

The Implementation Science at Work Podcast

Transcript - Episode 10: Maintaining Vision During Times of Change

Guests: Anne Odusanya, Hope Newsome, and Ashley Bowen from the North Carolina
Division of Health and Human Services
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Meera (00:00):

From the Impact Center at UNC's, Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute, this is implementation Science artwork. In this episode, we talk about visioning and implementation and how to maintain vision during times of change. Joining us today are leaders from the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, which serves as a key partner and funder for the Triple P programming across the state.

Anne (00:32):

My name is Anne Odusanya. I'm at the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services for our Division of Child and Family Wellbeing. I'm one of our assistant directors for the Division, and I oversee our whole Child Health Section.

Ashley (00:45):

Hi, I'm Ashley Bowen and I am also with the Division of Child and Family Wellbeing. I am the new North Carolina State Triple P Coordinator.

Hope (00:55):

I'm Hope Newsome, also with a Division of Child and Family Wellbeing. I serve in the capacity of the Child and Family Wellness Unit manager. And Triple P is one of the programs that's in my unit. Happy to be here with you today.

Meera (01:10):

Let's start by talking about creating and maintaining vision for programs like Triple P, where we have multiple partners who are involved at different levels in statewide implementation and scale up. What is your approach to visioning as state leaders in your supportive programs and in particular, the implementation of Triple P?

Anne (01:31):

I think in terms of idea of visioning, it includes having multiple perspectives at the table including those who are impacted by services, delivering or supporting services. It also to me involves creating goals, objectives, concrete outcomes to achieve collectively through strategic planning.

Hope (01:53):

Thanks, Anne. And I'll, I'll add to that, that I think with Triple P, one of the things that we try to be mindful of with Triple P in all of our programs is how it fits within the the larger vision of DHHS and looking for systemic ways that we can implement Triple P so that it meets the objectives of the Division as well.

Ashley (02:20):

Yeah, I agree with what's been said so far. And I would just add that I think part of visioning is looking at, you know, where we've been particularly with Triple P the last 12 or so years, and then figuring out how we can move forward and how to improve on our long-term and short-term goals. And like Anne said, it doesn't happen in silos. It's involving, it's involving all of our partners you know, the folks on the ground, our practitioners, our local implementation agencies, as well as the folks at the state level and our funders and our support system partners.

Meera (03:03):

Our guests go on to talk more specifically about the implementation and scale up of Triple P and how partner and community engagement are essential components. You'll hear some acronyms. For example, LIA short for lead implementation agency in Triple P LIAs are typically health departments and health systems, which have key regional roles in implementing Triple P. We'll also hear NCLC, otherwise known as the North Carolina Learning Collaborative.

Ashley (03:33):

Vision for scale-up is, has to be a shared vision. I think it has to have all of our people working together and aligning the effort of that vision. So if everyone has a similar vision, then we can kind of maximize our efforts and things aren't being, you know, duplicated or if they're done strategically, you know, I feel like we can, we're able to impact our communities more and have a longer lasting impact.

Hope (04:04):

You pretty much hit the nail on the head. The only thing that I would add to that is one of the things that as we talk about, scale up throughout the state which is really a constant conversation. One of the things that we want to do, and I most recently heard when the LIA said that, and it really just kind of hit home for me, is that we don't want to lose quality over quantity. And so we are really just trying to make sure that we are being intentional about how we implement Triple P and just making sure that we are providing a very quality effective program for children and families across the state.

Anne (04:46):

So Ashley and Hope in terms of what they shared especially when it comes to having a vision to maximize efforts because it provides that guiding North star that the system

knows to follow and to foster collective ownership. But I think beyond just having the vision as was mentioned earlier, it's important to have that co-creation to make sure that it does involve various system partners, LIAs, other perspectives – practitioners, families as well. That's something as well that we'd love to hear from directly from families to help make sure there are multiple perspectives at the table because if we do make sure we have those multiple perspectives at the table, it could be more comprehensive and respond to the needs of communities LIAs practitioners and so forth.

Hope (05:41):

One of the things that we encourage on the local level is community involvement and having coalitions at each level that meet regularly and can provide input and work collaboratively. And in partnership with Triple P, I think that we just want to ensure that yes, we are state administrators, but really this is a locally owned and operated program. We want to make sure that we provide the structure and infrastructure for Triple P, but really the ownership is up to the local level and the regions that serve the communities.

