

African American Female Caregivers' Perceptions, Experiences, and Expectations of the Special Education Process

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Abstract : African American families have consistently contended that their child's special education team does not provide the services necessary to meet their child's academic goals. Special education teams must guide and mentor African American students and their families through the special education process. This qualitative study examined African American female caregivers' perceptions, experiences, and expectations regarding the special education process. Data collection methods utilized in the study included a survey, semi-structured interviews, and three focus groups. Data were analyzed and compared to identify themes. Three themes emerged from the survey: education and training, participation, and challenges. Six major themes emerged: (a) differences in treatment and cultural disconnect, (b) lack of support and resources, (c) participants' experiences of the special education process, (d) parent participation, (e) barriers and concerns, and (f) expectations. Implications for policy and practice to improve the special education process are discussed.

Keywords : African American, caregivers, critical race theory, special education

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