

Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:
Civilian

Parental Perceptions and Satisfaction with Family Services in Families of Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder and Other Developmental Disabilities

Zuna, N., Gràcia, M., Haring, S. H., & Aguilar, J. M. (2016). Parental perceptions and satisfaction with family services in families of children with autism spectrum disorder and other developmental disabilities. *Journal of Intellectual and Developmental Disability*, 41(3), 1-10. doi:10.3109/13668250.2016.1179272

SUMMARY: Researchers examined 100 caregivers' perceptions and satisfaction with family services of children with autism spectrum disorder and other developmental disabilities. Results indicated that initial assessments could be used to match family services to family needs, and follow-up consultations may help to ensure that the services received result in improved family quality of life.

KEY FINDINGS:

- Of the sample, 25% of families indicated that a few family services, such as respite, sibling support groups, and parent support groups, were needed but not received.
- The majority of caregivers were satisfied with how well the family services received met their family needs. Families were less satisfied with their knowledge of family services as compared to their ability to request services.
- Of the families, 73 reported receiving no assistance from peers or family members in navigating the disability service system.

IMPLICATIONS FOR MILITARY PROFESSIONALS:

Military professionals could:

- Collaborate with other professionals about ways in which to facilitate program services that meet the individual needs of military families and children experiencing developmental disabilities
- Promote feedback groups for military families to ensure that the services received result in improved family quality of life

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Disseminate information regarding family services available to military families and children who are impacted by autism spectrum disorder and other developmental disabilities
- Offer workshops to promote accessible resources that assist in navigating the disability service system

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Investigate the organization of state agencies' provision of family services to encourage collaboration across agencies and to reduce duplication of services.
- Encourage the development and continuation of holistic family support programs that can promote resilience in Service members, their partners and children

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METHODS

- Participants were recruited via word of mouth through a local behavioral health and developmental disability agency in Texas.
- The survey used was a modified version of the Family Quality of Life and Services Inventory.
- Researchers used descriptive statistics to examine (a) the types of disability-related family services families used, (b) how well family services met their needs, (c) the types of family services needed but not received, and (d) families' perceptions of their knowledge of disability-related family services.

PARTICIPANTS

- Of the 100 families, the sample consisted of caregivers that spoke English (N =84) or Spanish (N = 16).
- Participants were comprised of the following race/ethnicity: White (N = 46), Black (N = 16), Latino (N = 32), Asian (N = 4), and Other or missing (N = 10).
- Caregivers ranged from 20-60 years old, with children ranging from birth-24 years.

LIMITATIONS

- Results are only representative of the area in which the study was conducted; therefore, these findings may only be applicable to this area in Texas.
- Researchers did not include children who were 13 years old within the study, and did not give rationale as to why that may be.
- Sampling method consisted of word of mouth as opposed to random sampling, which may limit generalizability.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Learn about the types of formal and informal systems available within each state to make known the availability of family services and to help families more successfully navigate service systems
- Include a more expansive list of family services, with open-ended questions asking families to provide suggestions for other family services not included in the survey
- Explore comparisons between families who receive assistance and support in service systems to those who do not

ASSESSING RESEARCH THAT WORKS



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