

Expanding Parenting Support Across California: Meeting Families Where They Are



Parenting today comes with a unique set of challenges. Across California, families are navigating rising costs, packed schedules, and limited support systems, all while trying to show up fully for their kids. In the midst of it all, many parents and caregivers are looking for trusted guidance, real connection, and tools. Every family's needs are different, which is why California is investing in a broad range of parenting support tailored to different languages, cultural identities, and lived experiences.

In response, something powerful is taking shape: a growing network of parenting programs is expanding across the state—including programs rooted in cultural traditions spanning generations, backed by research, and with demonstrated evidence of effectiveness, impact on racial equity, and sustainability. Together, they're reshaping what support for families looks like in California. From home-visiting models like the [Family Spirit Program](#), which honors Indigenous traditions, to culturally centered efforts like the [Effective Black Parenting Program](#), these initiatives are building trusted spaces where families feel seen, supported, and equipped with real-life tools.

One program making a measurable impact across communities is the [Triple P – Positive Parenting Program](#). With over 35 years of research behind it, Triple P gives families flexible options for building strong relationships, managing stress, and navigating everyday challenges. Whether it's a tip sheet, a workshop, or more in-depth support, the goal is the same: helping caregivers feel confident and connected, not judged.

Counties like Santa Cruz and Mendocino are already seeing the difference these programs make. In Santa Cruz, [First 5](#) has led a comprehensive implementation of Triple P since 2010. "Triple P is built around a core set of evidence-based strategies," says David Brody, Executive Director of First 5 Santa Cruz County, "They're designed to help parents find within themselves the capacity to build strong relationships with their kids—and feel successful doing it."

The expansion of programs like Triple P across California is part of a broader statewide investment in family and youth mental health. Through the Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative (CYBHI), the California Department of Health Care Services is partnering with organizations

"Discover additional programs funded through the Department of Health Care Services Evidence-Based and Community-Defined Evidence Practices Grants."



across the state to scale programs like Triple P, helping ensure that more families—regardless of their background or zip code—have access to the support they need. Other supports now available through this effort include BrightLife Kids, a free virtual telehealth service with one-on-one coaching sessions, and Positive Parenting, Thriving Kids, a series of 20 free videos and print resources with evidence-based information and skills to address common parenting challenges.

By investing in both local implementation and capacity-building, CYBHI is helping counties like Santa Cruz, Mendocino, and others grow and sustain Triple P's reach, making parenting resources more available and responsive to real-life challenges.



VIDEO CLIP: HEAR FROM DAVID BRODY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, FIRST 5 SANTA CRUZ COUNTY ABOUT TRIPLE P'S APPROACH TO SERVING CALIFORNIA FAMILIES

One Parent's Journey Through Triple P

For parents like 26-year-old Dia Antazo of Mendocino County, that kind of accessible, judgment-free support can be life-changing. As a single father who began caring for his younger sister at just 9 years old, Antazo knows what it means to carry a lot of responsibility. When he first heard about Triple P, it felt like one more thing to manage. But the experience turned out to be much more meaningful than he expected.

"Once I did it, I felt pretty good," he says, "It was actually teaching me things. I was learning. It clarified stuff I didn't understand as a kid and never really thought about as an adult." Triple P gave Antazo practical parenting strategies, a deeper understanding of his own upbringing, and tools to support both his mental health and his daughter's wellbeing.

"I think that was the hardest thing, just feeling that you're the only one dealing with this. None of my friends have really experienced this, and I don't really have any family that has [children]. So, it's not something you really want to talk about"

-Dia Antazo, Parent

Connecting with other parents through Triple P helped break that sense of isolation. It also encouraged him to seek therapy and join support groups, boosting his confidence and helping him build skills he'll carry forward for years to come.

One of the most impactful classes he took was specifically designed for parents who are separated. It helped him recognize how his parents' divorce continues to affect him, and gave him tools to better support his daughter when she begins asking questions. "Me and her mom are not really together, and she's so young that [I] can't really explain, it doesn't make any sense to her yet. But once she gets older, I feel like now I actually know how to deal with it and properly talk to her."

He also recalls a role-playing exercise where parents practiced how to de-escalate conflict: “They taught us to disengage and not start an argument, and that really stuck with me,” he says. “Learning how to de-escalate, I think that was the biggest thing that I took away from that, and I feel like it’s already helped my life.”

Antazo is confident that the knowledge he’s gained through Triple P will continue to support him, not just as a parent, but in every relationship that matters.

Creating Connection: A Practitioner’s Role in Building Parent Community

For [Mendocino County Triple P](#) Facilitator Tracy McGill, what sets the program apart is the emotional safety it offers: “It’s a space to connect with other parents,” she says, “and a space to feel vulnerable.” More than just a class, McGill describes Triple P as a place built on autonomy and free of judgment—where parents can show up as they are. With flexible options and classes starting regularly, she wants families to know that support is always available when they’re ready.

“I think that when you have support and you have community, your chances of better mental health are higher. And so, with that, that’s what I want to do—I want to help parents feel like they have community.”

