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Evaluation of a Child Abuse Prevention Home Visitation Program Using Predictive Discriminant Analysis to Identify Reasons for Early Departure

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Abstract

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Proposal Title

Evaluation of a Child Abuse Prevention Home Visitation Program Using Predictive Discriminant Analysis to Identify Reasons for Early Departure.

Abstract – 150 words or less

A formative evaluation of a state sponsored child abuse prevention program that focuses on first time mothers who are past their 29th week of pregnancy. The goals of the program are to improve the primary caregiver's health, improve the health and development of the child, to enhance family functioning and stability, to teach positive parenting techniques, and to teach safety practices to all family members. The purpose of this evaluation is to identify variables that differentiate clients who complete the program from those who do not continue in the program past the child's third birthday. A predictive discriminant analysis was used to analyze archival data for trends regarding reasons for leaving the program early and to develop a model for future prediction. Predictive models can then be applied to identify future clients' propensity to complete the program and make appropriate changes in program implementation to encourage long-term program involvement.

Relevance Statement – 500 words or less

In terms of importance, this formative evaluation examines the relationship of clients in a child abuse prevention home visitation program to determine the relationship between variables that may predict early departure from the program. The child abuse prevention program is similar to others across the nation; therefore, this evaluation is generalizable to many programs. Through this evaluation, the researchers were able to identify a model for use in identifying and labeling clients as at-risk for leaving the program prior to completion. By identifying clients as having a propensity to leave the program prior to completion, program stakeholders can develop incentives that encourage participants to remain active in the program. Therefore, this evaluation has provided the stakeholders with valuable information that offers the ability to modify implementation to encourage long-term program involvement. National stakeholders responsible for directing child abuse prevention programs would benefit from exposure to the information discovered in this evaluation. In terms of adding to the evaluation field's body of knowledge, the use of predictive discriminant analysis is a method rarely used in this area. It is believed that predictive discriminate analysis is not used in evaluations, as practitioners are not familiar with its methods. This analysis is a classification technique that uses a set of multiple attributes and one classification variable with two or more levels. Predictive discriminant analysis identifies key variables that distinguish clients from each other. The predictive model developed by the analysis allows future clients to be classified appropriately based on those key variables. Therefore, stakeholders are able to identify if a client has a high propensity to leave the program early before the client actually leaves and develop a plan to retain the client until completion of the program. Since most evaluators have not had exposure to this technique, there is a void in predictive models that would be generalizable to many programs across the nation. Evaluators would benefit from an understanding of this analysis as a valid method for developing models to

predict program relationships. Ultimately, predictive discriminate analysis allows evaluators to better understand the relationships among clients' behaviors.