**SCHOOL SATISFACTION PREDICTS QUALITY OF LIFE FOR CHILDREN WITH SEVERE DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES AND THEIR FAMILIES**

**Sarah Bjornson & Adrienne Perry, York University**

**Objectives**

Children with severe developmental disabilities (SDD) are frequently excluded from research and little is known about quality of life (QoL) for this population. School plays an integral role in the lives of all children and previous research has shown that parents of children with SDD report many variable and negative experiences with schools. The present study sought to understand how school factors are related to QoL for children with SDD and their families.

**Method**

Using a mixed methods approach, 171 caregivers completed questionnaires about their children with SDD (e.g., adaptive behaviours, challenging behaviours), themselves (e.g., mental health, parent self-efficacy, familial social support, socioeconomic status), their communities (e.g., community-based social support), and their children’s schools (e.g., placement type, services received, school satisfaction). Hierarchical multiple regression analyses were performed to understand the impact of these factors on individual child and broader family QoL. 123 parents responded to an optional open-ended question about their children’s general education experiences. Responses were analysed qualitatively.

**Results**

Quantitative analyses revealed that school satisfaction predicted QoL for both children and their families, over and above all other variables examined. Seven themes were observed in written responses which supplemented information gathered through survey measures. We found that there is no one superior strategy for educating children with SDD. Rather, QoL is positively impacted when the strategies implemented are deemed by parents as meeting the needs of their children.

**Conclusions**

Educational personnel have the capacity to facilitate positive experiences within the education system for children with SDD and their families. In turn, this can influence their overall QoL. Future researchers should work with educators to develop effective training, resources, and supports for educating these children. The development of more comprehensive school satisfaction measures may augment understanding of specific aspects of school experiences that are most impactful.

**Correspondence:**

**Sarah Bjornson, York University,** **bjornson@yorku.ca**

**Adrienne Perry, York University,** **perry@yorku.ca**