

The Implementation Science at Work Podcast

Transcript - Episode 8: Looking into Implementation Support: Data, Quality Improvement and Program Success

Guests: Alden Parker and Tori Wierzchowski, graduate interns;

Jessica Reed from The Impact Center at FPG, UNC-CH

Host: Meera Kumanan

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Speaker 1 (00:00):

From the Impact Center at UNC's, Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute, this is implementation science at work. In this episode we talk about how an analysis of more than six years of qualitative survey data help answer the questions. How does implementation support contribute to Triple P program success? And how can data review contribute to quality improvement? Triple P is a system of evidence-based positive parenting programs to meet parent needs and support families. One fun fact is that this podcast is born out of a graduate internship project that have had the privilege to continue producing. So I am so excited to hear from two former interns along with one of the project leaders today. Here to introduce themselves are:

Speaker 2 (00:48):

I am Alden Parker. I am a current social work student at NYU as well as with the dual concentration in child development.

Speaker 3 (00:57):

I'm Tori Wierzchowski. I finished my Master's in public health at UNC in May.

Speaker 4 (01:02):

And I'm Jessica Reed. I am working on a project to support the use of a triple P parenting program across the state of North Carolina. So we provide implementation support to regions to build, to build community capacity for that program. And I've been delivering implementation science support for around five plus years on this project now. And I am have recently stepped into a leadership role in the project as well.

Speaker 1 (01:35):

Can you all share a little bit about how this project came about and what you were hoping to learn?

Speaker 4 (01:40):

I can say from our perspective on the project, we collect data from the partners that we work with. So from the sites that we're providing support with, we ask them to fill out quarterly surveys that tell us a little bit more about their experiences with support, how they view the relationship with their support providers, how they see themselves as self, self-regulating the work of implementation and supporting the use of this parenting program. And over time we use this data for improvement of our support practices. We use the qualitative data we collect to see if there are any improvements. We as support providers could be using

Speaker 1 (02:23):

The Impact center pairs two specialists to work with the Triple P parenting program regions in North Carolina to offer implementation support. That support involves working with sites over a period of time to set goals, use implementation resources and tools, and get advice and feedback to support the local delivery of Triple P. So I'm curious, after reviewing the data, what were your first impressions about implementation support in the North Carolina Triple P system?

Speaker 2 (02:52):

Yeah, I can take this one. Pretty early on we both really realized how much implementation support makes an incredible difference for lead implementing agencies in the North Carolina and the South Carolina Triple P system. With, with things like team building, team structure and just additional point people with the ability to provide access to resources that are needed to successfully implement the Triple P positive parenting program was really important to these sites and it provides 'em with a person that they can go to with questions and challenges receiving help tailored to that site's specific needs, whether that's influenced by their unique regional location, their families or the communities they're working with. So we think a, a difficult job is made much easier when you have knowledgeable people that you can go to for help and ideas when you need it.

Speaker 1 (03:41):

Tori and Alden go on to explain more about how they approached the project and made sense of over 1600 short responses by identifying broad themes. Imagine a huge wall in tons of post-it notes, make that visual electronic and that's what they did, literally moving or dragging and dropping ideas in an attempt to summarize them into something actionable that the Impact Center could use to improve implementation support.

Speaker 3 (04:08):

Yeah, I can start with the data that we looked at. Jessica kind of explained the, these responses all came from surveys that were collected from the implementation teams receiving support services. So we looked at responses from all of the 13 regional sites and these were collected over six years, so I believe it was September, 2017 into 2023. So a lot of information, a lot of time had had passed. They were asked 10 open-ended questions. And those collect other information as well, the quantitative data. But we were looking at

the qualitative, the free response questions and overall we read through over 1600 responses and those came from just over 500 respondents. So it was quite a bit of information to take in.

Speaker 2 (04:57):

Yeah. And then kind of after we looked at all the data, we moved into looking at a very small section of responses, sort of independently to get a feel of what the common themes emerging might be. And then we came together to discuss those initial thoughts, looked at more data independently, and then we came together and made sure that we had a good percentage of similarities between our, our decision making. We were quickly finding that each site definitely had their own specific and unique challenges.

Speaker 1 (05:28):

While Tory and Alden can visualize patterns or themes, they were dealing with a major challenge.

Speaker 3 (05:34):

We had no idea how to communicate this to everyone

Speaker 1 (05:37):

Until one day. As part of their internship, they began to learn about implementation science frameworks.

Speaker 3 (05:44):

We were really lucky to be able to attend a seminar and implement implementation science research where we learned about frameworks that are being used in the field and one of those is CFR or the consolidated framework for implementation research. And we saw how our data really fit into the framework

Speaker 2 (06:01):

For anybody also who's unfamiliar with that framework. The consolidated framework for implementation research it's really just a framework that helps guide the systematic assessment of barriers and facilitators to different implementation efforts. So it's really just something that helps you identify the different factors that can influence whether or not a program is succeeding or struggling and where exactly the succeeds and struggles are placed.

