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In this course, we learned how to evaluate programs effectively. While doing so, we explored the reasoning for program evaluation and what to avoid or focus on while conducting one. We learned about each step of the evaluation process. After learning about various aspects of program evaluation via lectures and reading, we applied these concepts to conduct a mock evaluation of a program. The program that I selected was ASTDR, or Adult Sexually Transmitted Disease Reduction. The goal of this program is to educate older adults about safe sex practices and reduce the rate of STDs in participants. Following is a link to a description of the program and my rationale for selection in APA format.

<programselection.docx>

As we completed coursework, we learned about the different components to program evaluation, such as the stakeholders, the type of evaluation, the research design, the data collection methods, and the timeline. One critical aspect to program evaluation that we practiced was research. This was a learning curve for me, and I feel more confident in my research skills after completing the required tasks. We learned about the importance of researching the type of program being evaluated and becoming an “expert” on what that looks like, on other similar programs and what made them successful, and on the demographic that would be using that program’s services. I found this to be intensive, and after doing this research I could see how it directly impacts the program evaluation process. We combed many research articles to become more knowledgeable and we summarized our findings in an annotated bibliography assignment.

While doing this, I learned a lot about older adults and the issues they face, as well as what other programs had done successfully to provide services in an efficient manner. Perhaps equally important, due to this research I felt like I understood this demographic more and I felt a real drive to provide them adequate and helpful services that would improve their quality of life. We also created a mind map to consider how all the information we learned about was connected. I thought this was challenging, but I am more confident in my ability to replicate this the next time I am struggling to understand how concepts relate to each other. Following is the link to the annotated bibliography I created. I’ve also included a link to an article that was especially helpful to my research and enlightened me on the issues and stigma older patients face when seeking healthcare about their sexuality.

<annotated.docx>

<https://doi-org.proxy.lib.odu.edu/10.1017/S0714980819000734>

 The steps for the mock program evaluation provided a chance for us to complete both qualitative and quantitative evaluation. We were provided archival data to study to analyze how efficiently the program was providing services to participants to evaluate quantitatively. In addition, we developed questions to interview participants to bring life to our evaluation. We attempted to understand the participant’s perceptions of the program and evaluate qualitatively. I found this to be a creative process that forced us as students to imagine this program as real and try to understand the impact it had, and the potential help it could bring to individuals. Finally, we reported our findings of the evaluation to the stakeholders of the program. I found this to be a good practice for us as students to take on the role of the expert or the supervisory role, as we are often put in the role of the receiver of information. Additionally, it became a chance to use the lessons we learned in interpersonal communication as we conveyed our findings in the most constructive way possible. Following is a link to the interview questions I created for my research.

<interviewquestions.docx>

 As I reflect on my future in a human services career setting, I understand the value of learning about program evaluation. An important way this course ties into the human services degree is through the main purpose of program evaluation: to increase the efficacy of providing services to people in need of them. In addition, learning how to evaluate programs taught me the most important parts of programs, as well as issues to watch out for. I will use this knowledge in any program I become involved with in the future or even one I create. It is a major goal of mine to bridge the gap between the needs of community members and services provided and I have gained knowledge through this course that I can apply as a human service professional. In conclusion, I believe this course offered direct application of the many human services concepts we have learned about so far as well as concrete knowledge about programs and effective evaluation.