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A qualitative assessment of barriers to pediatric mental healthcare access

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Introduction: The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention approximates that 1 in 5 children experience a mental or behavioral health disorder. Pediatric mental healthcare service access cannot be improved without strong coordination between educational settings, social service providers for children, and adequate policy support. Addressing this critical child development issue is dependent on us understanding the barriers to mental healthcare access faced by pediatric populations.

Methods: This qualitative study explored barriers to pediatric mental healthcare access based on in-depth interviews with 53 key informants representing child-care settings, K-12 schools, foster care settings, and evidence-based home visitation programs. Semi-structured interviews with participants identified barrier-related themes and subthemes.

Results: The themes reflect a series of hurdles related to pediatric mental healthcare access including, lack of preparedness/training for pediatric mental health screening

and management, limited resources, lack of policy support, transportation, and family issues that have hindered mental health support for children. Conclusions. The findings highlight the compounding barriers to pediatric mental healthcare services and point to opportunities for improving pediatric mental health using a holistic approach. Future research should focus on designing and implementing community and organization-based strategies to break down these barriers for families to optimize their children's mental health and wellness.

References

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