Speaker 3 (06:27):

Most of our findings were centered in the outer and inner settings, and so the outer setting is all about the environment outside of the organization. So outside of the Triple P program, for the most part, and for us that mostly meant things like funding or outside factors like covid or even community distrust and stigma, which we did see.

Speaker 2 (06:48):

And the inner setting is just more so about the program and organization in and of itself. All those things that encompass, you know, how the program is running, how the implementation is running, and really mainly the individuals that are working. So just organizing it in this way just made it, made it a lot easier for us to see how many different barriers and facilitators there were for each regional site and also just to see how they were interacting with one another.

Speaker 1 (07:16):

Tori and Alden then go on to describe some key barriers and facilitators seen in the data to delivering Triple P and how the impact center's implementation support is responsive to local context and circumstances. They also touch on the community capacity assessment, which is a tool used in the field to help sites prioritize goal setting as they deliver Triple P. What are some key takeaways you'd like our listeners to know about both the organizational and outer settings?

Speaker 2 (07:44):

So within the organization setting, I think and, and the outer setting, the common themes that presented themselves really surrounded those time constraints and competing priorities. And just, you know, speaking on competing priorities, we've already sort of talked about how triple P implementation efforts are largely housed across the state and public health organizational settings. So that means it's largely affected also by funding streams as public health encompasses so much that communities require the funding for as well as consists of funding streams that are not only based and are vary by year by year, but they also vary based on political positionality within the state. So as we saw in some responses, when you know that your funding is coming to an end in a few months, it's really hard to keep working at full quality and speed when it may all stopped abruptly and you might not be able to see the results of the projects that you've been working on.

Speaker 3 (08:39):

We did see a lot of responses primarily in rural areas where team members were struggling to kind of combat the community distrust of public health and parenting programs, as well as the stigma that's associated with seeking help with something like parenting and caregiving. So that seemed to be something that only a few sites were were dealing with, or at least that they were the ones who reported having to face those issues.

Speaker 1 (09:04):

Yeah, thanks for that. It's interesting, although for many of us, maybe not so surprising that many of the barriers you bring up have been a common thread throughout this podcast's. Many episodes, things like funding streams and political will and stigma around parenting support. It really demonstrates how large and necessary the entire network is in public health interventions and in implementation support, and also how helpful organizing

frameworks like CFIR can be. I, I'd like to pivot a little, we've talked a bit about barriers, but I'm curious what facilitators you found in your analysis.

Speaker 2 (09:39):

Yeah, so something we found to be a major facilitators for surrounding like the support and buy-in from leadership positions specifically in the agencies in the inner setting, just the program in and of itself affected greatly the ability to get work done and improved. What we kind of interpreted as morale in a team or in an organization and responses where there was more of a lack of buy-in from agency leadership or limited communication with people in higher level positions. Respondents use language that felt very defeated or frustrated with how the program in and of itself was running. Another facilitator that we noticed were, or major one was learning collaboratives, which learning collaboratives were something where learn the lead implementing agencies who were the programs that were implementing Triple P. They were able to kind of come together and sort of have some sort of peer support from one another and they were able to lean on one another for their implementation efforts, has gave people the space to learn from and with each other. It also, you know, just gave them that space and community to have common shared goals and experiences. And we remembered one quote, something along the lines of it's a peer-to-peer tool where you can collaborate with others to find creative solutions to the challenges that you're facing.

Speaker 3 (11:02):

Yeah, so one of the biggest facilitators that we came across was really the adaptable implementation support. Especially the guidance through site assessments. Really the great support that has been provided to different parties in various ways was a, again, a huge piece of all the facilitators that we found because it directly impacts how Triple P is being implemented. And for me it was a really kind of fun and heartwarming part of the data to come across because there were so many responses that were specifically shouting out, like by name the support specialists who have spent so much time and energy on providing direct help to all of these teams and trying to find ways to improve how their team's functioning and how they can address issues that have been coming up. And support, being able to help teams dig into what isn't working and offer really specific solutions, provide step by steps to get through those difficult pieces was something that we saw quite a lot in responses and especially the guidance through assessments. We were generously invited to sit in on a few of the assessments with different regions and we were able to hear how teams were walked through the community capacity assessment and how the specialists kind of supported the discussion about where teams are at, what they're doing well, where they could improve. And again, from our data we knew that these assessments were very useful for teams. So it was really fun to see that in action.

