

An understanding of the mental health, parenting experiences, and support needs of Manitoban caregivers of children, ages 0–12, who require additional emotional, developmental, or behavioural support

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Background:

In 2021, we collaborated with SSCY (Specialized Services for Children and Youth), St. Amant, MATC (Manitoba Adolescent Treatment Centre), and KIDTHINK to send out a public survey link to Manitoban caregivers of children ages 0 to 12 who require additional emotional, developmental, and/or behavioural support needs.

Objective:

To gather insight into the parenting experiences and challenges, state of mental health of these caregivers, experiences in seeking mental health support, and their support needs.

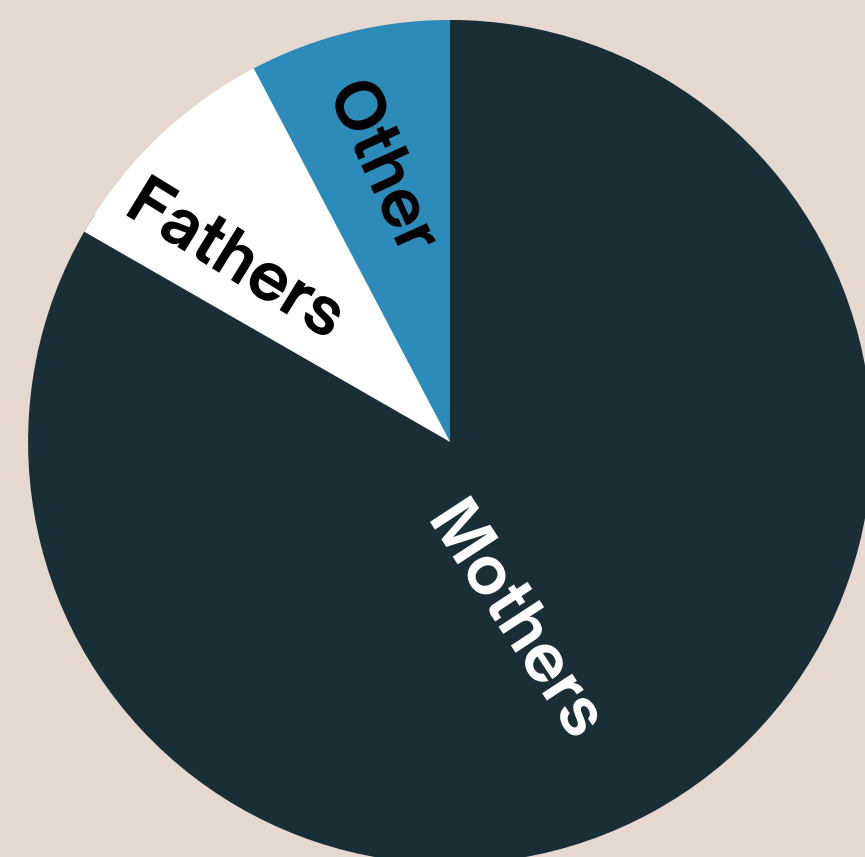
Methodology:

Caregivers were eligible for the 30-minute survey if they were 18 or older, had a child between the ages of 0 to 12 on the waitlist or accessing services at local Manitoban organizations.

Results:

General Characteristics

- 78 caregivers completed the survey



- 75% of caregivers reported a high number of challenging behaviours in their children
- 48.3% presented elevated depression symptoms
- 29.7% presented elevated anxiety symptoms
- 30% anxiety + depression symptoms
- 65.2% of parents experienced high levels of parenting stress

Mental health service use

44.4%
accessed
services



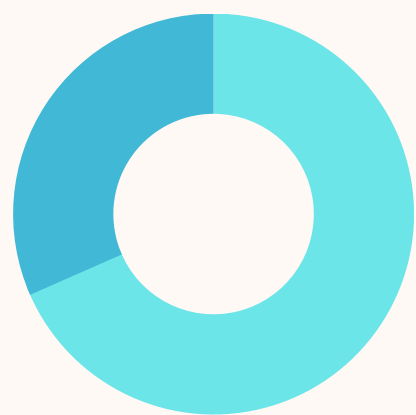
Motivation to access services:

- 71.4% believed they needed it
“I needed someone to validate my feelings and let me know what I was feeling was normal or I wasn’t the only one feeling this way.”
- 46.4% believed it would help



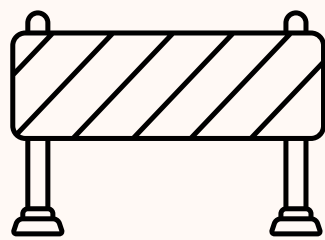
Of those that had not accessed services:

68.4%
had interest in
services



Barriers to service access:

- 56.5% had no time or energy
“busy with appointments for children. I am at the bottom of my own list in the family.”
- 52.2% found services too costly
“I have no one to watch them.”



What would make accessing services easier?

- Affordability
- More providers with flexibility
- Childcare availability
- “Would be great if there was parent counselling services offered when children are accessing services. It is obvious that the stress on parents of kids with extra needs is much higher – should be almost mandatory to have a program to support parents.”



Conclusions:

Many caregivers of young children with additional support needs are struggling and are having a difficult time accessing services due to multiple factors

Yet, *there are clear ways services can be improved to support accessibility* including reducing costs, providing more flexibility in scheduling, and providing childcare.

Future directions: What's next?

Replication! This study represents one, smaller sample that would benefit from more research to validate our conclusions

• We have co-developed and started trialing a tailored single session intervention (therapy) for caregivers of children with additional support needs titled SPYKids, which we hope will help address parenting stress among these parents.



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