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# Dilemmas in sharing care: maternal provision of professionally driven therapy for children with disabilities

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## Abstract

This paper explores some of the dilemmas that result when mothers and professionals collaborate in providing care to young children with disabilities within a US public program called Early Intervention. Successful collaboration between professionals and activist parents resulted in the program having a “family centered” approach, but the implementation of that approach is problematic. Professionals transmit therapeutic knowledge and skills to mothers of young children with special needs, urging them to perform therapeutic care work with their children. Through these efforts, professionals create a “therapeutic imperative” for mothers, expecting them to do therapeutic work that usually exceeds the amount of work that professionals do with their children. This paper explores the dilemmas mothers and professionals face when implementing family centered care and the ways in which mothers and professionals negotiate

contested understandings of the optimal mixture of public (professional) and private (maternal) provision of therapeutic care to young children with disabilities.



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## Keywords

Disabilities; Mothers; Children; Family care; United States

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