**Task 8: Findings**

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**A Summary of the Evaluation**

To fully understand the outcome of the evaluation’s findings, it would be best to briefly revisit the questions that determined the evaluation’s inquiries: the evaluation sought how effective Intercept Health’s programs were at serving at-risk youths, as well as the limitations and safety measures implemented for the benefit of both staff and clients to ensure success. Due to the areas of interest, Intercept Health’s staff and program participants were questioned about their experiences; the overall response to the evaluation’s assessment remained consistently positive from those who were able to contribute throughout the process. The methods that were utilized to gain data for the evaluation were surveys and interviews that contained the same questions; this mixed method of quantitative and qualitative research allowed the evaluation to include personal experience of the interviewee and numerical data lending itself to the positive correlation of Intercept Health’s programs affecting its at-risk youth population.

It was difficult to get in touch with supervising personnel of Intercept Health for their programs that work with at-risk youths in the Chesapeake site location; however, this was understandable as these services require a lot of attention and care. Unfortunately, the only program that was able to participate because they responded in time was Intercept Health’s foster care service. This then led to a limitation on the evaluation: the program participants were too young to be interviewed in a one-on-one discussion, and thus were permitted to solely answer surveys. Due to these combined predicaments, a small collection of surveys was answered, followed by two interviews with staff members. Most communication occurred through email with the foster care supervisor, which is who collected and presented the surveys.

**Conclusions Obtained from the Interviews and Surveys**

To address the evaluation’s first question about how effective Intercept Health’s program is at helping at-risk youth, the beginning half of the interview or survey had inquiries dedicated to expanding on what Intercept Health staff was doing to achieve this and the program participants’ experiences with the agency. The type of evaluation that was applied to determine the effectiveness of this agency’s programs involved implementation, intermediate, and outcome goals; for Intercept Health’s foster care program, the reunification or adoption of a foster child was considered the purpose and final goal for this program. Therefore, being successful in maintaining their purpose would confirm proper implementation of the program and positive outcome through the clients’ results. According to the surveys, it appears that clients trust that they are succeeding in their goals to find homes through this service; furthermore, the staff members confirmed that they had a high success rate in finding homes for children who do not have suitable living situations with hundreds of discharge outcomes, along with an improvement in behavioral or emotional concerns from the clients. Staff find that there are some aspects of the program that help in ensuring client success: passionate members with strong work ethic, a big team of foster care parents, small caseloads that allow for more contact with families, weekly check-ins to ensure requirements are met by the families through detail-oriented home studies, preapproval processes of potential foster parents, and an “open door” policy with supervisors to answer questions and assist with clients.

Another point that was included to test Intercept Health’s effectiveness was verifying if the agency’s mission and values were being upheld; both participants and staff believe that Intercept Health’s services are helping the clients grow and live their healthiest lives. Program staff find that the company’s mission and goals are prevalent in their daily work life; for example, team loyalty, passion, service excellence and authenticity showed themselves in the supportive and competent work ethic of their colleagues. There was also a wholesome ritual of receiving “Love and Praise Cards” from co-workers to commend those who were upholding their company values; the staff member who received the most of these cards were awarded gift cards.

When questioned about how they would change at Intercept Health to improve work efficiency and client success, some staff emphasized a raise in pay and an increase in staff member count; others suggested establishing connections with other agencies and increasing marketing efforts in order to serve a greater population of foster youths and parents. Clients find that the program is very effective at finding them homes, and that program staff are integral to making this happen as seamlessly as possible; they do not propose any changes to the program for improvements.

Concerning the second question of the evaluation that reflected on the limitations and safety measures Intercept Health has in place for both staff and clientele, aspects of the program like work conditions, training, and feelings of safety within the agency were discussed. As explained by staff, work conditions were deemed remarkably positive with a variety of descriptors: flexible, team-oriented and friendly, enjoyable, supportive, structured and organized. Everyone had a 9:00am to 5:00pm schedule, with an encouragement to work 40 hours weekly, utilize paid-time-off, and exercise self-care; they also have paid, on-call rotations for potential crisis situations. Weekly meetings are conducted with supervisors to talk about caseloads and mental health check-ins. The foster care program’s client-to-caretaker ratio allows for a six to eight client workload per staff member; foster parents are also limited to the number of children they can take in due to bed space and their ability to manage a child’s needs or behaviors. All staff members are content with their workload, even without the aid of volunteers. Intercept Health implements training for their foster care employees when they enter the workforce, as well as annually. This training includes preparing staff in working with foster parents and children, behavioral management, and self-defense through a program called UKERU provided by Intercept Health. Both staff and clients feel safe in each other’s space at Intercept Health, and neither would change anything to improve well-being or safety.

