



Triple P – Santa Cruz County

Special Study to Assess Child Welfare Outcomes

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

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REPORT PREPARED FOR:



REPORT PREPARED BY:



P.O. Box 1927, Watsonville, CA 95077 • 831.728.1356 •
1871 The Alameda, Suite 180, San José, CA 95126 • 408.247.8319 •
www.appliedsurveyresearch.org •

Study Summary

Triple P (Positive Parenting Program) is a comprehensive, evidence-based parenting and family support system designed to increase parents' confidence and competence in raising children, improve the quality of parent-child relationships, and make evidence-based parenting information and interventions widely accessible to parents. When families at high-risk for child abuse and neglect receive this program, it is expected that the enhancements in their parenting skills and attitudes will lead to improved child welfare outcomes such as reduced substantiated maltreatment allegations and foster care placements. Indeed, randomized studies have shown that Triple P intervention is associated with reduced rates of child maltreatment at the population level.

To examine whether these associations would also be evident in Santa Cruz County, outcome data for two groups of parents who entered (or re-entered) the child welfare system were compared, including: (1) parents who received the Triple P intervention between January 2010 and June 2011; and (2) parents who were enrolled in a prior model of parent education between July 2008 and June 2009. Results of these comparisons are summarized below.

Question	Conclusion	Data Highlights
1. Is Triple P participation associated with lower rates of new substantiated maltreatment allegations ?	Yes.	Participants in the prior (comparison) parenting program were twice as likely as Triple P participants to have had a new substantiated maltreatment allegation in both of the time periods examined – in the first six months and 6-12 months after beginning the program. Across the 12 month period after program entry, the rate of new allegations was 5.2% for Triple P participants and 12.4% for parents in the comparison group.
2. Is Triple P participation associated with lower rates of new foster care placements ?	Yes.	New foster care placements for Triple P and comparison program participants showed favorable results for Triple P as well. In the first six months and between 6 -12 months after entering their program, Triple P participants had lower rates of new foster care placement. Across the 12 month period after program entry, the rate of new placements was 4.1% for Triple P participants and 10.2% for parents in the comparison group.

The data suggest that Triple P is associated with reduced likelihood of recurrence, in terms of new allegations and new removals from the home. The researchers caution that these findings are based on a sample of Triple P participants that may not be generalizable to the larger Triple P population of clients involved in the child welfare system.

Triple P (Positive Parenting Program) Background

Program Description

Triple P (Positive Parenting Program) is a comprehensive, evidence-based parenting and family support system designed to increase parents' confidence and competence in raising children, improve the quality of parent-child relationships, and make evidence-based parenting information and interventions widely accessible to parents. It is based on a public health model in which an ecological approach is used. This approach initiates activities at individual, family, community and systemic levels to provide a comprehensive structure of support. There are five levels of intervention in Triple P. Level 1 is intended to reach a broad range of community members in the County, and as the levels increase, more intensive services are provided:

- *Level 1: Universal* involves a media-based parenting information campaign.
- *Level 2: Selected Individual & Seminar* provides information for a specific parenting concern.
- *Level 3: Primary Care* offers narrow-focus parenting skills training.
- *Level 4: Standard & Group* includes broad-focus parenting skills and training.
- *Level 5: Enhanced & Pathways* offers additional interventions for families with risk factors for child abuse or neglect.

Triple P focuses on 17 core parenting skills that are grouped into 4 areas: promoting positive relationships, encouraging desirable behavior, teaching new skills and behaviors, and managing misbehavior. It is based on a self-regulatory framework in which the practitioner provides information, skills, training and support based on the parents' concerns. Parents use self-evaluation to set goals and assess progress. While practitioners are helping parents to build confidence and competence, parents are helping children to build these skills in a parallel process.

Beginning in 2009-10, three local funders (First 5 Santa Cruz County, Health Services Agency, and Human Services Department) launched a pilot of the Triple P system in partnership with other agencies that serve children and families. Triple P was implemented incrementally, with Levels 3, 4, and 5 in FY 2010-11, and Levels 1 and 2 in FY 2011-12.

Measuring Impact on Child Welfare Outcomes

Among families at risk for child abuse or neglect, participation in Triple P is expected to be associated with lower rates of future child welfare allegations and children's removal from the home. To examine whether associations were observed between Triple P participation and improved child welfare outcomes in these Santa Cruz County families, outcome data for two groups of parents who entered (or re-entered) the child welfare system were compared, including: (1) parents who received the Triple P intervention; and (2) parents who were enrolled in a model of parenting education offered prior to Triple P. Both programs were offered through a local community-based organization called the Parents Center. The following research questions were examined:

- To what extent is Triple P participation associated with lower rates of **new substantiated maltreatment allegations**, compared to participants in the prior parenting program?
- To what extent is Triple P participation associated with lower rates of **foster home placements**, compared to participants in the prior parenting program?

