Examining the mental health indicators and service needs of children living with foster families

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There is little recent research on the mental health needs of foster children and youth in Canada who seek treatment. This study explored the mental health issues and service needs of foster children seeking mental health services. It was expected that foster children would show more severe mental health issues and need more support than non-foster children. The findings revealed that foster children experienced significantly more trauma, more externalizing behaviors, higher levels of risky or problematic sexual behavior, and a greater need for urgent and intensive services compared to non-foster children referred for clinical help. There was a strong link between the number of trauma types and being in foster care, with foster children being seven times more likely to experience four types of trauma. The study highlights the need for trauma-informed interventions to address the complex needs of foster children, who often require high levels of support.

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