



TITLE Qualities and Practices of Professional Social Work Leadership in an Interdisciplinary Mental Health Service: An Action Learning Approach

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OBJECTIVE The purpose of this study was to present a group investigation by professional social work leaders of values underpinning their contribution to interdisciplinary mental health services in a restructured District Health Board setting in Aotearoa New Zealand. The project explores how the group implemented “exemplary leadership” (Kouzes and Posner 1995, 2007) in an organic complex environment by examining their views and actions.

METHODOLOGY

Questionnaires were sent to the 16 social work leaders in mental health services identified in the 21 District Health Boards. Nine questionnaires were completed and returned. Responses to the questions about the social work leaders themselves and their social work services were largely quantitative in nature. Responses to the other questions about changes, accomplishments, frustrations and obstacles, opportunities, threats and challenges, anticipated changes relating to their social work services and questions on leadership qualities have been grouped and interpreted.

KEY FINDINGS

The authors’ found that “responses from the leaders were aligned with five exemplary leadership practices: challenge the process, inspire a shared vision, enable others to act, model the way and encourage the heart” (p. 47).