Speaker 4 (12:34):

And I just wanted to chime in and say, I, I think, you know, the, how much the context is specific to implementation and how, you know, any program or practice is supported and

used is, is a really major factor. But to hear, you know, that this data really bears out how much sites have their own specific and unique challenges that our support providers are being really responsive to, it just feels so validating to hear that. 'cause I think it's one of the things that like if you're providing support to a site, you're providing support to one site, you can't necessarily take the things that you do and apply them in these different places without that tailoring to be responsive and to really help people be able to put something into practice that is gonna matter for their communities and gonna matter for the people delivering Triple P there.

Speaker 4 (13:33):

And so I think we've, we work really hard to make sure that we offer support in a way that meets the needs of the teams that we're working with. So we have a tiered model that we use, which includes universal supports and that capacity assessment is one of those universal supports. But then we have more of like a brief narrow, so if sites are working on particular, you know, one maybe two performance areas that they have goals set in we provide some more narrow focus support or we can provide a broader, more intensive support to teams just again, depending on their needs, their capacity. I think that leadership support has a lot to do with whether or not the teams that we are providing support to really feel able to lean into this area of their work and to attend to implementation, put things into practice, test them out, and then lean into working with us to do some problem solving along the way.

Speaker 4 (14:35):

And then we have other more performance-based assessments that aren't used as regularly or as much, but we have a driver's assessment that can be used at the agency level to help provide some of the support at that level of the system. And then other performance measures like team functioning scales community readiness, organizational readiness, lots of different things that we can also bring into that process to make sure again, that we are helping teams to understand their context, that we understand their context and then all of our support is relevant and, you know, meant to impact the teams that we're working with in the ways that they wanna see that impact happen.

Speaker 1 (15:21):

As you all were talking, I was thinking about how tide this is to equity. I think tailoring really remedies this fallacy of a one size fits all solution in public health and can be such an important tool in advancing equity, both in community ownership of work and whether we're really meeting folks where they are, and also recognizing that community organizations that may need the most implementation support or often those that are underfunded and serving disinvested communities. Is that something you were thinking about during the work? And how do you think equity shapes your perspective on implementation support more broadly?

Speaker 4 (15:58):

Yeah, I, I appreciate that question. I think, I mean, I kind of think you, it's really hard to have equity if you're doing the same thing for everybody in the same way. And so just like we encourage, you know, our sites to be collecting and using data for decision making around what levels of Triple P are meeting the needs of their communities, what communities in particular are they trying to reach? Where are there access issues? Where are people engaged in systems where traditionally there have been, you know, inequitable outcomes or you know, all the way I think to like justice issues that just aren't addressed because we go about things like business as usual and just applying solutions without really examining more like what systems are these being built out of, you know, are these solutions really meeting everybody's needs or designed to meet everyone's needs?

Speaker 4 (17:02):

And so I think, I think the way that we work, we really see it and I think implementation science as a field is seen as kind of a space where there are opportunities to lean a lot more into equity and justice centered principles and activities so that we're not just going along with the status quo and business as usual ways of working, but we're really examining over time what are the outcomes we're trying to meet and who are we trying to meet them for and why. And then how do we best all work together to create systems that are gonna support, you know, children and families and practitioners and organizations and their leadership and people all throughout the systems to put those effective strategies into place.

Speaker 1 (17:50):

Thanks so much, Jessica. Yeah, I think that really gets to the core of implementation science, right? That bridging research into practice, that's equity, making sure that communities that haven't had access to these interventions before are getting it and it's being done with a health equity lens to it. Can you all share if there are any lessons learned that you would advise for the system to improve implementation work?

Speaker 2 (18:15):

Yeah, I can share some stuff. Just building off of what Jessica said in the conversation surrounding equity, I think one of the biggest lessons from the results here is not assuming needs of a community based upon general characteristics such as if they're rural, if they're more urban using the uniqueness of each community to build and provide specific support that's tailored to their needs, which are also likely to change over time. And just listening was often something that respondents mentioned was really helpful to them in order to build a co-partnership with the implementation support specialist to, in order to tailor that support together.

Speaker 3 (18:55):

Yeah. And then kind of at a broader level since we were the ones working with all of this data, we kind of did find a few ways that data collection could be enhanced to allow for quicker analysis and higher quality responses. So kind of changing up how the data that we

used as collected could help shorten the turnaround time for finding out what is and isn't working and also be able to get more detailed or direct responses from those who are answering these surveys. And both of those would reduce the analysis burden as well. So of course it's really important to have this information and then also be able to give it back to everyone who needs it so that they can improve or change the things that they're doing and, and learn from other sites as well, what's working well and what isn't.

Speaker 3 (19:43):

So some of the more specific ideas that we had kind of relate back to using a framework. So using a framework to create questions to, to ask the people that you're wanting to, to communicate with to be able to more quickly organize their responses and to some sort of organizational structure. And that would also help like more clearly identify specific areas where there might be a disproportionate number of barriers building up or where things are going really great. Again, just being able to shorten the amount of time for a turnaround there would be great to really let people know what's going on, what's, what's working, what isn't and how things could be improved. I recommend that because some of the responses pointed to some potentially like really large important issues, but they weren't detailed enough for it to be useful to us in this analysis or be able to really parse out what was happening to then make a recommendation for change. So being able to talk directly to people about their responses and just get more information would be really helpful.

