**Task 8: Findings**

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**Results**

Literature reviews conclude that body image and self-esteem impact positive youth development in young girls and also prove to be barriers to physical activity. Literature also shows that physical activity increases when programs are girls-only and multi-component. Girls on the Run is a physical activity youth program that places teaching life skills as a primary goal. Adolescent girls of various ages meet twice weekly for ten weeks in an inclusive setting where emotions are explored and physical health is strengthened. At the end of each season, team members complete a 5k run. This evaluation measured the effectiveness of Girls on the Run Central VA Blue Ridge in helping young girls develop life skills such as self-esteem and relationship building. The methods used to gather information consisted of surveys and interviews. Ten adolescent girls ages 10-16 and their parents completed surveys. Interviews were conducted with five staff members/coaches.

Survey analyses revealed that program participants felt the GOTR curriculum helped them develop self-esteem and build peer relationships. Survey items centered mainly on feelings of belonging and positive development. Responses tended to lean more towards “strongly agree” and “agree.” Analyses also show that participants felt the girls-only environment made them feel safe and supported. (e.g., “I’m more motivated now to be physically active because I’m doing it with my friends, and it’s been a great source of support.”) Quantitative analysis of parent surveys reflected an approval of the program and its effect on their children. (e.g., “I’ve seen my child bond with the coaches and other children. She has really enjoyed encouraging others and running as a team.” The analysis also showed that parents felt the coaches cared for their children and that the curriculum was relevant.

Analyses of coach/staff member interviews showed a consistent theme around training. While coaches also appreciated the girls-only environment, they felt that implementing the curriculum could be improved. And the improvement of the curriculum would come with more training centered around inclusion and diversity. Another barrier to implementing that the staff members pointed out was the relevancy of the topics to the age groups of the children. Some staff felt that content needed to be more comprehensive for their age groups. The moments of open discussion were areas where staff members shared approval of the curriculum. One staff member stated, “… the girls began to relate to each other and felt it was easier to talk about their lives and struggles being surrounded by peers who had similar experiences.”

**Conclusion**

Based on the evaluation results, Girls on the Run CVABR is an effective program that fosters an environment that aligns with its mission. Results from participants, parents, and staff members show overall satisfaction with and approval of its services. All stakeholders used to gather information recognized the positive impact that the program has on the adolescent girls in the community that participate. There are areas of opportunity for training to sustain the program's effectiveness in offering a supporting environment for young girls to develop life skills.

**Implications**

The findings could positively impact GOTR CVABR's ability to continue helping young girls in the community become physically active while learning life skills. The positive feedback from participants and parents shows that the program is on the right track and making a change and will continue to do so. Even though the findings were targeted toward measuring the effectiveness of the Central VA/Blue Ridge program, they could also help program administrators design improvements in other locales.

Findings regarding the curriculum suggest that training is an area for improvement, and the curriculum could be adjusted to match the age group of the participants. Staff interviews showed a desire for additional training in providing age-appropriate answers to questions arising from inclusivity, diversity, and cultural competency. These implications push to maintain the program's effectiveness and continue its support for the community.

**Recommendations**

The first recommendation for GOTR CVABR is to consider additional training for staff members and coaches. The Girls on the Run curriculum aligns with The Five Cs Model of Positive Youth Development. The Five Cs framework includes confidence, competence, connection, caring, and character. Since the program aims to instill these characteristics in young adults, coaches must portray them whether they are new or returning. It is critical that the staff have the skills to adapt the program to the age and needs of the participants, which will make for fewer barriers to implementation. This could be done with more interactive training, where coaches can practice role-playing different situations based on the age of the participants or ethnicity.

The second recommendation would be to provide resources for participants to continue with development post-program. Analysis of the results shows participants' approval and satisfaction with the program. And parents notice a change in their child immediately after the program. However, results did not show whether this development continues in settings outside of the GOTR program environment. Handouts and workout activities to do at home or with a friend group could ensure that the positive developments remain and encourage participants to continue in the program the following year.

**Goals and Objectives**

Goal: Continue to use physical activity to instill life skills in young girls.

Objective: GOTR CVABR should continue to remain accessible to girls struggling with self-esteem and bullying.

Objective: GOTR CVABR should partner with local schools, human service departments, and group homes to reach more adolescent girls in the community who are unaware of their services.

Objective: GOTR CVABR should continue to adapt the curriculum to fit the participants' needs by considering age and culture.

Goal: Increase the number of returning participants.

Objective: Create a means for participant groups to remain connected post-program.

Objective: Construct workout activities that participants can continue at home individually or with a group.

Objective: Continue to provide a safe space for participants to share their thoughts and concerns and ensure that they are being seen and heard.

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