– Tracy McGill, Triple P Practitioner

What unites the families benefiting from Triple P is not a particular cultural background, difficult circumstance, or socioeconomic status; rather, it’s a concern for the wellbeing of their children and a desire to take care of themselves and their families. At the same time, the program is designed and delivered with cultural sensitivity, with offerings tailored to meet the needs of diverse populations in order to help as many families, parents, and other caregivers as possible.

For McGill, Triple P is a meaningful way to give back to her community. She believes that supporting parents ultimately strengthens entire families—and, by extension, the broader community. She also emphasizes the value of offering services in both English and Spanish, meeting families where they are, and recognizing the diverse challenges people face based on their circumstances. Most importantly, she hopes the program encourages individuals from all backgrounds to feel comfortable asking for help and finding support that truly fits their needs.



Tracy McGill, a Triple P Facilitator with First 5 Mendocino County.



VIDEO CLIP: HEAR MORE FROM TRIPLE P PRACTITIONER TRACY MCGILL ABOUT THE SPECTRUM OF FAMILIES USING THE PROGRAM FOR SUPPORT

Another Facilitator, Sandra Rodelo, has been providing Triple P support in Santa Cruz for over 14 years. She has worked with children and teens of all ages—including those with special needs—and helped families navigate everything from everyday stress to more complex challenges like divorce, anxiety, and major life transitions. She also facilitates Triple P's Lifestyle Program. What stands out most to her is the program's inclusive and flexible approach. "We try to accommodate as much as we can," she says, noting how this helps "break the barrier of shame" around getting help to make Triple P's valuable resources more accessible for those from a variety of backgrounds and parenting situations.



Sandra Rodelo, a Triple P Facilitator with First 5 Santa Cruz County.

"That's the good thing about Triple P—we have different tools. But parents, at the end of the day, decide which tool they're going to use. We are there, our public providers are there to guide them to all the tools and show them how we can implement them in their families, but the parents are the ones deciding."

– Sandra Rodelo, Triple P Practitioner

Importantly, this approach is working. "In [recent] years, we have seen in our assessment how families are in stress at the beginning of the service, [but] they are not so stressed at the end of services," adds Rodelo. "When they finish, they say, 'I'm glad I have done this, and I want to continue doing it just for myself.'"

Beyond the Moment: How Parenting Support Shapes Generations

Executive Director for First 5 Santa Cruz County David Brody reaffirms the crucial role that inclusivity and flexibility play in shaping Triple P's efforts. "We certainly locate our services in communities that experience the highest levels of vulnerability for the right reasons, but we also don't means test or exclude."

Evaluations of the program confirm its effectiveness among diverse populations, indicating that families are using the tools they gain from the program, and that they are able to do so in ways that fit their specific situation. For example, Santa Cruz County has seen a “dramatic decline” in both maltreatment cases and referrals thanks to the program, with similar changes also happening elsewhere across the state. Supporting parents is one of the most effective ways to strengthen community wellbeing.

“When you’re confronted with real external challenges, whether it’s poverty, experiences of racism, or divorce and separation, and just being torn about and watching your kids and wanting to do everything possible to provide a safe, loving, and supportive place and maintain positive relationships in that context, Triple P isn’t the only thing, but it’s something that very, very much can help and that parents need.”

–David Brody, Santa Cruz First Five Executive Director

As Brody explains, the connections children have with their caregivers form the foundation for everything that follows. “There’s a very strong relationship between mental health, family wellbeing, and positive relationships,” he says. Providing families with the right information and tools now can spark a ripple effect that lasts for generations. “We’re not just shaping wellbeing for kids in the immediate term. By creating nurturing environments—whatever the family structure—we’re building a pathway that supports this child, and the ones who come after.”

Parenting will always come with challenges, but with the right support, it doesn’t have to feel overwhelming or isolating. Programs like Triple P show that when families are met with compassion, cultural understanding, and practical tools, meaningful change is not only possible—it’s already happening.

Reflecting on his experience with the program, Antazo says the following: “If I had any advice, it’s don’t be afraid to ask for help and take every opportunity that provides you with help, because I definitely would have regretted not taking the [Triple P] class, and if I had actually just blown it off, I think I would have been worse mentally [....] I really hope there’s more programs like this.”



*David Brody, Executive Director,
First 5 Santa Cruz County.*

Triple P is just one piece of a growing, statewide effort to meet families where they are—whether through evidence-based programs, community-defined evidence practices, or both. California is recognizing that there’s no one-size-fits-all solution to parenting. What matters is that families have access to the tools, relationships, and resources that reflect their values and realities.



VIDEO CLIP: HEAR MORE FROM DAVID BRODY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, FIRST 5 SANTA CRUZ COUNTY ABOUT HOW CYBHI FUNDING IS HELPING TRIPLE P SUPPORT FAMILIES

These efforts continue to make an impact—the hope is clear: every parent, grandparent, and caregiver in California should be able to find support that feels right for them, in a language they speak, and in a way that honors their lived experience.

Click the links to learn more about [First 5 Mendocino’s Triple P Program](#) and [First 5 Santa Cruz’s Triple P Program](#). Visit the [CYBHI website](#) to learn more about their free resources for parents and youth.