Task 8 Findings

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For my project I chose to evaluate Mental Health America of Fauquier County (MHAFC). When I initially chose my articles for my annotated bibliography, they seemed relevant, however, I only referred back to two articles and utilized one during the evaluation process. This task will go into more detail on my findings and the observations made that led to my suggestions for each aspect and stakeholder of the program.

After interviewing all three stakeholders I was able to gain much insight into program and the effectiveness. I was also able to see some areas where they lack and because of my observations I believe that I will be able to help in these areas. During the interview with the community outreach coordinator I was able to find out that she has trouble getting organizations to give workshops and trainings to the communities at their site. She says the strategy that they use to promote mental health wellness in the community has been very effective, but she isn’t sure how the online resource helps people in the community since they don’t get to actually speak to the people who utilize their website. I happened to know someone who used the website for their own personal use, and I was able to gain feedback that was useful to the agency. After talking to the local resident, it seems that they were able to find a practitioner that took their insurance and the practitioners office called them back to schedule an appointment the very next day. The local resident did not use the online assessment because they figured that they would get assessed at the upcoming appointment and they really wouldn’t have an understanding of the outcomes anyway.

After interviewing the executive director, she mentioned that there were twenty to thirty organizations that helped her organization promote mental health wellness. She mentioned that some of the strategies they use are marketing, annual holiday gatherings, and the workshops. She also says that they hold informational sessions at the police stations and local schools about mental health and addiction. The executive director states that the schools have had a great response to this since they are witnessing many people around them who are falling victim to substance abuse due to an underlying mental illness or past trauma. Like the community outreach coordinator, she wished that they had better ways to talk to the local residents that utilize their website and find ways to hold more workshops and trainings for the community.

Lastly, the mental health aid workshop was very long but very informative. The facilitators were very informative and knowledgeable and seemed to have a lot of understanding on mental health and its effects of people and their families. There were only 5 participants not including me and only one of them was a local resident and the others were helping professionals. They stated that it is hard to get local residents to come to the trainings because they feel more comfortable attending support groups. They would rather relate than told what to do in that situation. I feel that if they promote the trainings differently than it could target people while they are at different stages of bereavement, coping, and crisis. One thing that I have learned in these human services classes is that people don’t want to be talked to, but they would rather be heard. The interesting thing was that the only one who asked questions was the local resident and they did so every time they wanted to challenge what was being said with their own experience. I do think these workshops are effective but for helping professionals. I know that they promote them for people in the community, but they need to find a different approach to targeting the community.

I recommend that the agency offer a feedback survey at the end of the online tool that helps people find a helping professional. This way they can have an idea of how the website is doing and if the people using it have better ideas as to how it can better accommodate them. For the workshops and trainings, I think they should offer an incentive like refreshments or logo printed souvenirs along with pamphlets and literature to help people understand living with a mental illness and how to cope and identify someone in crisis. Another thing I noticed was that they didn’t have any local resource guides on the table of cards and sign up sheets. This would be a helpful tool to the residents who come into the trainings since that is basically what their mission is to promote mental health wellness. These findings can help the program and the service by helping them do what they say they want to do, promote mental health wellness. I would like for the stakeholders to consider my recommendations because as an outsider I feel I am nonbiased and am just looking to help all of the stakeholders and improve the program.

One specific goal that should be implemented is changing the way they promote to the community. They do a good job promoting to the helping professionals, which is great, but the main focus according to their mission is to promote to the community. Some action steps that should be taken are; hold a meeting for the community to find out what they would like to better serve them, hold a meeting for the organizations that are teamed up with MHA and find out ways they can all work together to better serve the community within their own agency and as a whole, add a feedback survey to the website so that they can see what needs to be changed on the website, and have a meeting going over what was addressed and what the outcome was so that they better serve the community.

A few of the research articles helped me by giving me ideas on how to implement my findings and what methods to use. However, only one article was utilized and it helped me to, “see the importance of the community-based approach and how the community is what makes the agency exist and if they are more focused on the professionals how will this continue to be effective for the local residents”. It is important to educate the families and individuals who suffer with these mental illnesses and without getting the information to the local residents the right way it could deter them from coming to the workshops.