Speaker 2 (20:45):

Yeah, and something else too that I wanted to mention is an issue that we sort of ran into was an issue of, of differential language or like a lack of shared language amongst different implementation supports and specialist and programs organizations. And I know implementation science is working to improve upon their accessibility specifically within academic work. Like plain language summaries and just not using as much jargon. So to make this accessible for more people so that more results are able to be, are able to come out that are, that are easier for everybody to understand and to co-build things with communities.

Speaker 3 (21:28):

It seemed that the, those providing support are really able to help team members feel more confident about the work that they're doing and that they, they can do it on their own in the future. So if we're talking about capacity, that's the most important thing is being able to, to give them the tools to, to function in the future on their own.

Speaker 2 (21:48):

And another thing is just that they understand that there isn't a one size fits all easy solution to providing this kind of support. And the diversity across regions, specifically in, in North Carolina speaks to that challenge. And after talking with some of those people that are providing that direct support, even briefly, you could tell how much that they enjoy being able to help problem solve and share their knowledge and expertise and respond

specifically to the needs of these teams and also specifically with the relationships that they have and have formed with each of these teams.

Speaker 4 (22:21):

I just feel like it is really helpful to hear all of this and I think kind of reflecting over time as I've heard back this data from Tori and Alden and just thinking about our role in the system and you know, what impacts are we seeing? I think there are, you know, a lot of places where more systematic strategies are put into place like maybe just a learning collaborative or training is happening. But being able to provide tailored support in addition to those strategies I think has just made such a difference in the sustainment of triple P across the state over time.

Speaker 2 (23:00):

Definitely also, just something else to add a notice around the time every year that the community capacity assessment would come up. There would be a lot more, you know, not only feedback that was really positive about, you know, just the planning process, the ability to receive this support about what, what they can really do, but just a lot of sort of push and morale for the implementation work that they were doing. Just again, highlighting how much those assessments and guidance from the external implementation team provide such a valued structure and encouragement to the local teams.

Speaker 4 (23:38):

I think it's interesting 'cause it's almost like there's a hierarchy of needs for like engaging in intensive implementation support. Like you have to know that you're supported internally by your organization, you have to know that your funding is pretty intact, that there are no other, you know, sort of like big competing priorities as you name 'em, but other like emergencies that are pulling your time and attention away. And then to see like what, what that takes to put together for people to be really able to lean into the support. And then that last comment that you made, it just made me think a lot about well we think, or I've started thinking about how important, like we know how important role clarity is, but once you have your role set and it's clear what your work is and then you have clear goals, people are really able to kind of take that and run with it unless something gets in the way and interrupts it. I think it's one of the spaces where it does feel like a runway is being creative or people into their work within that process. And it's always cool to see 'em kind of launch off of it.

Speaker 3 (24:47):

Yeah, that's a great way to put it. And I remember there being responses that did come from after a CCA or, or other assessments or specific support that was provided and those responses were incredibly positive and included a lot of exclamation marks and they were like, we're ready to go. Like, we can take this on our own. Now

Speaker 1 (25:06):

You all have shared a ton today. I'm curious how are we gonna use this information to advance the work that we're doing around implementation support?

Speaker 4 (25:15):

Yeah, I, I think one of the pieces, I mean we've been collecting data and, and the survey data is related to a couple of our outcomes that we see from implementation support, but it still feels just really challenging to fully be able to know the impact that we are having on the site teams that we're working with and the impact that we're having on the system more broadly. And so I think those are our next steps are really digging into how can we, you know, revise, change our existing data collection practices to really, I think, incorporate some of this feedback that we've heard, but to also think about a little bit more broadly. You know, how are we collecting data that we can share, you know, I think as you all said, like more in real time that help people not only know how to improve their practices, but help them really truly see the impact that they're making with the teams that they're working with.

Speaker 1 (26:23):

What a beautiful way to wrap up. Thank you all so much for joining us on this episode.

Speaker 4 (26:28):

So thankful to you all for doing this, be like, be doing this internship, taking on this messy data. It has been really cool to be able to see our work in this way from everything that you all put together. So thank you again for doing that.

Speaker 3 (26:42):

And it ended up being a, a very fun project.

Speaker 1 (26:51):

This episode was produced by Meera Kumanan and Sandra Diehl. Original Music by Robin Jenkins, artwork by Julie Chin. Special thanks for concept and creation to Sandra Diehl, Meera Kumanan, Devin Minch and Will Aldridge. Technical advice from Katherine Neer and funding from The Duke Endowment and the North Carolina Division of Social Services.