Research Plan for Program Evaluation

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HMSV440W

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Oct 15, 2017

For my program evaluation, I am evaluating the Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP) at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton. The stakeholders for my evaluation are the family caseworkers, outreach specialist, program manager, exceptional family members (EFM), and the parents of the EFM at the Camp Pendleton EFMP Office. It is important to note that I have added the parents as stakeholders in my evaluation since they also benefit from the program’s support services. If I was looking at the EFMP across all military services my stakeholders would also include each branch EFMP headquarters staff and director for all four military branches. I would also want to consider adding the Department of Defense section that provides funding for the Exceptional Family Member Program however, since I have narrowed my focus to just this one Marine Corps base I do not need to include the larger entities.

I will be conducting a summative evaluation for the EFMP at Camp Pendleton. My evaluation will look at the EFMP’s ability to provide support services and resources to EFM’s with childhood mental health illnesses and developmental disabilities listed in the most current Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM). Since family caseworkers already provide support services as a part of their job description, it is important to evaluate the type and quality of support resources they are providing for EFM’s with mental health illnesses and developmental disabilities.

My evaluation question is “are the families and children with mental health illnesses participating in the EFMP receiving effective support services for both the exceptional family member and their family?” This question will look at the support services and resources that family caseworkers provide for both the EFM and their family. Currently, family caseworkers provide a basic list of the outside support services for children in the EFMP and their families however, the level of resources that are provided isn’t at the same level as those with medical illnesses. In my evaluation, I will look at the types and quality of support services and resources that are given to families and evaluate whether these services are helpful to the EFMs.

By conducting a summative evaluation, I will look at the services provided, discuss the effectiveness of these services with all the stakeholders involved and be able to compare effective support services offered in the civilian sector. By looking at statistical information on the types of illnesses and disabilities that the EFMP I will also be able to determine if there are enough services provided that address the needs of mentally ill children in the EFMP, this will look at the numerical value of services compared to those provided for EFMs with medical illnesses. Once I know the statistical information about the types of disabilities/illnesses of EFMs, I will be able to go through the services provided for both medical and mental health illnesses and compare the quality of services.

There are many ways that I can collect data for my evaluation however, I will rely on interviews with both staff and EFMP participants and agency records. I am also considering the use of brief surveys to determine which participants would be best to interview. Agency records will show me the types of services that each EFM has used and the types of services they have requested. This information will be vital in knowing what services EFMP participants are seeking. Conducting the interviews will allow me to understand how the staff of the EFMP feel this portion of their program is going and whether they think they are providing effective support services. Once I have a few EFMP participants selected, interviewing them will give me a better understanding of how they feel about the services they have been given. It is likely that the staff will see there are some areas that need to be improved but overall, they will see the program with a higher level of success than the participants do.

For my evaluation, it will be beneficial to use mixed research methods. Using both methods will give me the ability to conduct thorough and thoughtful interviews and focus on questions that help answer my evaluation question. I will use quantitative methods when conducting surveys which will allow me to narrow my list of EFMs to interview and focus on the effectiveness of both mental health illnesses and medical support services that have been offered and used. I will use qualitative methods when conducting interviews with the stakeholders.