

My child has a brain disorder, too...

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My name is Lula Haynes, and I am a parent of two children with a mental illness. I am hoping by writing this letter that you would share or feel some of the pain my children and I had to experience knowing that my children were different. I am also hoping that our voice makes a difference to bring Mental Health Parity Laws for All.

I had a difficult birth with my daughter Imani. I thought something was wrong with her as I looked at the ultrasound picture with the doctor. I was told not to worry and that she was a healthy baby who was just active. Well, by the time she was 4 she was having trouble in school with social skills and completing her work. Imani was sent home on numerous occasions due to her behavior. Imani is now 10 years old, on medication and we are now just making things work in her favor due to her therapist and medication.

My son Jaruad was a different story. At the age of 6 years old he would light fires and lie to me and his teachers. Jaruad would fight his siblings and wouldn't get along with others in school. Not to mention the struggles he had dealing with school work and his behavior. One day my son decided that he wanted to kill himself at the rare age of 10 years old. Jaruad stated to the mental health intake worker that he was having problem with his teachers and that his mother didn't believe him and he wanted to kill himself. At that time I didn't have medical coverage due to the change in insurance. Jaruad had to be hospitalized and he stayed a few days.

I am writing this to say that due to me not having insurance coverage Jaruad and Imani had to go without treatment they needed to help them be successful children in our community. I am now covered and my children are on the road to recovery. But without having the insurance we would go without the help and the support we need to continue our day-to-day activities. I am only one voice; however there are many more stories that don't end with a happy ending.

I work with families every day who have children with extreme mental health needs. On behalf of my children and the families we serve and support, please don't let our cries go unheard.

Sincerely,

Lula Haynes  
Parent