



TEACHER-MHL

Health promotion for children of mentally ill parents. Assessment and promotion of teacher-specific mental health literacy (March 2015 – March 2018)

Results from an online-questionnaire among school principals

The HLCA subproject “TEACHER-MHL” will investigate reliable knowledge of teachers in different types of schools (grade 1 – 6) who are dealing with pupils experiencing a critical life-event such as the mental illness of a parent and thus running a higher risk of health disorders (see [CPI – brief 06/2015](#)).

General information about the online-questionnaire:

To date, no data is available which could have allowed estimating on the importance of the topic ‘pupils with mentally-ill parents’ for everyday school-life, including its relevance for school professionals and practitioners. Thus, the aim of our online-questionnaire was to collect data for a first assessment concerning this issue. The questionnaire was applied between August 24th and November 23rd 2015 consecutively for each of the 5 administrative district in North Rhine-Westphalia. Schools’ mail addresses were identified by searching schools’ websites. 4,927 schools were contacted, and finally, 614 questionnaires were completed (response rate: 12.46%).

Summary of results:

- Almost 80% of participants reported that last year at least one student was known with a mentally ill parent.
- Participants weight this issue differently and they often compare it against other family problems.
- Sphere of influence: families have great influence on learning success, but in turn school influence on families is reported very low.
- Resources are clearly expressed as low: notably personal resources, time, training, etc.
- It is not easy to get information about pupils’ family backgrounds (it was stated that not knowing about parental mental health problems could be better for children than if they`d knew and in turn experience negative consequences like stigma).
- Both the challenges of teachers concerning tasks of everyday school life and the burden among children affected by family crisis were emphasized. For the latter, teachers need to cooperate with parents sensitively in order to solve school problems of their children.

Assessment of results:

Many participants knew affected children in the last school year. Results’ indicating high numbers, although schools usually underline that they consider this issue as mostly unknown and difficult. There is a high uncertainty in dealing with such problems in school. Further research is necessary to assess the current state of school conditions and teacher skills and training to detect possible demand orientated intervention strategies.

We are looking forward to informing the audiences around the world on science and research.