

*National
Organization of
Mothers
Of
Twins
Clubs, Inc.*

SUBJECT:

**DISABILITIES/HANDICAPS
IN MULTIPLES**

RESEARCHER: National Organization of Mothers of Twins Clubs, Inc.

DATE:

1993

PURPOSE: The purpose of this survey was to determine if the emotional needs of families with disabilities/handicaps in their multiples were being met. The survey also tried to assess the effect of the disability on the multiple child and his/her co-twin who may not have shared the handicap or disability. The survey also tried to touch upon the cause and effect of the disability/handicap and coping strategies.

METHOD: The survey was distributed to NOMOTC members and was to be completed only by mothers of multiples who had one or more multiples with a disability/handicap. A disability was defined as any professionally diagnosed physical and/or mental handicap of long-term duration.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

1. Only three mothers of children with disabilities/handicaps responded to this survey.
2. The multiple sets in the survey consisted of 1 pair of identical girls, 1 pair of identical boys, and 1 pair of fraternal boys.
3. The multiples' ages were under 2, 2-4 years old, and 8-12 years old.
4. Two twin pairs had both twin affected, while the third had only one.
5. In one twin pair, they both had the same disability.
6. Prematurity was the most common cause of the disability.
7. One twin pair had just a physical disability, while the other two had both a physical and mental disability.
8. All of the affected multiples had visual impairment, and only one had hearing impairment.
9. Two of the moms rated the disability as mild, and the third said it was moderate.

RESULTS:

1. COPING (MOM) -
 - a) Two of the moms worried about what may happen to the handicapped multiple when the parents were older and unable to provide needed care.
 - b) Two families received assistance from Federal, state, or local agencies.
 - c) One mom received counseling to assist her in dealing stress with her child's disability.
 - d) One mom felt her marriage had suffered from the emotional strain, but all three were still married. Two felt that the financial stress had also caused problems.
 - e) All three moms said they sometimes found themselves "spoiling" the child with the handicap, and that they sometimes found it difficult to discipline that child.
 - f) Only one mom felt that other family members sometimes showed signs of emotional stress.

2. COPING (MULTIPLES) -

- a) All of the moms said that some of the time the handicapped multiple feels "left out."
- b) All three also felt that the multiples' relationship was "somewhat close."
- c) The multiple without the handicap was understanding and protective of co-twin.
- d) One mom felt that the handicapped multiple minimized the problem, while another mom felt that they used the handicap as a manipulative tool.
- e) All three moms said that the handicap was an issue in everyday activities.
- f) The school-aged handicapped multiples attend Special Education classes either full or part-time.

3. SUPPORT GROUPS -

- a) Two moms said they would like to be in contact with other multiples who have children affected by disability/handicaps.
- b) Only one mom felt that there was a place in her local MOTC for mother of multiples with disabilities.
- c) Two moms would like to see a workshop on the subject of multiples with disabilities at the National Convention.
- d) All of the moms would like to see more in *MOTC's Notebook* about this topic - perhaps as a column.
- e) None of the moms had contacted National's Support Services/Pen Pal program to correspond with other mothers of multiples in situations similar to theirs. Two said they didn't know the program existed.

CONCLUSION:

This is a very small survey, however it does point out the emotional and financial stress endured by families with handicapped multiples. Most of these families seemed to be coping adequately. The moms would like more support from NOMOTC, such as a workshop at Convention and more in *MOTC's Notebook* about disabilities/handicaps in multiples. There also was little awareness of the Pen Pal program through Support Services.

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