

PARENT/PROFESSIONAL THOUGHTS ABOUT THE USE OF THE TERM "SERIOUSLY EMOTIONALLY DISTURBED"

In a brief qualitative survey of 75 parents and professionals conducted by Oregon Family Support Network (OFSN), findings indicate that "Seriously Emotionally Disturbed" (SED) is no longer the preferred term to use when describing the symptoms of mental illness that children and their families experience. Instead, the most frequently recommended terms were:

- #1. "Emotional and Behavioral Challenges"
- #2. "Emotional and Behavioral Disorders," or
- #3. A specific mental health diagnosis

Most respondents indicated that their most preferred term was "Emotional and Behavioral Challenges." However, among those who considered themselves mental health professionals, there was more variety among secondary recommendations. Other terms suggested by this group were: a) "...Disorders," b) "...Diagnoses," c) "...Difficulties," d) "...Needs," and e) "...Issues." Family members overwhelmingly preferred the terms "Emotional and Behavioral Challenges" and "Emotional and Behavioral Disorders" as compared to other terms. Individuals who held dual roles as professionals and family members specified a clear preference for either "Emotional and Behavioral Challenges" or referencing a specific mental health diagnosis over using the term SED.

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