**Task 5: Research Plan**

Deannah Myers

Human Services, Old Dominion University

HMSV 440W: Program Development, Implementation and Funding

Dr. Sharon Silverberg

October 13, 2023

**The Stakeholders in the Evaluation**

When evaluators decide to assess an agency or program, one thought to keep in mind is who the evaluation results are for: stakeholders refer to the people who will be invested in the evaluation process to some degree, and they could show as program participants, program leaders, those who donate to the agency, as well as the general public. The agency that is to be assessed is Intercept Health; while this human services facility provides various help to a range of diverse populations, the focus of the evaluation will be on the at-risk youths enrolled in programs geared toward them, like the independent living programs. The stakeholders who would be interested in this evaluation may include the Intercept Health owners and leaders, the program staff who work at the group homes, the children to young adults who are currently receiving help at the agency, any financial supporters of the agency, and future potential clients. All of these groups would want to know that the programs assisting at-risk youths are working as intended; it is important for leaders and staff to know that their work is having the appropriate effect on these youths, while clients have the right to know that their time and energy spent is developing the desired goals. In the case of financial supporters, they will want reassurance that the money they are donating is being used on effective programs.

Hopefully, by the end of the evaluation process, if changes are needed, those in power will take the results into consideration and improve any aspects that are lacking. To be more specific, it is expected that the program leaders will make necessary upgrades no matter the negative or positive outcome from the evaluation, so as to continue giving the best care possible to their targeted population. Moreover, the current and potential clients of this agency would gain a clear insight as to how the program is running, allowing them to make well-informed decisions on what to do next.

**The Evaluation Questions**

The purpose of this evaluation is to assess the effectiveness of Intercept Health’s care towards at-risk youths, as well as ensure the well-being of the staff who work with this group, which would enhance a program’s effectiveness. This will be explored through two evaluation questions. The first poses how effective the available programs are at Intercept Health for at-risk youths? The second asks if there are limitations and safety measures put in place for both staff and clients to guarantee client success? The reason behind the second question is due to the knowledge that at-risk youths is a relatively large group that requires careful attention; how the agency addresses an appropriate client to staff ratio to decrease burn-out and lacking efforts is a concern. The safety of both the vulnerable population and program staff is good to confirm along the way.

The agency’s mission is to aid those in need in their journey to live their healthiest life, and their values include some attributes like: providing excellent service, team loyalty, kindness, and authenticity (“Intercept Health,” n.d.). It would be a good idea to keep this in mind to see what the agency holds its standards to; their determination to accomplish their mission and maintain their values could indicate their method in assessing the agency’s effectiveness. In other words, would the agency consider itself effective if their programs uphold the standards that they have set for themselves? Having this information involved in the evaluation process is important because both the evaluator and the program leaders should agree on the criteria that is to be assessed.

**The Type of Evaluation**

One type of evaluation that would help in answering the proposed inquiries involves the use of implementation goals, intermediate goals, and outcome goals. The first step is about investigating the different programs implemented at Intercept Health, and finding out if they are being used as originally intended; this is the implementation goal. Following that is the intermediate goal, which would be examining the results of the programs, and confirming whether or not these were the results the agency expected. Lastly, compiling the evidence to reveal the program’s positive or negative correlation with its intended purpose is part of the outcome goal; for example, a positive result would show that the program is being implemented properly while achieving its objectives to get the expected outcome. For the second question that is more focused on the staff, the same method would work well to determine if the limitations and safety measures are ensuring their wellbeing.

To give a more solid vision as to how this type of evaluation would work, Intercept Health’s independent living program will suffice as an example. The intention of this program is to help young adults ages 17 to 21 become self-sufficient and gaining independence; when applying the implementation goal, the program will be assessed for its ability to do exactly as it intended in helping develop independence and self-sufficient habits. The intermediate goal would have the evaluator examining the results of the program, which would be getting an account or retrieving records on the clients’ successes in becoming self-sufficient and independent. Finally, the outcome goal mostly helps in deciding if the evidence gathered proves if the program did as it intended: if the young adults did indeed gain independence and self-sufficient behaviors, the program works as envisioned.

