Research on Family Perspectives, Needs, & Roles

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Family-oriented Research

A little history

• 1984 found only one study done from the perspective of parents whose children had mental health problems.
• By late 1980s a few descriptive studies using parents as informants.
• 1990s studies of family roles, parent-professional collaboration
  • Measures developed: empowerment, caregiver strain, parent-professional collaboration, family participation in service & educational planning.

Descriptive Studies

What are the experiences of family members trying to find help and resources for their children/youth with mental health conditions?

• Needs (appropriate services, respite, support)
• Barriers
  - Cost
  - Availability of services
  - Stigma
  - Relationships with professionals
  - Questions about condition, medication, parenting
• What helps?
  - Information about the condition
  - Support and understanding from other families
  - Empathetic, competent helpers.

Outcome Framework*

- How parents influence their children's mental health;
- Influence of children on parent's mental health;
- Mutual effects of parent on child and child on parent;
- Caregiver characteristics affecting child outcomes;
- Family outcomes as primary goals;
- Benefits to communities of caregiver and family well-being.


Current Research

• Family to Family Initiative (National Federation of Families) working to identify the "essential ingredients" and outcomes of family-to-family support (F2F).

• Exploring how systems of care know about and respond to the mental health needs of caregivers, especially when children are in Child Welfare system.

Research Needed

• Impact of family organizations on individuals, policy development, communities;
• Studies of impact of family participation at system, policy levels;
• Studies of outcomes of family support services;
• Benefits to society of caregiver well-being;
• (More - discussion).
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