

# Problems and Goals Identified by Primary Caregivers of Children with Mental Health Problems During A Problem - Solving Intervention

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## BACKGROUND & SIGNIFICANCE

- About 1 out of 5 children in the US have mental health problems, and mothers are usually their primary caregivers (National Institute of Mental Health, 2001).
- Services for these children have been decreased in an effort to reduce costs.
- Consequently, parents are faced with the increased responsibility to care for children with very severe mental health problems at home.
- Few studies have addressed the well-being of caregivers of children with mental health problems.

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this report was to describe the problems and goals identified by primary caregivers of children with mental health problems during a feasibility study to test the efficacy of Building Our Solutions and Connections (BOSC), a cognitive behavioral problem solving intervention for these caregivers (Gerkenmeyer et al., in press).

## METHODS

BOSC intervention focused on enhancing problem-solving skills of primary caregivers of children with mental health problems.

Participants were recruited over 11 months from community mental health centers, response to ads, and calls to the research team from information on fliers.

Problems and goals were identified by individual caregivers during a nine week problem-solving intervention that included a face-to-face one-hour intervention followed by eight half-hour telephone interventions.

Counted the number of times problem were identified.

## RESULTS



### Sample Characteristics

**Total number.** 44 caregivers

**Gender.** 42 females and 2 males

**Age:** Ranged from 26-69 years with mean age of 43 years

**Race:** 57% Caucasian (n = 35), 39% African American (n = 24), 1% each Pacific Islander (n = 1), and 1% (n = 1) biracial

Next, a summary of the problems and goals selected by these primary caregivers is described in table 1 and figure 1.



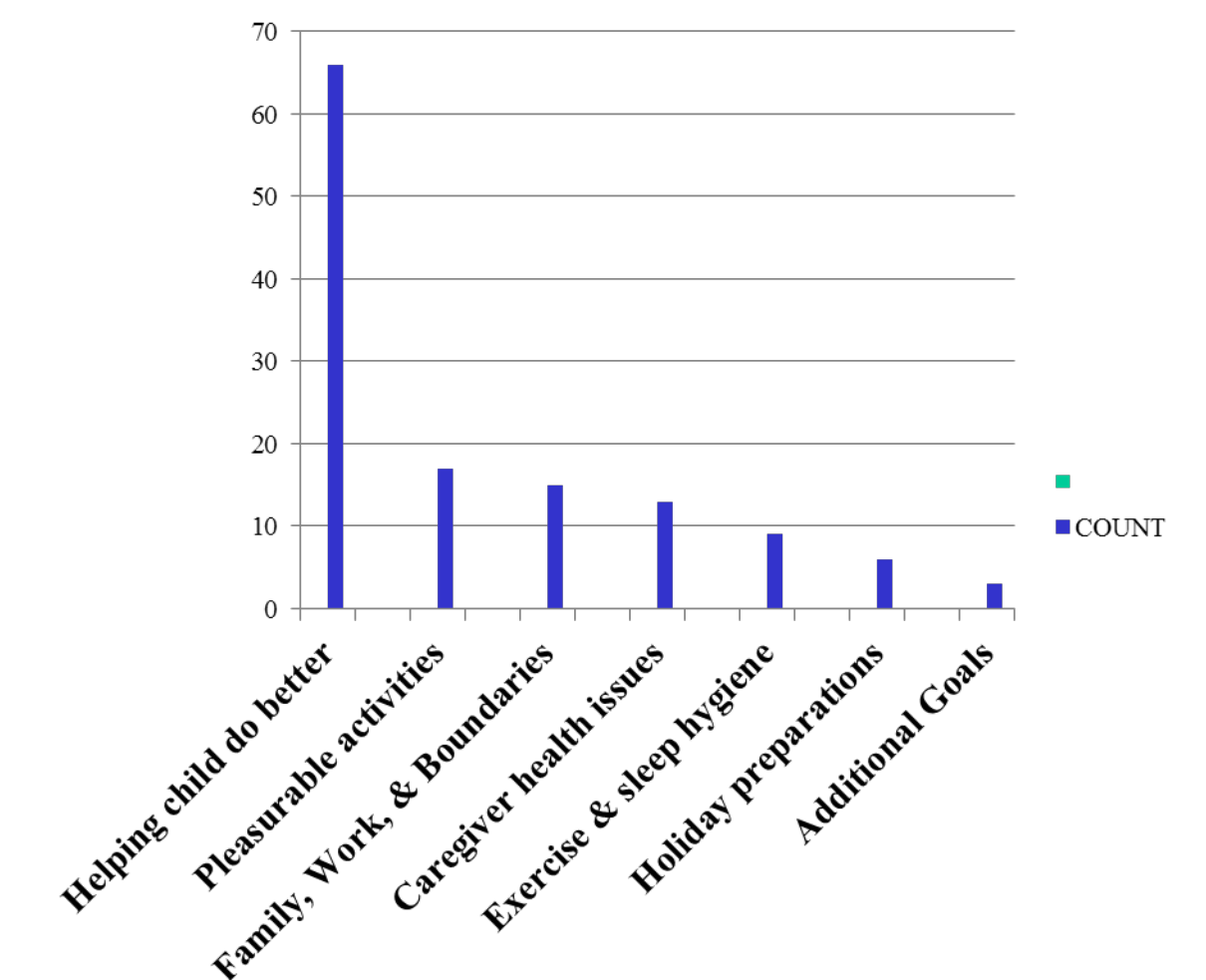
## RESULTS

**Table 1. Problems Identified by Primary Caregivers**

PROBLEMS	COUNT
<b>Child Behavior</b>	<b>43</b>
• Not doing chores	
• Not following directions	
• Arguing	
<b>Caregivers' Emotional Health</b>	<b>30</b>
<i>Emotional Health</i>	
• Stress/Depression/Depletion	
• No time for themselves	
• Limited or no pleasurable activities	
• No identify beyond that of mother of mentally ill child	
• Need to spend more time with other children in the family & spouses	
• Overwhelmed by household needs & personal responsibilities	
<b>Caregivers' Physical Health</b>	<b>11</b>
<i>Physical Health</i>	
• Not exercising enough	
• Diabetes management	
• Interrupted sleep	
• Weight gain	
• Anxiety	
<b>Family-Related</b>	<b>26</b>
<i>Family-Related</i>	
• Stress with partner over child	
• Needing more help from father	
• Not enough help from kids	
• Lack of trust of significant other	
• Not enough time with partner	
• Family not getting along	
• Strained relationship with mother -in- law	
<b>Financial</b>	<b>22</b>
<i>Financial</i>	
• Needing money to pay bills	
• No Budget	
• Being out of food	
• Medicaid issues/cut off	
• Need to fix things in house	
• Wanting to move to new neighborhood	
• Transportation-related issues	
<b>Childs' School</b>	<b>8</b>
<i>Childs' School</i>	
• Issues related to bullying	
• Wanting child in a different school	
• Child needs help with keeping focus and busy academically; firm behavior plan; information about colleges & universities	

## RESULTS

**Figure 1. Goals Identified by Primary Caregivers**



## CONCLUSIONS

- Caregivers need additional support and resources.
- Mental health professionals need to assess for problems and identify goals of primary caregivers of children with mental health needs at intake and throughout treatment duration.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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