

## Dissemination of evidence-based parenting and family support strategies: Learning from the Triple P—Positive Parenting Program system approach

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### 1.1 Abstract

This paper discusses the evidence for parenting skills training and behavioral family intervention (BFI), and the need for early intervention and prevention programs. It presents a conceptual framework for a comprehensive multilevel parenting and family support strategy for reducing the prevalence of parenting difficulties and other family risk factors associated with child maltreatment and the development of behavioral and emotional problems in children and adolescents. The framework for the system of intervention known as the Triple P—Positive Parenting Program (Triple P) is described. Also discussed are issues in the dissemination of evidence-based psychological interventions.

### 2.1 Effective Interventions do not equal population impact

Despite the evidence for the efficacy of BFI, and the trend for managed care and cost-effective practice (Task Force, 1995), the accessibility of empirically supported interventions is typically poor (Barlow & Hofmann, 1997), as the use of these empirically supported interventions in clinical practice is not widespread (Wilson, 1995). Families presenting to agencies that provide intervention services for children and families commonly do not receive BFI (Taylor & Biglan, 1998). Only the minority of children with identifiable conduct problems receives any form of treatment. In Australia, it has been estimated that between 2% and 20% of children with identified mental health problems receive any form of treatment from specialist mental health services (Sawyer et al., 2000; Zubrick et al., 1995) and only about 10% of parents participate in parent education (Sanders et al., 1999). Although many BFI programs are available, there is no evidence that they have made a difference at a population-level in reducing the community prevalence of childhood and adolescent problems (Sanders, 2001). The injection of more funds into current services will not, in isolation, solve the problem. A key challenge in meeting the need for better parenting is to develop cost-effective, accessible programs capable of reducing the prevalence of parenting practices known to be associated with poor developmental outcomes in children (Taylor & Biglan, 1998).

### 3.1 Dissemination of evidence-based prevention and early intervention programs

The overall aim of dissemination is concerned with the effective management of knowledge. It involves the transfer of knowledge about how to successfully plan, implement and evaluate family intervention and prevention programs, communicate the outcomes in both scientific and clinical arenas (including service providers, agencies and policy makers), and support the adoption of evidence-based approaches. Effective dissemination can avoid reinventing the wheel and minimize the promotion of programs that are ineffective. Dissemination efforts can also provide information about how to access training and provide support for evidence-based programs, and facilitate communication and networking between agencies, organizations and individuals involved in parenting and family support activities.

### 4.1 Recommendations for dissemination of evidence-based interventions

Our experience with Triple P has convinced us that a carefully planned strategy can lead to the successful dissemination of evidence-based programs. As the program has evolved, it has been clear that the strategies used to disseminate the program to the field require careful ongoing empirical scrutiny, with key considerations for dissemination efforts as follows: Program and resource development, Quality training, Promotion of practitioner self-efficacy, Workplace support, and Supervision.

### 5.1 Conclusions

Despite the notion that BFI may be the most effective intervention available for at-risk families (Kazdin, 1991; McMahon & Wells, 1998), there has been little impact on population prevalence rates of child maltreatment or childhood behavioral and emotional problems as they are not widely available through community services (Taylor & Biglan, 1998). Effective dissemination is critical for evidence-based research to have any significant community impact. Furthermore, a system such as Triple P that seeks to reduce the prevalence rates of child and parenting problems requires disseminated interventions to be widely used by trained practitioners so that there is sufficient program reach or parental exposure to the intervention. Without this parental involvement population approaches will not be successful.