

Assignment 5
Program Evaluation

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Methods of Inquiry

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April 28, 2006

Introduction

Martin County Public Schools (MCPS), in an effort to address and raise awareness of violence and sexual abuse prevention, is participating in a research program with the Fischler School of Education and Human Services (FSEHS), the Violence Prevention Network (VPN), and Safety Center (SC). Services to the school will be provided by VPN and SC with FSEHS providing oversight and conducting the program evaluation. The research program aims to achieve four goals, which are to: (1) promote pro-social behavior and conflict resolution skills in students, (2) augment parent and staff conflict resolution strategies and skills, (3) improve parental affiliation with schools, and (4) increase awareness in child sexual abuse issues. For this program, a sample population in a high need, underserved elementary school is desired.

Evaluation Method

This research program is in response to a previously identified need from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, #1B2322256. As such, the proposed research program will be evaluated using a program theory assessment. The aim of this assessment is to determine the integrity of the program's concept and design. To determine the integrity of this research program's concept and design, FSEHS intends to look at the program's goals and objectives; functions, components, and activities; and the logic or sequencing of components and activities.

Program Goals and Objectives

An overall goal to implement a school-based comprehensive violence and sexual abuse prevention program in a Marcos County public school is supported by four subordinate goals. As the evaluator, FSEHS will evaluate if the subordinate goals will provide results/consequences

that support the overall goal and similarly, will evaluate if the overall goal will provide results/ consequences that support the MCPS initiative to impact the target population.

Program Functions, Components, and Activities

This research program is expected to be the first step towards empowering MCPS personnel in universal preventive activities which may be continuously implemented as education programs or methods for students and parents. As the evaluator, FSEHS will evaluate if the planned function and activity of both VPN and SC provide the necessary competencies to MCPS personnel, students, and parents so that each public school may continuously implement preventive activities.

Logic or Sequencing of Components and Activities

Beyond evaluating the functions, components, and activities of VPN and SC, is a review of the logic or sequencing behind them. Table 2 in the proposal identifies the details of each activity performed by VPN and SC. Various details such as the immediate target audience of the activity, number of sessions offered each academic year, and the duration of each session are identified. As the evaluator, FSEHS will evaluate the logic or sequencing to determine if enough detail is provided and if the proposal supports a continuous implementation of preventive activities.

Salient Process Variable Assessment

Each of the four goals associated with this research program have had specific degrees of success identified for each immediate or short-term and long-term outcomes. To assess the achievement of these variables, pretests and posttests will need to be administered. At the start of the school year, each target audience will be assessed on their competencies for every activity

they are associated with. Then, at the end of the school year, each target audience will be assessed again to determine the degree of success achieved.

To measure the success of the long-term outcomes, data for each goal will be collected for the duration of the first school year in which this research program is conducted, and then continued for every school year that follows. At the end of the third school year following the start of the research program, the data from that year will be compared to the data collected at the end of year one.

Research Methodology and Data Analysis Strategy

This research program, although complex in that there are various target audiences for each activity and that there are numerous activities, is a basic one-group pretest-posttest design. For each activity there is a single group of participants that will complete the activity. The expected immediate or short-term outcomes are projections for degrees of success after one year of participation. A pretest at the beginning of the year followed by a posttest at the end of the year will provide the data necessary to determine if the projected degrees of success were achieved. The immediate or short-term outcomes are objectives that are mostly knowledge and skill competencies of violence and sexual abuse prevention.

Similarly, the long-term outcomes are projections for degrees of success. Rather than reviewing after one year of participation, these projections compare data after three years of participation. Although neither a pretest nor posttest will be administered, an initial collection of data at the end of the first year will be done to set a baseline. Data will continue to be collected on a yearly basis until the end of the third year. The initial data collection will be compared to the data collected at the end of the third year to determine if the projected degrees of success

were achieved. The long-term outcomes are objectives that are mostly attitude competencies of violence and sexual abuse prevention.

Means and standard deviations for each outcome will be reported. The means of each outcome will reflect the actual degree of success achieved, where the standard deviation will show how each target population was dispersed in terms of degree of success. Dependent t-tests for each outcome variable will be conducted to compare the pretest and posttest means to determine the actual degree of success achieved. For the long-term outcomes, additional t-tests will be conducted, and the means of each outcome for year one will be compared with year three to determine the degree of success achieved.

Communication Plan

As the program oversight lead, FSEHS will be responsible for communicating research program data and information to program leaders and staff. Various communication tools will be used to accomplish the dissemination of data and information. For most communications, e-mail will be used among the team members. When decisions or collaborative input is required, face-to-face meetings or teleconferences will be used. Additionally, if communications include sample-sensitive data, strives will be taken to ensure that the data remains protected. In this case, face-to-face or asynchronous meetings will be used—e-mail and teleconference capabilities will not be used.

Project Sustainment and Operationalism

Ultimately, MCPS wishes to have a preventive program in which each school is empowered to administer each year. To achieve this goal, the research program must demonstrate that all participants were able to adapt from existing and adopt new processes with minimal challenge. Additionally, the expected outcomes for each goal need to be operationalized

into standard operating procedures. As each activity is completed, the target audience needs to be assessed to determine the actual outcome. Should actual and expected outcomes differ, a gap analysis will be completed to determine if the expected outcome was unrealistic or if the implementation of program activities was insufficient to achieve the expected outcome. Changes will be made as prescribed by the results of the gap analysis. Continuous assessment of the program theory and process, as well as competencies of the participants, is necessary to sustain and operationalize this program.