

**ABSTRACT****DISSERTATION:** Experiences of Caregivers of Middle School Children with Autism

Spectrum Disorder in Middle School

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This study takes a deep look into the experiences of guardians of middle school children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) communicating with the school. Caregivers of children with ASD have high levels of stress. Caregivers report needing accommodations that are tailored specifically to their child. They are generous in providing advice and help to caregivers in the same situation. Caregivers tend to take a position of advocating for their child or teaching the child to advocate themselves. Child behaviors that do not relate to academics affect the way the child is treated at school. Caregivers describe the process of communicating with the school and going to IEP meetings as very difficult, emotional, and requiring sacrifice. In addition, school personnel have a huge impact on whether the process of communication goes well or not.

Understanding this experience is important for practitioners, schools, caregivers, and researchers.