

ABSTRACT

Generational poverty is defined as a family having lived in poverty for at least two generations. Ignite Community Solutions employs a dual-generation approach to the problem of generational poverty by creating opportunities for and addressing the needs of both children and the adults. Ignite offers three programs: Reset, ClearPath and ThinkBig. All programs are offered in the community and use teaching methods that include 1) didactic instruction; 2) role play; 3) group exercises; 4) homework, and 5) tell, show, do apply. A process and impact program evaluation were conducted using quantitative and qualitative methods.

Pre and post surveys using the Theory of Planned Behavior were administered to 80 participants throughout the 3 programs. Reliability and validity were determined, and independent t-tests and ANOVA were used to analyze data. Overall, there was a statistically significant difference for all 3 of the Theory of Planned Behavior components by one- way ANOVA ($P > 0.05$). Those surveyed showed a higher tendency to have increased psychosocial skills and self-esteem (attitude), understand what are important factors to developing communication skills (subjective norms), considered themselves more capable to successfully make healthy life choices, and be workplace ready, while also reducing the risk of recidivism. These statistically significant findings indicate that for those surveyed the increase was due to their participation in Ignite Community Solutions.

In addition, narrative interview data from participants using standard inductive textual analysis were analyzed. Nine participants were interviewed: 3 attended Reset; 5 attended ClearPath, and 1 attended ThinkBig. An iterative process of independent coding to compare and establish agreement among content and scope of each primary theme and relationships among themes was conducted. Interviews were stopped once data saturation was achieved or at the point when no new information or themes are observed in the data. Results from the narrative data develop a conceptual model that documents and explains the method used to build the capacity that enhances participants' behavior change. The themes are developing: 1) trust/bond between instructor and participants; 2) a vision; 3) asset development, and 4) a sense of others. The narrative findings seem to indicate that the relationship of the four conceptual themes to the development of behavior change necessary to break the cycle of poverty is key to the Ignite's success.

This program evaluation suggests that the unique programs offered by Ignite Community Solutions contributes to building capacity within participants that are necessary to break the cycle of poverty. Thus, rather than providing for the immediate needs of participants that live in poverty, Ignite creates an environment in which participants build the internal mechanisms or capacity that will allow them to break their cycle of poverty.

Currently, Ignite reports that many of their past participants, 8 males and 10 females, are now gainfully employed. Among this group, the average length of employment reported is over 6 months, while 2 report they have been employed for over 1 year. Nine of the participants reported having jobs that offer health benefits. Prospective study of the participants relative to their socioeconomic status would add to information about the long-term impact of Ignite Community Solutions and its contributions to breaking the cycle of generational poverty.