An exploratory study was completed in September 2011 that revealed promising results for Triple P in both of these outcome areas. However, that study was somewhat limited by a small sample of Triple P participants, some of whom also did not have a full year of post-program data with which to assess longer-term program success. This 2012 follow-up extends the initial study in two ways:

- It **increases the Triple P participant group** to include another cohort of consenting participants who began Triple P in the period between January 2011 through June 2011.¹
- It **expands the follow-up window** so that all of the new and original cohorts of Triple P participants have a full 12 months of follow-up data with which to examine outcomes related to new allegations and foster home placements.

As with the exploratory study, all participants in the 2012 update (Triple P and comparison group) were child welfare clients, and the two groups were highly comparable in terms of their risk levels (see Figure 2). However, there are two differences between the groups that may limit the comparability of their outcome data. Specifically, consent procedures required that parents taking part in Triple P had to provide consent to have their data included in this study; this was not the case for parents in the comparison group, for whom no consent process was required to include their child welfare outcome data.² Consequently, the child welfare outcome data reported here include 100% of the participants in the comparison group, but only 63% of the Triple P participants receiving services at the Parents Center. In light of the fact that not all Triple P participants consented to participate in this study, some caution should be used in interpreting findings, as the results demonstrated for these Triple P participants may not be representative of all Triple P participants involved in the child welfare system.

Figure 1: **Summary of Program Participation and Available Data, by Program Type**

PARTICIPATION VARIABLES	TRIPLE P	COMPARISON PROGRAM
Number of parents receiving each intervention	158	137
Number (and percentage) of parents whose data are included in this summary	99 (63%)	137 (100%)
Range of program enrollment dates	January 2010 – June 2011	July 2008 – June 2009

Source: Triple P - Positive Parenting Program data and Santa Cruz County Human Services Department data.

¹ The original and newer cohort were demographically similar and thus all data for these two groups was merged into a single Triple P group.

² The procedures for gathering de-identified data from the Human Services Department were classified as imposing less than minimal risk, and thus approved by an IRB as not requiring explicit client consent.

In addition, the Triple P and comparison groups are not concurrent samples. Beginning in Spring 2010, the Parents Center transitioned from its prior model of parent education to Triple P. As a result (as the previous figure above shows), the comparison group participants were drawn from an earlier enrollment period (July 2008 – June 2009) than the Triple P participants (January 2010 – June 2011). Although there is no known reason why this might favor one group's outcomes over another, it is possible that, for example, general social or economic influences on families might have been different in 2008 than in 2011.

In the sections that follow, the **characteristics of participants** in the Triple P and comparison parenting programs are described, followed by a summary of findings relating to the two key research questions examined.

Characteristics of Study Participants

Figure 2 describes the participants enrolled in Triple P and the comparison parenting program. The figure shows that the profile of participants was generally similar across the two groups. There were slightly more women enrolled in Triple P than in the comparison parenting program, although this was not a statistically significant difference. The racial/ethnic make-up of parents in the two groups was similar, with White participants making up the largest percentage of each group, followed by Hispanic/Latino families. In both groups, the majority of participants spoke English as their primary language. Parents entering each program were also similar in age and had roughly the same number of children who were involved in child welfare incidents.

Figure 2: **Comparing Characteristics of Participants in the Triple P and Comparison Group**

PARTICIPANT CHARACTERISTICS	TRIPLE P	COMPARISON PROGRAM
Gender		
Male	38%	42%
Female	62%	58%
Race/ethnicity		
White/ Caucasian	49%	53%
Hispanic/Latino	39%	41%
Black/ African American	3%	5%
Asian or Pacific Islander	3%	2%
Multi-race/ethnicity or other	6%	0%
Primary language		
English	86%	84%
Spanish	14%	16%
Age at program entry		
Average age	34.21	35.27
Age range	16 – 61	15 – 63
Children in family with CW encounters		
Average number of CW-involved children in family	2.42	2.45
Range of number of CW-involved children in family	1 – 9	1 – 8

Source: Triple P - Positive Parenting Program data and Santa Cruz County Human Services Department data.

Note: Triple P sample sizes range from 90-97; Comparison program sample sizes range from 130-137.

