

An Exploration of the Experiences and Perceptions of Caregivers of Children with Disabilities Regarding Community-Based Rehabilitation Services in a Rural Setting in South Africa

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Rehabilitation services have a fundamental importance in improving quality of life and functionality of people with disabilities. With progressive changes in views of disability, understandings of rehabilitation evolved to include the empowerment individuals and their families too.

Comprehensive rehabilitation is understood to encompass family-centred rehabilitation services aimed at children with disabilities, their families and the people around them.

South African researchers stress that listening to views and experiences of caregivers of children with disabilities is very important in identifying essential components of a rehabilitation service that is relevant, appropriate and also meets the needs of caregivers in their context.

The purpose and aim of this study was to explore and describe how caregivers experience and perceive the rehabilitation of children with disabilities in a rural setting in South Africa in order to explore the extent to which rehabilitation services in a rural health setting are relevant and address their needs.

The Community-Based Rehabilitation (CBR) Framework was used to underpin this study. The research setting was the Makana Sub-District, Eastern Cape.

A qualitative research approach was used. Data collection included key informant interviews, semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions.

Study findings revealed the necessity and need for more contextually relevant Community-Based Rehabilitation services. People living in this rural community experience multiple constraints, limiting their access to rehabilitation services. Resultantly, children with disabilities in this rural community do not receive the necessary and adequate healthcare, which has had negative implications in their overall optimal functioning, and that of their caregivers and families.