

Service Gaps

Research findings for mothers (Bourke-Taylor PhD©)



This fact sheet reports on research findings that identified service gaps as a major contributor to maternal stress (Bourke-Taylor, 2019). Unfortunately, many parents of children with a disability find that they cannot get the support that is needed or wanted for their child. This results in a service gap for the child and family.

Service gaps can place mothers under stress for a number of reasons. Research with mothers shows that mothers find it more stressful managing an important service gap than managing multiple services at once. It is frustrating to know that a service may help you and your child but is currently not available to your family.



Why do service gaps cause high stress for mothers?

- Waiting for services, experiencing dissatisfaction with services, or not qualifying for services are all frustrating experiences.
- It takes time and energy to persist, advocate or locate services.
- Many mothers worry that service gaps may affect their child's progress.
- Service gaps can create more work for mothers themselves as they try to address this gap.
- Sometimes services are too far away or just inaccessible. This can cause disruption to family life as new options, such as moving to retain services, are considered.

So what can I do?

Navigating the service system around your child and managing services is a high-level skill. Reflect on what you have achieved for your child and family. Give yourself a pat on the back!

Identify people who can optimally support you and your family, whether this be within the family or a professional such as support coordinator, key worker, or other professional. Share the responsibilities of managing a service gap, and seek support from organisations specialised in disability advocacy, service navigation, and disability rights. Organisations such as an association for children or young people with a disability, or your child's school or therapists may offer resources about services for your child. Other families may also be a good source of advice. You can also ask your child's paediatrician or GP for advice. Pay attention to your communication with services. Take notes on waiting times and services. Sometimes one friendly and helpful person can lead you to a good option that you may not have considered.

With regards to your own needs, make sure you are seeing the professionals you need to maintain your health and well-being. Whether it be for a physical or mental health matter, or general health check-ups, it is important to look after yourself.

While you are occupied with managing service gaps, it is important to find ways to manage your stress whilst also effectively problem-solving this issue. Find support and information from others who are close to you, or who are familiar with similar situations.

Visit our website at <http://www.healthymothers-healthyfamilies.com/> for references and more information.

If this fact sheet has raised any concerns, please seek medical advice from your local GP. Alternatively, please call LifeLine on 13 11 14 or Carers Australia, who can provide short-term counselling and emotional support for carers and families, on 1800 242 636.