the families and youth being served by Triple P**, five key themes emerged from participants' responses:

- (1) Local families who have been engaged in Triple P services have an important role in providing feedback and supporting continuous quality improvement at agency, countywide, and statewide levels.
- (2) Local service agencies and county leaders found parents' openness to Triple P content and behavior strategies to be of particular benefit for Triple P success.
- (3) Local families have a unique ability to catalyze Triple P engagement within their communities by word-of-mouth advertising, sharing positive experiences, and transferring learning and parenting skills to other community parents and stakeholders.
- (4) Families also have a unique ability to successfully champion Triple P with local, county, and statewide stakeholders.
- (5) There are opportunities to more systematically involve local community members and families in the Triple P implementation infrastructure, such as in decision-making bodies that select which Triple P programs to adopt locally.

Regarding the role of **Triple P America and other implementation technical assistance providers**, five key themes emerged from participants' responses:

- (1) TPA is a very responsive program purveyor and provides high quality program support and strong partnerships.
- (2) The quality of Triple P materials and resources from TPA is high, though it may benefit from revision to increase local and cultural responsiveness. Enhancing accessibility of Triple P materials through digital platforms may also be helpful.
- (3) The quality of TPA's Triple P training process is also high.

- (4) The cost of Triple P training and materials is perceived to be high by local stakeholders and raises concerns about the sustainability of local access.
- (5) Active implementation support based on implementation science is particularly valuable to state, county, and local stakeholders, and even TPA itself. Each level of the state system may benefit from increased implementation support from TPA and other implementation support providers.

Regarding the role of **Triple P researchers and developers**, three key themes emerged from participants' responses:

- (1) It has been particularly helpful that Triple P has a broad evidence base and that researchers have also demonstrated Triple P effectiveness in real-world service systems.
- (2) Making Triple P research more accessible to diverse stakeholders would be of value.
- (3) Local Triple P implementation and scale-up initiatives provide naturally occurring research opportunities that could be used to increase information about Triple P fit and feasibility in varied settings, as well as create local data that can be used for ongoing quality improvement.

## **Respondents' Priority Recommendations for Triple P Rollouts in North Carolina Counties**

Across all respondents, a handful of priority recommendations for leading Triple P rollouts in North Carolina counties emerged:

- (1) By far, the most discussed priority recommendation was ensuring readiness for Triple P implementation at county and agency levels. This included ideas such as conducting Triple P orientation sessions for community stakeholders, assessing agency readiness for implementation and fit of Triple P programming, and gaining buy-in from agency leadership and staff members.
- (2) Countywide Triple P rollouts benefit greatly from opportunities for cross-system collaboration, learning, and planning.
- (3) Because of the increasingly recognized need for implementation science in the rollout process, counties and agencies need access to active implementation support from TPA and other intermediaries.
- (4) Countywide Triple P rollouts benefit greatly from efforts to promote awareness of Triple P in the community, including through the Triple P Stay Positive media campaign and other public relations activities.

## **Additional Recommendations Based on TPIE-Qualitative Findings**

Findings from TPIE-Qualitative reinforce many of the recommendations made in the TPIE Final Report regarding Triple P implementation in Cabarrus and Mecklenburg counties. In particular, respondents across state, county, and local settings echoed the importance of:

- Well-resourced county implementation teams;

- Strong agency leadership and implementation teams; and
- Well-developed local implementation infrastructure to support the use of Triple P as intended.

Additionally, themes across participant responses led evaluators to offer key recommendations for both counties.

- Systematizing thorough exploration and readiness processes for Triple P implementation at each level of the state system (state agencies, lead county implementation agencies, local service agencies, and local practitioners) would be beneficial.
- Reinforcing and sustaining peer support networks, local agency coalitions, and cross-county learning networks will promote cross-system collaboration, help systematize learning, and encourage ongoing action planning and problem solving.
- Identifying and securing sustainable financial resources would greatly promote the uptake and sustainability of Triple P and relieve tension from local implementation systems.

TPIE-Qualitative findings also offer greater detail for recommendations about co-creation partner roles that were only briefly introduced in the TPIE Final Report:

- Beyond appropriating resources and supporting activities for ongoing learning and collaboration, state agencies may be additionally helpful by increasing the frequency and quality of their communication with local leaders and about the value of Triple P in North Carolina with state policymakers and other funders.
- There is a need for enhanced implementation support, grounded in implementation science, from intermediary organizations and TPA.
- There are opportunities to more systematically involve local community members in Triple P implementation infrastructure and opportunity costs of not doing so.
- Triple P researchers and program developers have an ongoing role to ensure the local responsiveness and accessibility of Triple P programs and materials, supporting local research and evaluation for program optimization, and keeping stakeholders informed about the evolution of the Triple P evidence base.

Some or all of these recommendations may also be helpful beyond Cabarrus and Mecklenburg counties as statewide partners continue to strengthen support for, and activities related to, the scale-up of Triple P across North Carolina counties.