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Medically Complex Children at Home: Caregiver Burden Equals Higher Medical Costs

Advances in surgery, pharmacology, medical equipment, etc. have increased the survival of small children with severe diseases. More children are going home with life-sustaining technology that requires high levels of care. This success has resulted in the support needs of children with medical complexity extending well into adulthood.¹ However, the nation's systems for supporting these community-dwelling children struggles to keep pace.

Due to nursing shortages and other challenges, much of the healthcare burden falls on the family. **More than 43 million US adults provide an average of 24.4 hours of care to a child or adult per week.**² The financial and career burden of this childcare is well documented.^{3,4}

- Parents are less likely to work more than 20 hours per week.
- They are more likely to engage in only casual, irregular employment.
- 52% have to drop to part-time work.
- 42% take a leave of absence.
- 31% have turned down a promotion due to the demands of their caregiving role.
- 23% lost a job benefit.
- 21% give up their careers entirely.



Piling this cost on family caregivers may not be saving money for insurance and government. **For medically complex children, the absence or delay of home nursing correlates with a 70% increase in rehospitalizations.**⁵ Nursing support at home for newborns has been found so valuable that a single, well-timed home nursing visit to every newborn, including healthy newborns, has been found to reduce hospitalization rates and reduce medical costs 7.5%.⁶ One multicenter study found that nursing shortages resulted in delayed discharge for 57% of medically complex children.⁷ The estimated costs of these delays was \$54,000 per patient.

Authors put much of the blame for this scenario on a national shortage of home health nurses with adequate experience caring for medically fragile, technology-dependent children.¹ Nurses are often not available. Even when they are available, parents routinely report that they lack the requisite experience in pediatric respiratory assessment, airway care, and at-home emergency preparedness.⁸

Fortunately for parents, doctors, and discharge planners of Miami-Dade and Broward Counties, Nationwide Healthcare Services specializes in home health for medically fragile and technology-dependent children. We stand prepared to efficiently staff all your referrals for those cases with properly trained and highly experienced nurses. **Please order a no-obligation, in-home assessment for all your families with a technology-dependent child. We will help families explore Medicaid and insurance benefits as well as private-pay options to maximize their quality of life and quality of care while raising a medically fragile child.**

More than 100 Caring Professionals Strong



Nationwide has provided home care for Miami-Dade and Broward since 1993. With a staff of more than 100 caring professionals (75% of whom are RNs or LPNs), Nationwide is uniquely prepared to cover 12 and 24-hour continuous nursing shifts. The majority of this agency's service goes to medically fragile children, so Nationwide nurses and care coordinators prove highly experienced in the needs of these children and their families.

Please tell families about
Nationwide Healthcare Services

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