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Effective Evaluation for a Human Research Education Program

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Problem/Issue Statement: Many Human Research Protection Programs (HRPPs) have responded to the growing complexity of federal requirements, guidance documents and human subjects review processes with educational programs of various sizes and formats. Offering any type of educational program is costly and time-intensive making program evaluation an integral part. Due to the fragmented nature of most HRPP educational efforts, robust program evaluations are not always in place and good national models are not available. Washington University has developed such a model for its large-scale education program, which is an integral part. Due to the fragmented nature of most HRPP educational efforts, robust program evaluations are not always in place and good national models are not available. Washington University has developed such a model for its large-scale education program, helping to increase effectiveness while saving time and cost measures.

Description of Program/Research: Using established qualitative and quantitative program evaluation models, the Education Team began to apply these principles to the large-scale comprehensive human research protection program in existence. Information garnered helped guide future efforts and assisted in determining which current offerings, most effective in helping reach goals, were to remain.

Program development took the following steps:

1. Identifying Educational Programs: Twenty-seven (27) currently available educational outlets for the HRPP education program were identified. This process enabled us to see potential gaps in our educational programming, and subsequently created additional potential programs. (See Diagram 2)

2. Identifying Goals: The initial assessment structure was completed by identifying intended program goals, based on objectives identified within each of the current 27 educational offerings. (See Diagram 2)

3. Individual educational goals were linked to broader more comprehensive outcomes/aims. (See Diagram 3)

4. Identifying Stakeholders impacted by the programs: Primary Stakeholders were identified as: Faculty Investigators, Research Staff, Student Researchers, Students, IRB Members, IRB Staff, St. Louis Community, National, and International Audiences. (See Diagram 4)

To determine if the HRPP education program is meeting its goals and aims, current data collection instruments were evaluated and subsequently enhanced to collect consistent data points across programs. Data points collected include: individuals’ first and last names, type of service, date, department/ affiliation, topic. This allows us to track individuals’ involvement in the program, frequently used services, and current issues being raised which can then be shown in generated reports.

The Education Team is currently working on correlating usage of educational programming to IRB research related to time to approval, number of contingencies, and issues with non-compliance. Evaluation such as this takes the cooperation of every individual involved in the process and requires dedicated staff time for tracking. The benefits are not only an effective education program tailored to the needs of the audience but also provides a mechanism by which institutional leadership can be appraised of educational needs and efforts being made to meet those needs. This is also a system by which individuals can be held accountable for learning and knowledge related to compliance issues.

Additional Information: This program evaluation is unique in that it is being done on offerings designed for those engaged or interested in human subjects research using adult education learning theory where little information regarding program effectiveness has been disseminated widely. Results of these efforts will be made public via the Washington University Human Research Protection Program Digital Commons Open Access Library found at: http://digitalcommons.wustl.edu/hrpo/