Figure 3 describes participants' experiences with the child welfare system in the three-year period prior to their entry into Triple P or the comparison parenting program. More than eight in ten Triple P participants and comparison group participants had a substantiated allegation in the three year period prior to beginning their respective parenting programs. Among the subset of participants who did have a prior substantiated allegation, parents in both groups both had an average of slightly more than four substantiated allegations in the three years prior to entering their program. The two groups also had similar rates of foster care placements during the previous three years, with 51% and 53% of Triple P

participants and comparisons group participants, respectively, having had one or more children in foster care in the past three years.

Figure 3: Previous Experiences with Child Welfare –Triple P and Comparison Program Participants

PARTICIPANT CHARACTERISTICS	TRIPLE P	COMPARISON PROGRAM
Percent with a substantiated allegation in three year period prior to entry	82%	86%
Number of total substantiated allegations among those with a previous allegation – three years before entry Average number of allegations Range in number of allegations	 4.39 0-28	 4.11 1-22
Percent with one or more children in foster care – three years before entry	51%	53%

Source: Santa Cruz County Human Services Department data.

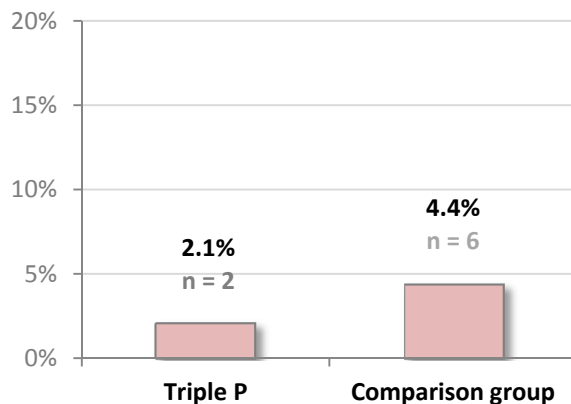
Note: Triple P sample size = 97, 80, 97; comparison program sample size= 137, 118, 137.

Is Triple P participation associated with a reduction in new substantiated maltreatment allegations?

To determine whether participation in Triple P is associated with lower rates of future substantiated maltreatment allegations, allegations rates were examined at two timepoints: within the first six months after their program started and in the period from six to 12 months after beginning the program. Rates were compared for Triple P participants and participants in the comparison parenting program.³

Figure 4 shows the rate of new substantiated cases within the first six months of parents' participation in either Triple P or the comparison parenting program. As the figure shows, in the first six months after beginning their parenting program, participants in the comparison program had twice the rate of new substantiated allegations that Triple P participants had (4.4% versus 2.1%, respectively).

Figure 4: **Percentage of Triple P and Comparison Program Participants with a Substantiated Allegation Up to Six Months after Program Entry**



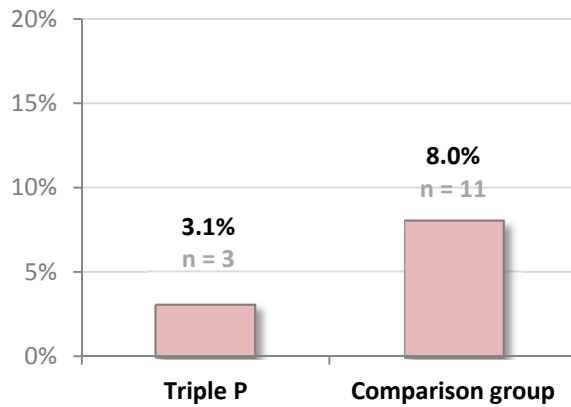
Source: Santa Cruz County Human Services Department data.

Note: Percentages are based on 97 Triple P participants and 137 comparison group participants.

The figure on the following page shows the rate of new substantiated allegations during the second half of the 12-month follow-up period. There were more substantiated allegations in this period than in the first six months, overall and in each of the two participant groups. Rates of new substantiated allegations were still lower for Triple P participants than they were for parents in the comparison groups, with 3.1% of Triple P participants having had a new substantiated allegation in the second half of the 12-month period, as compared to 8.0% of the comparison group.

³ Any allegations or placements occurring within the first 28 days of treatment initiation were not included in this analysis, as these events likely predated the beginning of treatment.

