



## Caregiver Strain: Experiences of Different Caregivers of Children with Serious Emotional Disturbance

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## Families and Caregiver Strain

- ◆ Normative response to added stress of caring for a child with emotional and behavioral problems
- ◆ Can create negative psychological consequences for caregiver
- ◆ Types of Strain:
  - financial
  - family conflict
  - effect on family life
  - caregiver physical and mental health
  - personal time, freedom, and privacy

## Assessing Caregiver Strain: Caregiver Strain Questionnaire

- ◆ 21-item self-report
- ◆ Impact of caring for a child w/ emotional & behavioral problems (past 6 mo)
- ◆ Burden felt by caregiver regarding child
- ◆ 5 point Likert scale
  - 1 = “not at all”
  - 5 = to “very much”
- ◆ 3 subscales:
  - ◆ Objective Strain (negative, observable occurrences resulting from caring for the child)
  - ◆ Internalized Subjective Strain (feelings internalized by the caregiver)
  - ◆ Externalized Subjective Strain (negative feelings directed at the child)

Brannan, A.M., Heflinger, C.A. & Bickman, L.B. (1997). The Caregiver Strain Questionnaire: Measuring the impact on the family of living with a child with serious emotional disturbance. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders*, 5, 212-222.

## Caregivers in Study

- ◆ Parents
  - Biological
  - Step
  - Adoptive
- ◆ Other Relatives
  - Grandparents
  - Aunts/uncles
  - Siblings

## Research Objectives

- ◆ Assess whether parents of poor children diagnosed with an SED experience strain differently from other relative caregivers.
- ◆ Assess whether caregivers of Medicaid enrollees have different levels of strain from those in the military.
- ◆ Assess whether CGSQ adequately measures strain in different groups.

## Methods

- ◆ Examining differences among several samples of caregivers of children ages 4-17 with SED
  - Medicaid (n= 648) vs. Military (n=978)
  - Medicaid (n=539) vs. Medicaid Other Relatives (n=109)
- ◆ Analyses
  - Item and Scale Scores
  - Exploratory Factor Analysis
  - Reliability analysis (internal consistency) using: Cronbach's alpha = .93

Characteristics of Sample				
	Medicaid		Total Samples	
	Living with Parents N=639	Living with Relatives N=109	Medicaid N= 648	FBEP N=978
<b>Children</b>				
Mean Age (years)	11.6	11.5	11.6	11.2
% African American	44.3%	51.4%	45.8%	20.6%*
% Female	30.1%	30.3%	30.1%	36.8%*
Mean CBCL Score	69.1	70.1	69.3	65.2*

Characteristics of Sample				
	Medicaid		Total Samples	
	Living w/ Parents	Living w/ Relatives	Medicaid	FBEP
<b>Caregiver</b>				
Bio Parents	93.9%	-	78.1%	91.1%
Step/adoptive	6.1%	-	5.1%	7.3%
Relatives		100%	16.8%	1.6%
Mean Age	35.9	52.6*	38.7	35.4*
% Female	96.1%	95.4%	96.0%	85.6%*
# in Household	4.3	4.3	4.3	5.0*
Annual Income			10K-15K	20K-29K

- ### Principle Findings
- ◆ CGSQ adequately measured strain in all groups
  - ◆ All caregivers reported high levels of strain
  - ◆ Total Medicaid Parents vs. Military Sample
    - Item and Scale Scores:
      - Objective Strain MCD>>Military
      - Subjective-Internalizing and Externalizing MCD<<Military
    - Similar factor structure
  - ◆ Medicaid Parents vs. Medicaid Other Relatives
    - Scale Scores: No significant differences
    - Factor Analysis:
      - Other relatives did not endorse many of the emotionally based items (Other relatives reported two types of Objective Strain)
      - Emergence of a second Objective Strain Scale
  - ◆ Overall strain experienced relatively similarly

- ### Principle Findings: Medicaid vs. Military
- ◆ Significant differences reported on 9 of 21 items
    - Subjective-Internalizing Strain:
      - Feeling sad or unhappy about child's problems
      - Amount of toll taken on family
    - Subjective Externalizing Strain:
      - Child relational problems
      - Feeling anger toward child
      - Feeling resentful toward child
    - Objective Strain
      - Interruption of personal time
      - Family members having to do without things
      - Financial strain
      - Social isolation

- ### Summary
- ◆ CGSQ can be useful for detecting caregiver strain and identifying family support needs for Medicaid and military caregivers.
  - ◆ Medicaid sample and military caregivers experience strain similarly despite race and SES differences in samples.

- ### Implications and Future Steps
- ◆ Caregiver differences in relationship between CGSQ Objective strain and Subjective strain symptoms warrant further investigation.
  - ◆ Differences suggest caregiver assistance needs to be tailored.
  - ◆ Ethnographic approach might be useful for exploring these differences.