Ashley (06:17):

At the local like lead implementation agency. Our practitioners have a huge voice in how things are planned and created for Triple P. Because ultimately it's our practitioners that really drive the program. They are the folks directly working with parents as well as our lead coordinators and implementation specialists. And so we get a lot of feedback from them to help create the vision of what Triple P looks like. We have the North Carolina Learning Collaborative where we, you know, meet virtually and in person to figure out, you know, what is going on in the community and how do we move triple P forward, where are the things that are being done successfully and also what are the things that are barriers that are coming up that we can help, you know, pivot Triple P or you know, create new ideas and visions for Triple P to overcome those barriers. Going back to the kind of community coalitions, our community leadership teams at the table, we try to have a lot of leaders and stakeholders in the community. Those who have the ability to make changes at their agencies and just drive the work of Triple P forward.

Anne (07:41):

There's a lot especially when it comes to our Title V Maternal and Child Health Block grant. One of my other roles is the North Carolina Children and Youth with Special Healthcare Needs Director. And when it comes to the block grant reviews that we have with federal partners, they always say North Carolina is a gold standard when it comes to family and not just family, but community and youth engagement, which we're very proud of. So there are many ways that we partner with families. We have a family partners committee where we pay them for their time. They inform our section efforts from start to finish. They develop and deliver trainings. We also have our needs assessment for Title V, which includes Triple P and various partners with responding to surveys, doing focus groups so we can get that information or have those community conversations to inform our efforts and to be data informed. So on our end here at the state, it's very hard to think about not

starting with families. Of course programs vary in terms of how that family input is given. So that's why going back to Triple P, I really like that there are testimonials and those moving stories directly from the ground, from families that have been used in state presentations and so forth, that really shows the importance of Triple P. It shows the story behind the numbers.

Hope (09:08):

One of the things that, you know, we always think about is COVID-19 and the pandemic and how that really forced us as a department to pivot and to pivot quickly and things that we did not think we could possibly do, we were able to do in a very brief period of time. And I think that we've used those lessons learned from that experience in almost every area within our department and certainly within our division being a newer division, carrying forward some of the new innovations and technologies that we gained through that experience, we really had to shift our vision in terms of serving children and family. We certainly use those opportunities to look back and say, Hey, these are some of the things that we were able to do. I think that one of the other things that really helps in a everchanging environment is to be transparent both with staff and with the community and stakeholders. I think that in the past from my experience at least, government has had a bad rap in terms of not being communicative with things that are happening. But we're in a different day where we want to share, we want people to understand where we are, the efforts that we are trying to make, because I think that it builds trust and it holds us accountable as well.

Ashley (10:39):

Yep, I would agree. And with Triple P, I feel like one thing you can count on is there to always be something that is being adapted or changed or revised, just because we want to be able to improve the program to better meet the needs of our families that we're serving and to meet the needs of the practitioners who are serving families. I think it's important in this process that we, you know, look at the data we have collected and getting feedback from families, from practitioners, from coordinators from our funders, from people at all levels as we make changes just to ensure that our vision and the things that we have planned on the way are adapting in a way that is actually helpful and useful to the people we're trying to serve and are grounded in their real world experiences. You know, it's one thing for us to be like, oh, we have this great vision for Triple P, it's amazing, but is it applicable? Is it practical? Is it feasible for people? And useful.

Anne (11:46):

To think about what hope mentioned about COVID. It hit home hope because I remember when I started my role three years ago, I was tasked with leading the department when it came to COVID efforts and developing 13 mental health offerings in the 2022 to 2023 academic year for schools. So quite an endeavor that required really building trusted relationships. And I like how Ashley talked about it in relation to Triple P, but I think leadership practices during transition is applicable to any program. There's always been

waves of uncertainty, you know, that we've always had to go through. And it's really important to build those trusted relationships, especially with those subject matter experts and looping them into decision making, including those who are impacted really trying to foster collaboration or like hope mentioned, promoting transparency and open and honest communication. It needs to be a two-way street instead of just being talked at, but having a productive conversation and focusing on that co-creation.

Anne (12:50):

In terms of what does the change look like? Not doing it alone, but including system partners, funded agencies leadership saying we are committed to change. You know, thanks for your patience as we're trying to go through this transition. We will share with you what we can, even if it may be tentative, even if you don't know the answer saying you don't know, but you'll try and get the answer somehow. Really trying to confirm the identification of challenges and barriers, because it does acknowledge that change needs to happen and not only focusing on the deficits approach as well, because I feel when there are times of transition, it's very easy to have this sense of urgency and focus on what you don't have <laugh> or what's needed to make this happen. So I think really celebrating strengths or giving kudos, really honoring those milestones and accomplishments is really important too.

Meera (13:44):

Our guests then go on to talk about how an identified need improving the quality and consistency of Triple P data across local implementation agencies resulted in an important change process.