Figure 5: **Percentage of Triple P and Comparison Program Participants with a Substantiated Allegation Occurring Between 6 and 12 Months after Program Entry**

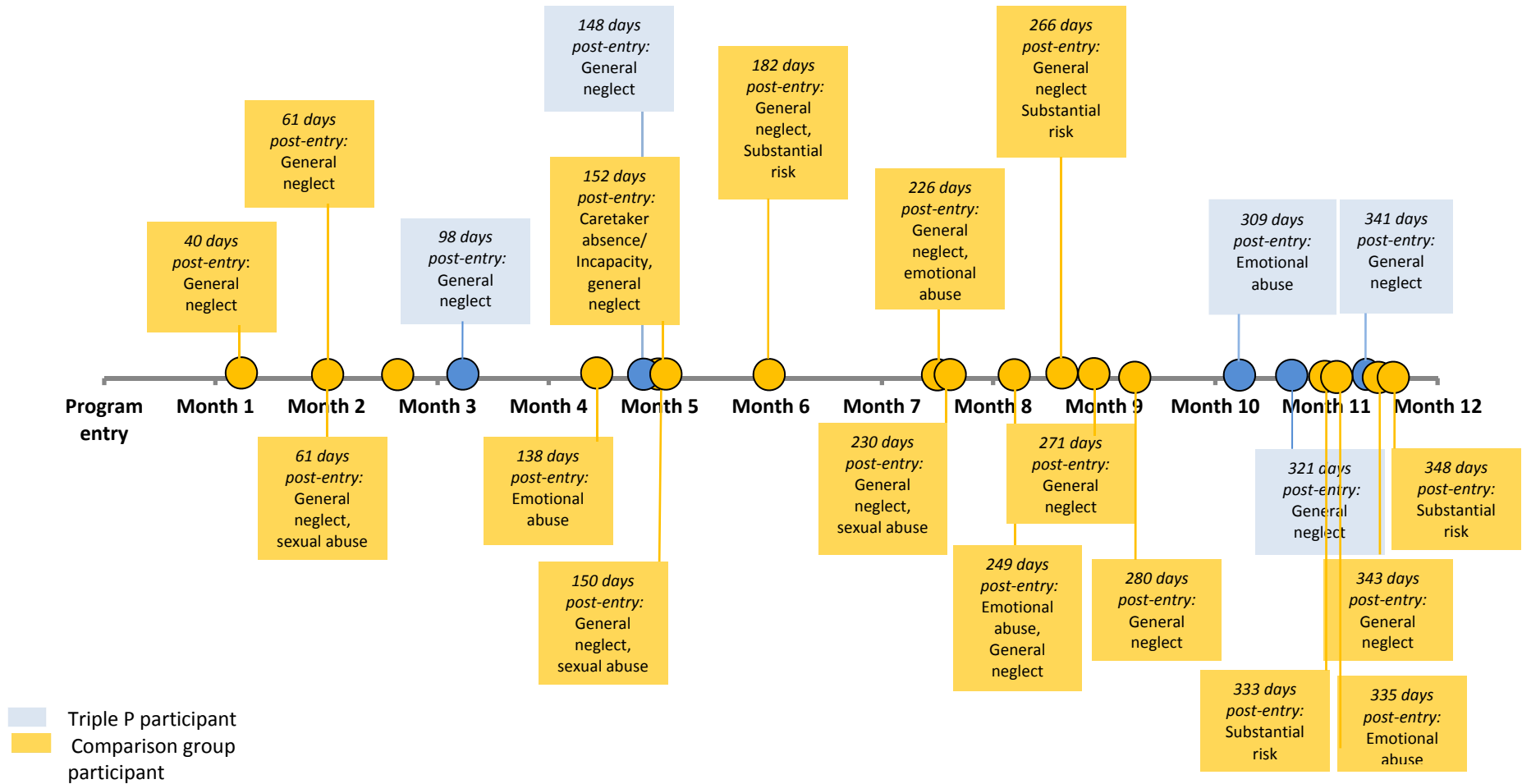


Source: Santa Cruz County Human Services Department data.

Note: Percentages are based on 97 Triple P participants and 137 comparison group participants.

In all, after 12 months, the rate of new allegations among parents in the comparison group (12.4% over 12 months) was more than twice that of Triple P participants (5.2% over 12 months). The figure that follows visually depicts the timing and types of allegations for the five Triple P participants (in blue) and the 17 comparison group participants (in gold).

Figure 6: Triple P and Comparison Group Substantiated Allegations Occuring After Program Enrollment



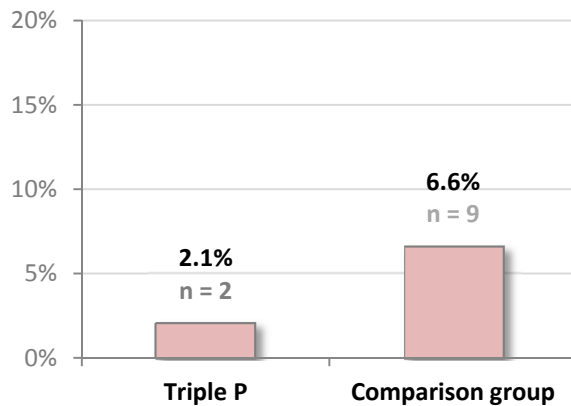
Source: Santa Cruz County Human Services Department data. N= 17 comparison group allegations, 5 Triple P allegations.

