

The Described Experience of Primary Caregivers of Children with Mental Health Needs

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Abstract:

About 10% of our nation's children have serious mental health needs that result in significant functional impairments. Although research has found that primary caregivers of children with mental health needs have high levels of depressive symptoms and distress, little is known about the challenges these caregivers face. Focus groups with 20 caregivers of children with mental health needs between 2 and 17 years of age revealed these themes: struggling with care systems, living in fear, being burdened and exhausted, worrying about the rest of the family, and having good things happen. Caregivers described extreme challenges and many unmet needs that are important to consider in efforts to improve both children's and caregivers' well-being.

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