

Proposed Policies to Improve Support to Families of Preschool Children With ASD

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Abstract: Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a neurodevelopmental disorder that includes a range of difficulties with social communication, behavior and interaction. A family with an autistic child may notice significant differences in their interactions with others, social norms, family planning, career life, financial situation, and mental health. Social policy support is very important for families with preschool children with autism. This paper tries to make some suggestions on social policy support for families with autistic children.

Keywords: Preschool children with ASD; Social policy support

Introduction

Kanner (1894-1981), an austrian doctor, wrote an essay titled Autism of Emotional in 1943 that noted significant commonalities between these kids. Infantile autism was the term Kanner used to define the syndrome, which is marked by difficulty communicating with others and the environment (Anjos & Morais, 2021).

Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5-TR), the fifth edition published by the American Psychiatric Association, was made available in 2022. Today, healthcare professionals assess mental and behavioral conditions, involving ASD, using the DSM-5-TR as their standard reference. It explains that autism is manifested by a persistent lack of ability to communicate effectively with others in a variety of situations and settings (APA, 2022).

Preschool-aged children with ASD refers to children with autism before the age of 7. Preschoolers with autism have the same and different characteristics as children of other ages. The biggest difference is that this age group is the best time to identify and treat symptoms. Early intervention treatments, administered between the ages of birth and seven, have been shown in studies to significantly improve outcomes for children with ASD.

Social Policy for Preschoolers with ASD

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A social policy is a government or administrative agency's plan or activity to enhance or transform society. Social policy starts with the study of the welfare state and the delivery of social services (Lu, 2015). It includes regulations, rules, legislation, and related activities that affect the living conditions beneficial to the wellbeing for consistency of people, like a person's quality of life.

This paper tries to make some suggestions on social policy support for families with autistic children.

Proposed policies to improve support to families of preschool children with ASD

1. Objectives

To improve the rehabilitation of preschool-aged children with ASD and promote their overall development, this study recommends a policy that aims to lessen the strain on families of autistic children and enhance social support. The policy is based on the result of the study and connect the actual policy for preschool children with autism.

2. Target Groups

This project aims to enhance social support for children with ASD aged 0-7 and their families.

3. Suggestions to Enhance/Improve Support to Families of Preschool Children with ASD

Field 1. Improving the prevention and diagnosis of children with autism.

(1) Strengthen the prevention.

Research has shown that autism may have a genetic component, therefore preventative measures should be taken to address this issue. This includes discouraging consanguineous marriages, increasing the use of maternity testing during pregnancy, and implementing genetic testing to identify potential risk factors.

(2) Improve early detection and diagnosis system.

Early screening, detection, and intervention can greatly enhance the likelihood of recovery for children with autism, thereby reducing the intensity of future care and support requirements, and ultimately alleviating the long-term burden on both families and society as a whole. Being identified early is critical for autistic children under the age of three. This can be achieved through early screening identification and the use of assessment tools. Ultra-early intervention can then be provided to effectively improve their overall abilities. To ensure early detection and diagnosis rates, gynecologists and maternal and child health nurses should receive training. This will facilitate early rehabilitation training for children with autism.

Field 2. Treatment and rehabilitation service provision.

(1) Provide more public rehabilitation schools.

There are currently has numerous private rehabilitation schools that charge varying fees for children's rehabilitation in china, but lacks affordable public rehabilitation schools. To address this issue, the local education bureau should prioritize the establishment of more public rehabilitation institutions, particularly in smaller cities within the region.

(2) Improve management.

The management of rehabilitation schools will be strictly regulated by the departments of education and civil affairs. Currently, the government provides 95 yuan per day to children receiving training in rehabilitation institutions. This funding is given directly to the rehabilitation schools, who then deduct the fees based on the children's rehabilitation progress records. To ensure proper use of these funds, strict monitoring of the rehabilitation schools is necessary.

(3) Increase rehabilitation subsidies.

Caregivers of autistic children from low-income families report that government-provided monthly rehabilitation expenses fall short of covering all necessary costs. They require additional funds to enroll their children in rehabilitation schools. As a result, they are urging the government to increase rehabilitation subsidies to better align with the unique circumstances of each autistic child's family.

(4) Improve the professional capacity of special education teachers.

Caregivers of autistic children typically focus on monitoring their child's progress and ability improvement. More professional and competent teachers play a crucial role in enhancing the abilities of these children.

(5) Upgrade rehabilitation school facilities.

The data collected revealed that a majority of respondents did not have access to training equipment for their children at home. Rehabilitation institutions should consider updating and providing more equipment to help caregivers facilitate daily training for autistic children.

Field 3. Develop continuing integrated education.

(1) Create a fair educational environment.

In order to improve the education system, it shall implement reforms in schools and promote integrated education. It also needs to encourage schools to admit autistic children and provide incentives to non-special schools that do so. Additionally, it should increase the number of kindergartens, primary schools, middle schools, high schools, and vocational schools that cater to the needs of autistic children. The goal is to help that children with autism have access to education at every stage of their development, just like their peers without autism. This is a major concern for families with autistic children.

(2) More universities should set up special education major to train professionals.

To address the growing need for qualified professionals in autism screening, diagnostic evaluation, and rehabilitation services, it is imperative that more universities should establish special education majors focused on training such professionals.

Field 4. Increase advocacy and protect against social discrimination.

After education and rehabilitation, the elimination of social discrimination was the most important issue for respondents. The promotion of autistic children's traits, treatment, and rehabilitation through various forms of media such as television and the Internet can help eliminate misconceptions and social distance. It is important to guide society in creating an environment that fosters understanding, acceptance, and support for autistic children.

Field 5. Improve the economic situation of autistic children's families.

(1) Provide financial assistance.

To alleviate the financial burden of families with autistic members, local governments have the option to implement taxes or establish social enterprises that donate funds.

(2) Provide employment assistance.

Introducing employment opportunities to parents of children with autism may be a beneficial approach to helping families affected by the disorder. Relevant government departments could offer parents the chance to take special education courses related to autism rehabilitation free of charge, and subsequently provide them with positions in kindergartens or rehabilitation centers after obtaining the necessary qualifications. Alternatively, other job opportunities could be introduced to accommodate the unique needs of these parents.

Field 6. Provide childcare or respite care service.

Child care emerged as a significant concern among respondents. To address this issue, the government can implement measures, such as developing the social work profession, training a team of social workers, and establishing a community support network. This network can provide child care and respite services to families with autistic children, thereby easing the burden on parents and caregivers.

Field 7. Health insurance scheme coverage.

It is imperative that the national health insurance scheme provides coverage for all individuals with autism. Additionally, the scheme should also include coverage for the expenses associated with early screening and testing programs.

Field 8. Provide emotional support to caregivers.

Caring for a child with autism can be challenging, and caregivers often experience high level of stress. Therefore, it is crucial to provide them with emotional support. This can be achieved through various strategies. Government and private hospitals, institutions, and organizations should offer professional psychotherapy and support to help parents restore balance and maintain a positive attitude. Additionally, support networks can be established among parents of children with autism to alleviate feelings of isolation and helplessness.

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