Is Triple P participation associated with a reduction in new foster care placements?

A second key outcome of interest was the extent to which Triple P participation resulted in a decrease in the rate of new foster care placements.⁴ To examine this question, the percentage of new foster care placements was compared for the Triple P participants and participants in the comparison parenting program, again using two time ranges: (1) within the first six months after their program started; and (2) in the period from six to 12 months after beginning the program.

The figure below shows that in the first six months after beginning their parenting programs, foster care placement rates among comparison program participants were three times higher than they were for Triple P participants (6.6% versus 2.1%, respectively).

Figure 7: **Percentage of Triple P and Comparison Program Participants with a Foster Care Placement Up to 6 Months after Program Entry**



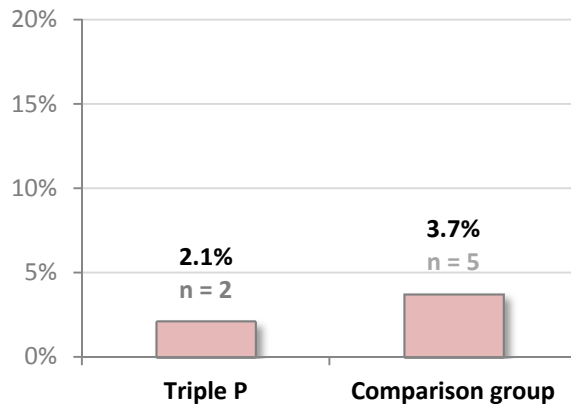
Source: Santa Cruz County Human Services Department data.

Note: Percentages are based on 97 Triple P participants and 137 comparison group participants.

The figure on the following page shows the rate of new foster care placements during the second half of the 12-month follow-up period. The rate of new placements among parents in the comparison group was lower than it had been in the first six months, with 3.7% of parents experiencing a new foster care placement. For Triple P participants, the rate was the same in the second half of the year as it had been in the first half, with 2.1% of participants having a new placement. Thus, as with the first six-month period, Triple P placement rates in the second half of the 12-month follow-up were lower than placement rates for the parents in the comparison group, although the gap was smaller than it was for the first half.

⁴ Foster care placements were considered to be a “new” placement if they occurred four or more weeks after the parent began the parenting program.

Figure 8: **Percentage of Triple P and Comparison Program Participants with a Foster Care Placement Occurring Between 6 and 12 Months after Program Entry**



Source: Santa Cruz County Human Services Department data.

Note: Percentages are based on 97 Triple P participants and 137 comparison group participants.

Across the full 12-month period after beginning their parenting programs, parents in the comparison groups (who received a parenting program that preceded Triple P) were more than twice as likely as Triple P participants to have had a child placed in foster care.

Rates of new placements in the full 12-month period (the 0-5 and 6-12 month periods) were 10.2% and 4.1% for the comparison group and Triple P participants, respectively.

Conclusions

Results suggest that participation in the Triple P program may be associated with reductions in later involvement in the child welfare system. In both periods of time examined – the first six months after starting their parenting program and the period between six and 12 months after starting their program – **parents in the comparison program were twice as likely as Triple P participants to have had a new substantiated maltreatment allegation.** Across the full 12-month period after initiating their respective parenting programs, 12.4% of participants in the comparison group program had a new substantiated allegation, as compared to only 5.2% of Triple P participants.

New foster care placements for Triple P and comparison program participants showed favorable results for Triple P as well. The differences between participants in the two programs were largest during the first six months after they began their program. During this period, the rate of new placements for comparison group participants was three times the rate for Triple P participants (6.6% versus 2.1%). During the second six-month period, comparison group participants still had a higher rate of new placements than did Triple P participants, although the difference between the two groups was smaller. Overall, over the full 12 months, new foster care placement rates were 10.2% and 4.1% for the comparison group and Triple P participants, respectively.

These findings suggest that Triple P may be highly effective in reducing later family involvement in the child welfare system. However, some caution should be used in interpreting these results. As noted previously, the findings reflect those Triple P participants who consented to be in the study, and thus they may not represent the experiences of all Triple P participants involved in the child welfare system.