**How the Type of Evaluation Addresses the Inquiry**

The point of the evaluation is to assess Intercept Health’s effectiveness and the standards it has in place for their staff to ensure wellbeing and effective productivity. The type of evaluation that will be used lends itself well in verifying effectiveness. The term effectiveness means the desired result is reached successfully, which is exactly what the evaluation type confirms: is the program being used as intended, and is its use producing the intended outcome? Alternatively for the second question: are the limitations and safety measures being used to its full purpose, and is it succeeding is maintaining the staffs and clients’ wellbeing?

**The Data Collection Methods**

While there are a multitude of ways one can conduct research, the method that will be used to collect data for this evaluation is interviewing. Sources of data that would make the most sense to interview would be the program staff and leaders, any volunteers, program participants, and possibly family members or friends of the participants. A pro of using the interviewing method is gaining a closer insight as to how those involved in the program feel about it and its effectiveness; getting a perspective from both the workers and the clients would guarantee a more balanced appraisal of the program. Program staff should be able to explain the purpose of the program, and how they are going about obtaining that goal; they can also give their opinion on their success rate with their clients, and the limitations and conditions they work under. The program participants will be able to give an account of their experiences with the program, as well as express if they feel the program has sufficiently provided help to their problems. Both program leaders and participants could suggest if there are changes that need to be made for greater effectiveness and room for growth. If it is possible to get the opinion of the friends or family members during the interviewing process, they could help in sharing the successes of program’s effect on the client; this is especially true if the participant is underage and needs an adult present for the interview. A con of using the interviewing method is receiving potentially biased responses; however, to combat this issue, the questions will be tailored to require mostly factual answers. For example, instead of asking a participant if they enjoyed the program activities, a better inquiry would be if the participant acquired beneficial behaviors as a result of the program: self-sufficient habits from the independent living program.

**The Research Methods**

The different types of research methods include qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods. Qualitative research methods are used to understand the experiences of people being researched; for example, this would be of use if the researcher wanted to see what it was like to be an at-risk youth and their experiences with programs intended for them (Mcleod & Guy-Evans, 2023). Quantitative research methods use numerical data to understand a posed question; one would find this method in scientific experiments, for topics like how the interactions between two variables lead to certain consequences (Mcleod & Guy-Evans, 2023). For instance, if a researcher wanted to find the cause-and-effect independent living programs have on those enrolled. The mixed method is a combination of the two previously mentioned research methods. The best method for this evaluation would be both qualitative and quantitative research methods

**How the Type of Research Benefits the Evaluation**

Interviewing is a data collecting method that can be employed in either quantitative or qualitative research methods; the quantitative method uses questionnaires to determine a numerical result of all those who feel a certain program was helpful in their endeavors, while the qualitative method uses interviews to get a first-hand understanding of how the interviewee feels about their experience in the program. Quantitative is often used to find the correlation between two variables; in this evaluation’s case, the correlation that is to be determined is between the help of Intercept Health’s programs and the improvements of at-risk youths enrolled in the program. This method helps to highlight effectiveness. The qualitative research method is usually found though interviews; the personal accounts of the interviewees are important for finding effectiveness, as well as understanding their environment’s conditions. Therefore, a mix of the two methods makes sense for this evaluation.

**References**

*About us: Intercept Health*. Intercept Health. (n.d.). <https://www.intercepthealth.com/about-us>

Mcleod, S. (2023, September 25). *Qualitative vs Quantitative Research Methods & Data*

*Analysis*. Simply Psychology. <https://www.simplypsychology.org/qualitative-quantitative.html>

Posavac, E. J., & Linfield, K. J. (2016). *Program evaluation: Methods and case studies* (9th ed.).

Routledge.