Overall, the foster care service at Intercept Health was deemed by both program staff and program participants as successful in finding children homes just as the program had originally intended; most if not all children have found suitable homes to live in after being discharged from the service. Moreover, Intercept Health’s presence in the lives of staff and clients appear to have zero adverse effects on their well-being, and it provides a safe space for both groups.

**How the Findings Can Impact Intercept Health and Its Programs**

After conducting the necessary interviews and collecting the finished surveys, it can be concluded that Intercept Health has proven itself to be effective and safe in its foster care program. This can only impact the program in a positive way due to the sufficient evidence that the foster care system does exactly as it is supposed to, and that there are rules and expectations put in place to ensure the safety of all those present. These findings can help show outsiders that Intercept Health offers an efficient service to children in need of homes; hopefully the positive outcome could direct foster parents and those interested in this career toward Intercept Health to grow their outreach and potentially increase their resources in welcoming homes. The only negative review staff gave about the program was that they felt there needed to be an increase in pay and more staff to help balance the workload. This may deter some looking to work in this part of the agency, but this field requires compassion despite low pay; hopefully people looking to work here are there for the children rather than for the pay.

**Recommendations For Improvements Based on the Findings**

Although neither foster care program staff nor participant really felt that there needed to be a great deal of change for improvements, advertising the program for more exposure, increasing staff to balance workload, and raising pay were common concerns among staff. A broad goal that could eventually lead to all listed concerns being met would be raising awareness of the program’s existence and job openings. Doing this will show the outside world that Intercept Health helps at-risk youths find homes for those in need of one, which could then lead to more potential hires. Exposure could also help Intercept Health find organizations interested in donating money to services like theirs, which would hopefully allow for an increase in pay for staff members. Recommendations on how to achieve this in small steps would be to bring the issue up to the leaders at Intercept Health, discuss and come to an agreement on how to best advertise the establishment to job hunters and those in search of foster care options, finding organizations that would donate to the program, and finally discuss a raise in pay with those who can permit that change.

**Objectives to Reach Goals**

1. Set a meeting time and date with Intercept Health leaders and foster care program supervisors to discuss raising awareness of the program, as well as increasing staff and pay.
2. Find at least 3 different ways to best advertise Intercept Health’s foster care program; for example, an ad showing what the program is for and that it is looking for more workers to join the accommodating, supportive, and compassionate workforce.
3. Explore options on those who can donate to the program, and choose at least 3 organizations to begin working on a communication between them and Intercept Health
4. Work on ways Intercept Health can increase the pay rate of its hard-working staff that is agreeable for everyone.

**How the Research Supports the Findings, Recommendations, and Goals**

When determining the evaluation’s purpose and creating its questions, the vague idea was to find out how effective the chosen agency was at doing its job; luckily the vagueness worked in the evaluation’s favor due to the small blurbs of trouble that came up when communicating with Intercept Health’s leaders over email. However, many of the research articles were chosen under the impression that the evaluation would include Intercept Health’s independent living program; since there was not a response on their end in time for the collection of data and presentation of its findings, that aspect of Intercept Health’s programs that work with at-risk youths will no longer be included. Some research articles do support the idea that at-risk youths may display dysfunctional behaviors due to a lack of care at home, but Intercept Health’s foster care program ensures that their children get placed in welcoming, loving homes that will improve behavioral issues by providing supportive spaces (*At-risk youth in schools: A wraparound delinquency prevention program produces disappointing results*, 2020). Having this resource can only help improve the lives of at-risk youths. Raposa & Co. (2019) suggested that mentoring or non-parental caregivers are important in aiding youths develop positively. This article can be used to show how important Intercept Health’s staff in the foster care system is for at-risk youth foster children; more proof can be revealed in one of the staff’s interview response in how their involvement with the children improves behavioral and emotional problems.

**References**

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