Anne (13:56):

So I think a good example would be from the NCLC, which we in Triple P called the North Carolina Learning Collaborative, we have those meetings monthly and meet quarterly in person for, it's a great way for folks to connect, including the lead implementing agencies or the LIAs with leadership and support partners. And I recall, I think in the March NCLC, there was a lot of conversation about the need from various perspectives at the NCLC to revise data to really have a North star regarding data. LIAs had seen some issues that they were encountering on the ground unbeknownst to us in leadership. So we took that feedback and I connected with our data team to say, Hey, this is what I'm hearing from LIAs and funders and support system partners. Is there a way we can strengthen it? Because data tells the story. Data is the way that you can advocate for more funds. It's the way to show that the program is being effective or to review the data to inform changes so that we can remain data informed. So that was well received and resulted in a data optimization committee, which we call the doc being formed that has various perspectives to really take that feedback and translate it into action based on discussion with various perspectives at the table.

Ashley (15:26):

Yeah, so our data optimization committee basically has been working to improve kind of the data process. They take feedback from data team meetings and now newly formed data work group meetings, and they connect to review the questions that have been asked from these TD meetings and look at, you know, how we can improve processes, how we can answer these questions. They're keeping, you know, documentation of all of these things. And they're posted on Basecamp, you know, just to increase transparency that way. The data optimization committee has a lot of things kind of going on, on its agenda, just figuring out the best way to collect data, our practitioners who are implementing Triple P and standardizing what that process looks like, defining the data terms.

Meera (16:27):

We then hear about creating a vision for Triple P and communicating that vision.

Anne (16:32):

So when it comes to the, the vision for Triple P, what is really important is to see this program that a lot of families find very valuable to expand to delivering all intervention levels in each county. That's what we'd like to see. That's what funders would like to see. Because that increases the reach to families and it makes sure that it's available everywhere and that families have their choice of programs, right, that meet their needs. Has the vision adapted over time? Yes, there have been several discussions with funders and system partners and LIAs and others to course-correct as needed especially just due to transitions at the local level and even at the state level. So there's been a lot of collaborative discussion where we are constantly refining that vision to make sure that it does meet the needs of LIAs' practitioners and families impacted. And I think one thing we can all agree on is that the program is available in each county at all levels.

Hope (17:40):

I think you were spot on. As we are growing and building, we just want to make sure that we're not losing the quality and integrity of the program. And secondly we want to make sure we are build, we are building a sustainable program across the state. Ideally we would love for this to 100% be ran by the local level and have as little government oversight as possible. We're always encouraging the LIAs to look for ways that they can be sustainable. We are always here to support, we're always here to be the biggest cheerleader for Triple P, but we also want to make sure, again, that this is something that across the state in communities that they own Triple P. I think that one of the things, and I will give kudos to Anne for jumping in with Triple P, actually showing support by being there.

Hope (18:40):

I know it sounds simple, but people have really expressed to us that they appreciate leadership taking the time to come to meetings, to show up, to be present and actively involved. We've also talked about transparency a lot. We've talked about communication because we feel that that is very important, as Anne said earlier, having two-way communication and making sure that those lines of communication are always open. And I

think another thing is just really encouraging people to share what they're seeing so that we can take that feedback back and make any types of changes that are needed. And I think that just showing compassion, allowing people to vocalize how they're feeling, what they're seeing and be vulnerable and being receptive to that, and we be vulnerable to them as well, really goes a long way.

Meera (19:39):

As we end today's episode, I'd love to hear a little bit more about what keeps you going in this work? What are some resources and ideas that you always come back to?

Anne (19:49):

The guiding factor for me or a North Star in terms of how I work with partners, community-based organizations, even, you know, with staff is if you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together. So really having those who are impacted at the table, being part of decision making and that co-creation to increase the chances of long-term success and to make sure that the collaboration is responsive to the needs.

Ashley (20:19):

A quote that I like is, we may encounter many defeats, but we must not be defeated by Maya Angelou. It just reminds me, you know, especially I feel like in leadership there are lots of things that may not necessarily always go your way, but it's important to remain resilient and that progress is not necessarily linear. It can take many different forms, but you just got to, you know, keep going and keep trying.

Hope (20:46):

Awesome, awesome. Quotes from both of you. When I was starting out, it seems like a long time ago, but when I was starting out in my career, one of the things that I always did was talk to individuals who had been in their career for many, many years, decades and just really had a mentorship relationship with them where I could lean on them. I'm a social worker by trade, so process cases with them. And then when I became a state administrator, really finding those individuals as a consultant that, you know, I could talk to and, you know, in each level, just keep finding someone that you can connect to who has been in the place that you want to be or aspire to be. And even if you're not in a leadership capacity yet, quote unquote with the title, you still are a leader because you're affecting change and you're making a positive impact. And so I think these are some great tools and resources hopefully that someone can take away. Thank you for having us. Yes, thank you. Thank you so much. It's been a pleasure.

Meera (21:56):

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