Clear, accurate, and applicable research

A key element of our work is providing scientific research and expert perspective that enable sound decision making. Abt Associates is a leader in collecting and analyzing data on at-risk youth and youth development.

We employ an array of quantitative and qualitative data collection methods that include surveys, focus groups, case studies and interviews. Sample groups include all stakeholders to ensure that our analysis encompasses a full perspective. Advanced technologies including computer-aided surveys and Web-based systems provide rapid analysis and feedback. We specialize in surveying diverse and hard-to-reach populations such as at-risk youth through the use of comprehensive tracking systems. The result is accurate, comprehensive research data that enables us to evaluate issues with objectivity, and to provide clients with information that can be readily applied to their work.

Insight and direction through expert evaluation

Abt Associates also evaluates programs, systems and policies—quantifying outcomes and identifying best practices to provide clients with insight on current circumstances and recommendations for the future. Our approach encompasses the full range of evaluation methodologies including random-assignment studies, econometric modeling, development of performance standards, quasi-experimental approaches, qualitative evaluations, and assessments based on “theories of change” models.

Our forty-year history of policy analysis expertise enables us to effectively examine legislative and regulatory issues at the federal and state levels. We identify potential impacts on budget, staffing and organizations and recommend workable strategies to address them. Combined with detailed research, our evaluation and analysis services offer clients with the information they need to make strategic decisions, assess program direction, and advocate for change.

An experienced and committed staff

Our diverse team combines solid academic credentials with practical experience at the federal, state, and community levels to offer critical support to clients working on at-risk youth issues. Abt Associates staff includes prior educators, clinicians, program directors and leaders in the youth development field. Many have decades of experience, reflecting a long-term commitment to at-risk youth and youth development, and have authored respected publications on the subject.

Abt Associates applies a multidisciplinary approach to establishing project teams, drawing on our staff’s strong technical, economic, sociological, educational, and clinical knowledge. This
encourages a vibrant intellectual dynamic and ensures that key related perspectives are contributed to project work. For example, Abt Associates’ Community Workforce Development group offers guidance on preparing youth for employment, accessing higher education and engaging them in national service.

Abt Associates has participated in a wide range of projects designed to promote positive development for at-risk youth in the United States. A brief sample of our work is provided below. Please visit our Web site at www.abtassociates.com for detailed project descriptions and to explore our complete capabilities.

• National and community service
Abt Associates has conducted numerous studies analyzing the impact of civic participation. Youth Corps programs combine education, job training, and community service to prepare young people for a successful transition into adulthood. Guided by the White House Task Force for Disadvantaged Youth, we are employing a random-assignment, experimental design to evaluate the impacts of Youth Corps initiatives. This study of 4,000 individuals examines areas such as employment, education, life skills, and avoidance-of-risk behaviors.

We also evaluated Civic Works, a Baltimore community service program geared to help low-income minority youth learn job skills and transition into productive adulthood. Our work included a cost-benefit analysis, process study, and corps member survey. The evaluation was part of the Longitudinal Study of the Outcomes Associated with Participation in AmeriCorps, the largest study of national service undertaken to date. Both evaluation projects were conducted for the Corporation for National and Community Service.

• Mentoring
For the Family and Youth Services Bureau of the Department of Health and Human Services, we created a series of evaluation designs to provide quantitative and qualitative data about the Mentoring Children of Prisoners Program. Abt Associates is employing one of the evaluation models to assess the program’s potential to generate improvements in disadvantaged youths’ self-esteem, relationships with parents and peers, and academic participation and outcomes. We are also conducting a random-assignment evaluation of the Department of Education’s Student Mentoring Program. Including more than 2,800 students, the evaluation assesses the impacts of school-based mentoring efforts on targeted youth risk behaviors.

• Youth employment
We led a comprehensive formative evaluation of the Annie E. Casey Foundation’s Jobs Initiative B. The eight-year, six-city, $30 million program aims to achieve system-based reforms that will improve employment opportunities for young disadvantaged job seekers. Local intermediary organizations partner with community-based organizations, training providers, and employment brokers to connect job-seekers with skills-based training and long-term employment. Our “theory of change” evaluation approach documents program activities and their connections to participant and community outcomes. The evaluation design also provides timely feedback to facilitate development and implementation of the local initiatives and their host organizations.

• Youth empowerment
The Communities Empowering Youth (CEY) program supports organizational capacity building to better meet the needs of disadvantaged youth. Abt Associates, with subcontractor Branch Associates, is assisting the Administration for Children and Families of the Department of Health and Human Services in defining performance measures and targets for the program, conducting case studies, and developing evaluation design recommendations. In addition to developing a comprehensive evaluation plan, we are developing data collection instruments for the evaluation study.

Abt Associates is conducting an evaluation of Upward Bound for the Institute of Education Sciences at the U.S. Department of Education. The national program supports at-risk high school students and promotes access and success at college by providing tutoring, mentoring and counseling services. The random assignment evaluation covers 90 sites and 3,600 youth entering the program in ninth grade to assess Upward Bound’s impact on at-risk youth.

For more information on Abt Associates and our work in the field of at-risk youth and youth development, contact:

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