

# Unmet Need for Medical Equipment and Devices

A 2025 national survey captured the experiences of families of children and youth with special health care needs (CYSHCN)<sup>1</sup> who rely on medical equipment and devices, including the types of equipment they need and their ability to obtain it.



**1 in 5 CYSHCN**

needed at least one type of medical equipment or device in the past 12 months



**1 in 3 CYSHCN**

did not receive all the medical equipment or devices they needed

## Among CYSHCN who needed medical equipment or devices:



**36%** needed durable medical equipment<sup>2</sup>



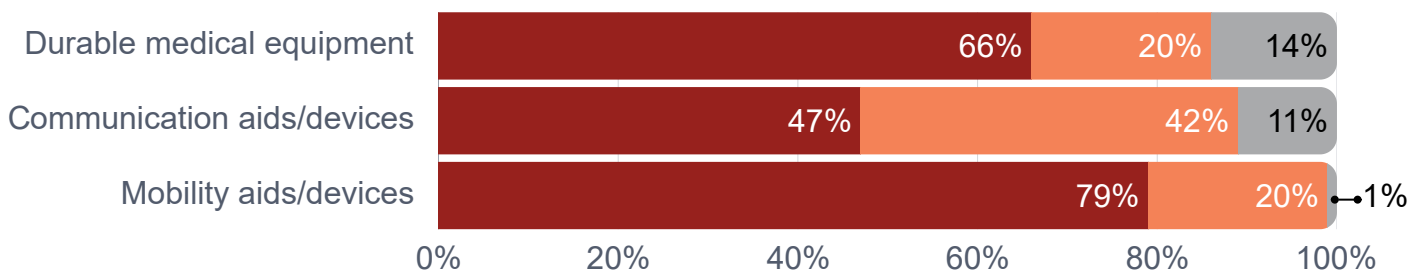
**24%** needed communication aids or devices<sup>3</sup>



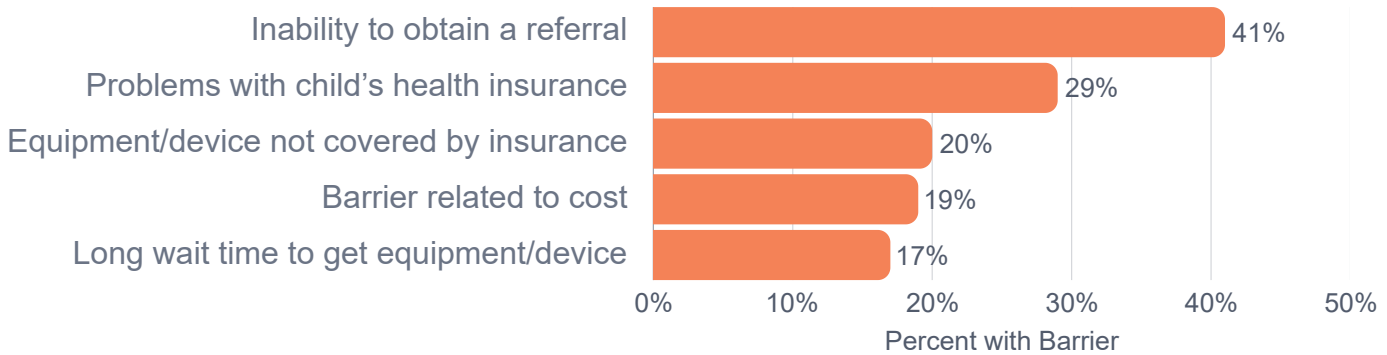
**17%** needed mobility aids or devices<sup>4</sup>

## Percentage of CYSHCN who Received All, Some, or None of the Medical Equipment or Devices They Needed, by Type

- Received all of the medical equipment or devices needed
- Received some of the medical equipment or devices needed
- Received none of the medical equipment or devices needed

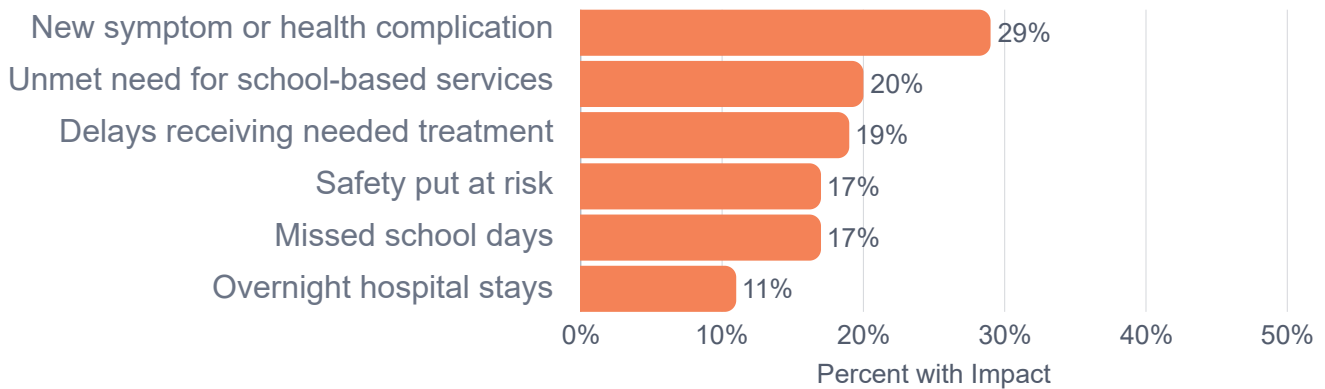


Nearly half (48%) of CYSHCN who needed medical equipment or devices experienced at least one barrier to obtaining them. **Barriers among CYSHCN who did not receive all the medical equipment or devices they needed include:**



“My daughter needs an anti-seizure watch, and the insurance doesn't offer coverage on the watch. To get the watch, in general, it's \$500 or \$600. And then you have to have a prescription for it. And then you have to sign up for a service for it. The service itself is \$499 a year. The insurance doesn't cover any of it.” - **Parent Focus Group Participant**

**Impacts of Unmet Need<sup>5</sup> for Medical Equipment or Devices**



1. CYSHCN are defined by the Maternal and Child Health Bureau as “those who have or are at increased risk for a chronic physical, developmental, behavioral, or emotional condition and who also require health and related services of a type or amount beyond that required by children generally” (McPherson et al., 1998).
2. Examples of durable medical equipment include blood glucose monitors, hospital beds, pressure machines, orthotics, incontinence supplies, feeding devices, and respiratory equipment.
3. Examples of communication aids or devices include communication boards and eye-tracking systems.
4. Examples of mobility aids or devices include canes, crutches, wheelchairs, and scooters.
5. Survey respondents were asked if, in the last 12 months, their child needed medical equipment or devices. Respondents who reported affirmatively were then asked if “all”, “some”, or “none” of the needed equipment or devices were received. We identified children with “unmet need” as those who received either “some” or “none” of the needed medical equipment or devices.

**About this study:**

In January 2025, NORC at the University of Chicago conducted a national survey of 1,316 parents of children and youth with special health care needs (CYSHCN), aged 0 to 25. CYSHCN were identified using the Child and Adolescent Health Measurement Initiative's screening instrument. NORC conducted focus groups and interviews with survey respondents to learn more about their experiences with navigating the health care system for their children and caring for their children's needs. Read more about the study and access all findings [here](#).

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