

# Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:  
Civilian

## Family Quality of Life During the Transition to Adulthood for Individuals with Intellectual Disability and/or Autism Spectrum Disorders

Boehm, T. L., Carter, E. W., & Taylor, J. L. (2015). Family quality of life during the transition to adulthood for individuals with intellectual disability and/or autism spectrum disorders. *American Journal on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*, 120(5), 395-411. doi:10.1352/1944-7558-120.5.395

**SUMMARY:** Parents of children with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) may face additional stressors and challenges in supporting the needs of their children, thus impacting quality of life. This study examined factors related to family quality of life among parents of children with an intellectual disability or autism. Findings revealed overall satisfaction with family quality of life, with some differences in domains.

### KEY FINDINGS:

- Parents' religious faith was positively related to family quality of life, thus greater well-being was present among parents who sought their religious faith more frequently to cope with daily stressors.
- Challenging behaviors (i.e., aggression, self-harm) and lack of support from friends and family negatively impacted parents' emotional well-being and overall quality of life.
- Overall, 70% of parents were satisfied with their family quality of life; with physical well-being and family interactions rated the highest.

### IMPLICATIONS FOR MILITARY PROFESSIONALS:

Military professionals could:

- Collaborate with other professionals in the field to provide support and resources for military families of children with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD)
- Develop practical models for incorporating faith and other family values to help support families of children with IDD in making important decisions

### IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Utilize evidence-based practices that are designed to address challenging behaviors in children with developmental disabilities
- Offer educational opportunities for families of children with IDD to accurately address needs and provide appropriate resources for family support

### IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Encourage research that examines how to implement effective programs to further support military families who have children with IDD
- Promote partnerships among professionals and associations that work to improve family quality of life among families with children of developmental disabilities

This product is the result of a partnership funded by the Department of Defense between the Office of Military Community and Family Policy and the USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture through a grant/cooperative agreement with The University of Minnesota.



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## METHODS

- Participants were recruited via mail, email, and word-of-mouth throughout the state of Tennessee.
- Parents completed questionnaires addressing family quality of life (i.e., family interaction, parenting, emotional and physical well-being, and disability-related supports), religious faith, child's main mode of communication, challenging behaviors, and severity of disability.
- Statistical analyses were conducted to determine the relationship between parents' family quality of life ratings and child- (i.e., functional abilities) and family- (i.e., parent education) level factors.

## PARTICIPANTS

- The sample included 425 parents/primary caregivers of young adults with developmental disabilities.
- Developmental disabilities included 43% autism, 38% intellectual disability, 12% both autism and intellectual disability, and 7% other disability or not answered.
- Parents' ages ranged from 31-72 years (M = 48 years, SD = 8); children's ages ranged from 13-21 years (M = 16 years, SD = 3).
- Most participants were White (83%), followed by 14% Black, and an equal amount of Latino, Asian American, and multiracial (2% for each).

## LIMITATIONS

- Interpretations based on study findings are limited due to a lack of a randomly selected sample.
- Conclusions from this study may be difficult to generalize to all families of children with developmental disabilities throughout the U.S. as participants were recruited only from Tennessee.
- Family quality of life was only assessed from one parent, thus study findings are limited to one perspective or point of view.

## AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Explore family quality of life among families of children with IDD who have graduated from high school and are experiencing young adulthood
- Examine techniques for positively addressing challenging behaviors of children with developmental disabilities
- Observe how faith in families of children with IDD impacts decisions and overall well-being

## ASSESSING RESEARCH THAT WORKS



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<https://reachmilitaryfamilies.umn.edu/content/assessing-research-that-works>