**Task 9: Reflection Letter**

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**How the Evaluation Meets the Course Objectives**

The purpose of the human services’ program evaluation course is to develop an evaluation plan that will then be implemented on the student’s chosen agency or program; through the understanding of key concepts and tools used during an evaluation, the student must decide what aspects of the program are going to be assessed, and utilize an evaluation method that would best answer the questions created. The evaluation that was conducted for this class is based on Intercept Health, a human services agency that helps people in many diverse populations to live their lives to the fullest; programs available at Intercept Health for the at-risk youth population were specifically chosen to be assessed for its effectiveness by using the implementation, intermediate, and outcome goals evaluation method. In other words, the programs were evaluated for whether or not they were successful at doing what they were meant to do, as well as whether there were safety measures put in place to further ensure program success. The fifth course task, Research Plan, helped the most in putting this process into perspective: it describes what the evaluation is going to be focusing on, as well as what tools will be implemented to gain evidence and how it will be used.

The plan for the evaluation was to conduct interviews and surveys with Intercept Health’s staff and clientele in order to determine if the programs were performing as expected within safe environments; the mixed-method of qualitative and quantitative data helped in finding a positive correlation to the program’s efforts and the successes of their clients. The stakeholders, Intercept Health’s program leader and a member of staff, reviewed the interview questions for additional approval; utilizing these individuals during the evaluation process ensured both the stakeholders’ and evaluator’s interests were being met, which also validated the accuracy of the evaluation’s purpose because it has the stakeholders’ needs in mind. The evaluation has been achieved by doing exactly as it was intended to.

**How Understanding the Components of a Program Evaluation Lends Itself to the Course Objectives**

Through the discussion boards, the class could identify the purpose of evaluations within the human services field: proving the existence of an agency is positively impactful, making sure the targeted groups are being served, and discovering ways to improve the agency in any way possible. The evaluator’s role is to find the answer to those inquiries, while the stakeholder’s role is to take the evaluation’s information and use it to determine their next step; for example, making the appropriate changes and improvements in the agency. Keeping these ideas in mind will help in understanding what is to be expected from the evaluation process and what actions should be taken when concluding all of the evaluation’s tasks.

The descriptions for key components of an evaluation like stakeholders, data collection, research methods, and the different types of evaluations can also be found in the discussion board assignments to better understand the role and importance of each concept. Stakeholders include important figures in an evaluation, such as the program’s staff, managers, leaders, and clients, as well as the financial contributors and those interested in the program’s services; knowing the needs of these groups can help shape the purpose of an evaluation and how it will be directed. For example, the evaluation could be used to find areas of the program that are lacking and needs improvements; this could lead to the agency effectively meeting the needs of its program participants, or changing the working conditions to increase well-being and productivity. Moreover, deciding on which research methods and the type of evaluation will be implemented, and what data will be collected to best answer the evaluation question, can heavily determine how an evaluation will be utilized; understanding the differences within each category can help in making the evaluation precise and successful in achieving its purpose, because the evaluator will know which tools would be the best at answering their questions. Concerning another component, understanding the role of research in the evaluation process was influenced by the third task of the course, the Annotated Bibliography. Researching the population being served revealed what needs are typically not being met at other similar agencies, which informed the questionnaire that was used in the evaluation process: the research information helped in determining if the chosen agency was doing its best to provide for their clients’ needs, and having mentoring figures available was the need in this case.

**Reflecting On Successes and How the Course Contents Intersect with the Human Services Field**

One of the most successful aspects of the evaluation was creating a plan for what the evaluation was going to do and how it was going to answer the evaluation questions, because it helped drive the physical actions needed to conduct the evaluation. Knowing what the intentions were behind the evaluation increased understanding between the evaluator and concerned stakeholders because everyone knew what was to be expected through clear communication. Another successful part of the evaluation was the creation of the interview and survey questions because they were integral in determining the program’s effectiveness; the answers to the questions evidently point out how the foster care program successfully found homes for their at-risk youth clients, and everyone appears happy and safe at Intercept Health. If an evaluation is performed at a future place of work, it will be easier to understand what will be expected from all parties involved; knowing what to do should increase the accuracy of the evaluation because its requirements will be appropriately met.