

Mental health promotion for children of mentally ill parents. Assessment and promotion of teacher-specific mental health literacy (Teacher-MHL)

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Abstract (300 words)

Context and background: School-based mental health promotion is of increasing importance across Europe, while at the same time children of mentally-ill parents are at considerably higher risk of developing serious mental health problems. Teachers play key roles in the identification of mental health difficulties among children on the one hand but on the other creating further risk potentials through lay knowledge and normative health and mental health assumptions. Although teachers' knowledge, and raising awareness to school mental health must be considered essential, the literature provides less information on the extent of teachers' mental health literacy.

Aim of the study: The primary objective is to measure teachers' mental health literacy in context of pupil-related psychosocial factors at primary and secondary schools (years 5-6), while also focussing on children's social living conditions. The results will provide insights into teachers' current levels of mental health-related knowledge, awareness, and what actions they take when confronted with school mental health problems, and their perception of support. Further, the project will support the development of interventions aiming at improving teachers' mental health literacy.

Research methodology: Qualitative pre-study to inductively survey the general profiles of teachers; quantitative and representative survey of teachers in one the federal state. Based on the results, an intervention will be developed to improve teacher mental health literacy and capacity in the context of providing help to their students.

Key findings and conclusions: Addressing the teachers' mental health literacy gives reason to expect a high effectiveness of the programme. Considering that only 10-30% of such high-risk families accept therapy and assistance offers, this will be the first health promotive and primary preventive approach to avoid mental health problems of yet unaffected but particularly burdened high-risk group. This three year project is in the initial-phase with two other according projects addressing this high-risk group.