



## **An evaluation of the CAST program using a conceptual model of school-based implementation**

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### **Abstract**

Therapeutic prevention and/or early intervention programs for children at risk of developing disruptive behaviour disorders are increasingly being implemented in schools. One such Australian school-based program is CAST: CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service) and Schools Together, an evidenced-based program treating children with emerging disruptive behaviour disorders in the early primary school years. The current evaluation examines the process of implementation of the CAST program in primary schools. By using a conceptual model of school-based implementation (developed by Greenberg, Domitrovich, Graczyk & Zins, 2005) the wide array of factors that can affect successful implementation at the school level were identified, and those elements critical to implementation quality were examined. Semi-structured individual and group interviews were conducted with a sample of 69 school personnel across 16 schools in the City of Ballarat and wider Grampians region of Victoria, in both government and Catholic primary schools. Results showed that schools were highly satisfied with the quality of CAST resources and personnel, and the implementation and delivery of sessions as planned. Aspects that impacted negatively on the implementation process were the lack of parental engagement; the lack of classroom follow-up in some schools; the level of readiness and pre-planning by the schools; and the availability of technical support. Greenberg's conceptual model appears to be a useful framework to utilise in examining the implementation of the CAST model, as it allowed close examination of how the program was implemented within naturally occurring constraints. It allowed the identification of elements within the CAST model and the associated support system that must be maintained and nurtured by the collaborating parties, in addition to the factors at a school level that are potential barriers to effective implementation. Identification and examination of such factors assist in ensuring quality outcomes for school-based interventions in the future.

### **Keywords**

*program evaluation, implementation quality, schools, school mental health program, disruptive behaviours*

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