

Court Appointed Special Advocates: Research Plan

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I will be conducting my evaluation on the Rappahannock Area CASA. The Rappahannock Area CASA, which is our local agency, receives funding from a mix of federal, state and local government grants, private donations, fundraising events and the Rappahannock United Way (CASA, 2019). The Rappahannock Area CASA has a small staff to support the volunteers and a Board of Directors to provide fiscal and policy oversight. The community stakeholders include judges, child welfare specialists, legal, school, and mental health professionals. The main stakeholders of this study will be the CASA volunteers and the children. Through the enhancement of the volunteer's ability to create positive outcomes for the children.

I will be using an improvement-focused approach to answer the question of: What traits make a more effective CASA volunteer, and what are those more effective advocates doing to produce superior child and case outcomes? Many issues can be addressed through this type of evaluation, such as; whether the target audience is being reached, if the program is achieving the planned objectives, if the outcomes match the needs that brought about the program, and cost vs. benefit of the program (Posavac, 2011). For my evaluation of the Rappahannock Area CASA, I would like to look at whether the program is achieving its planned training objectives by evaluating the effectiveness of the volunteer training program through immediate child outcome.

There are three possible sources of data collection, the intended beneficiaries, the providers of service, and observers. For my evaluation of Rappahannock CASA, I will be using the providers of service, in the form of the volunteers and the staff members. I will use surveys for the volunteers. Through the surveys I will be able to evaluate the volunteers' own evaluations on how they have influenced the results of the cases and children they serve, and what behaviors and characteristics are most important to achieving superior outcomes. This should give me

information on problems that they ran into as well as solutions. I will also conduct an interview with a staff member from the Rappahannock CASA to find out information on effective volunteers vs. ineffective volunteers. The interview would allow me to ask more difficult and sensitive questions than a survey about volunteer success vs. failure (Posavac, 2011). In my interview I would want to ask questions about the training program and also whether they are able to weed out ineffective volunteers before they are assigned a child.

I will be conducting a qualitative evaluation; therefore, I will be yielding non-numerical information that will help to understand the program and its participants (Posavac, 2011). More specifically, I will use a qualitative evaluation method called an Appreciative Inquiry (AI) (Posavac, 2011). Through this method, using interviews, and surveys, I can learn what the characteristics of a good volunteer are and help the Rappahannock CASA to build upon it. I believe that this is the best method for conducting my evaluation because I will not need to access any privacy act information. I can get all of the information that I need through surveys and interviews in a short period of time and translate them into constructive feedback.

Works Cited

CASA, R. A. (2019, 05 22). *RCASA About Us*. Retrieved from Rappahannock Area CASA:

<http://www.rappahannockcasa.com/home>

Posavac, E. J. (2011). *Program evaluation: Methods and case studies 8th edition*. Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall.

