



## **The impact on mental health in others of those in a position of authority: a perspective of parents, teachers, trainers and supervisors**

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### **Abstract**

Improved mental health in the population requires a long-term and holistic approach involving multiple sectors of the community not just mental health service providers. People in authority over others, that is, parents, teachers and employers, could provide a leverage point for a universal intervention to promote mental health in those in their care. A telephone survey of 1,000 metropolitan and 500 country male and female respondents was conducted in Western Australia. Four types of 'authority' persons were identified (parents, teachers, trainers and supervisors) and asked what they thought they could do, if anything, to ensure that those in their care remained mentally healthy. Responses were coded into dominant themes across the four types of respondents, the most common being: providing stimulation; providing positive reinforcement; good communication; recognising and dealing with problems openly and sympathetically; ensuring physical activity; not overworking and providing adequate rest breaks; goal setting; not disparaging or being overcritical; and encouraging relationships with family and others. The results are discussed in terms of Hawkins and Catalano's concepts of participation, opportunity and recognition, and Warr's influences on mental health. The findings can be used to identify areas where salience can be increased through mental health promotion.

### **Keywords**

*mental health promotion, authority, parents, teachers, supervisors*

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**Citation:** Donovan, R.J., Henley, N., Jalleh, G., Siburn, S., Zubrick, S. & Williams, A. (2006). The impact on mental health in others of those in a position of authority: a perspective of parents, teachers, trainers and supervisors. *Australian e-Journal for the Advancement of Mental Health* 5(1) [www.auseinet.com/journal/vol5iss1/donovan.pdf](http://www.auseinet.com/journal/vol5iss1/donovan.pdf)

**Published by:** *Australian Network for Promotion, Prevention and Early Intervention for Mental Health (Auseinet)* – [www.auseinet.com/journal](http://www.auseinet.com/journal)

Received 31 October 2005; Revised 15 May 2006; Accepted 15 May 2006