

# Health Program Evaluation and Policy Analysis

Evaluating health initiatives to improve quality of care, efficiency and health status



Abt Associates is a leading provider of innovative methodologies that evaluate the success and effectiveness of a wide range of public and private health initiatives – from neighborhood-level clinics to national policy reforms. We perform extensive, detailed, quantitative data gathering and analysis, including large-scale surveys, statistical and econometric modeling, and analysis of large datasets. Our qualitative evaluation capabilities include identifying and conducting focus groups, creating case studies, and reviewing literature. We have a record of providing objective research that helps improve the quality of care and service delivery to a broad cross-section of populations.

## **A broad perspective on health**

Abt Associates has more than 30 years of experience analyzing data and information from an array of sources, including clients, providers/clinicians, programs, healthcare delivery systems, and payors.

We evaluate payment, quality of care, and program effectiveness issues in acute, post-acute, long-term-care, and ambulatory settings. We also evaluate programs focused on complex health issues, such as mental health, drug and alcohol addiction, maternal and child health, and the continuum of institutional and community-based care. In each case, we work closely with our clients to develop the right protocols and approaches necessary to answer critical questions about their health programs.

## **Experienced, skilled staff**

Our multidisciplinary staff includes clinicians, health services researchers, data analysts, policy analysts, health economists, statisticians, and survey methodologists who work together to apply the most appropriate approaches to our clients' questions. Researchers bring the technical knowledge necessary for performing complex research to our clients' projects, and the expertise to examine and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of health initiatives from many perspectives.

## **Managing evaluations efficiently**

Abt Associates has the technical capabilities and state-of-the-art facilities necessary to manage the complicated logistics that enable objective evaluation of health initiatives at all levels. We identify, recruit, and conduct focus groups quickly and effectively, and arrange in-depth interviews with diverse groups – from patients to high-level executives – that gather views, perceptions, and attitudes. We conduct broad-ranging surveys that collect extensive data, and perform large-scale, multisite evaluations.

## **Surveying diverse populations**

Abt Associates specializes in reaching and surveying diverse populations. We gather data from mobile groups, people with chronic disabilities, HIV-positive populations, children with special healthcare needs, Medicare beneficiaries, Medicaid recipients, and people from many ethnicities and backgrounds.

## **Expertise in a full spectrum of health issues**

Our vast experience evaluating health initiatives encompasses family-centered care, women's health, health promotion, healthcare finance, access to care, long-term care, post-acute care, disease management, managed care, mental health, drug and alcohol addiction, and children with special healthcare needs.

## Health policy analysis

Abt Associates has a long history of evaluating health policy issues for federal and state governments, provider associations, and foundations, researching and analyzing the impact of regulatory policy on provider behavior and quality of care. Our health economists and clinicians have developed and refined prospective payment and casemix reimbursement systems for a variety of provider settings, analyzed the potential impact of new payment policies on care outcomes and expenditures, and evaluated the effect of regulatory change on provider behavior. Abt Associates researchers have expertise in many policy areas, including drug pricing and payment, casemix reimbursement, and the healthcare workforce – such as nurses, allied health professionals, and physician specialists.

## Turning evaluation into action

Accurate evaluation information helps strengthen healthcare initiatives by improving quality of care, providing better access to care, lowering costs, achieving better outcomes, ensuring patient safety, and raising customer satisfaction. Through accurate program and performance measurement, our clients can gain a benchmark for health services that enables new improvements for years to come.

## Abt Associates work in Health Program Evaluation and Policy Analysis

### Evaluating Real Choice grants

CMS is funding grant programs to support community-based alternatives to institutionalized care for individuals who are elderly and/or have disabilities. Abt Associates is conducting the cross site process and outcomes evaluation of these systems transformation grantees. During the first year of the evaluation, Abt provided technical assistance to the grantees for the development of their strategic plans and local evaluations.

### Analyzing the information environment

Abt Associates conducted National Medicare Education Program case studies, which involved in-depth analysis of the information “environment” in six U.S. cities and the educational resources available to beneficiaries, identifying the resources beneficiaries were aware of and relied on in making insurance decisions, and determining how they reacted to changes in the benefits or plans available to them. For each community, we interviewed experts and stakeholders, including state insurance commissioners, state hospital associations, insurance counselors, health insurance plans, and beneficiary advocates.

## Gathering data on home health

Under the Home Health Casemix Development Project for the U.S. Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), Abt Associates collected data from home health agencies. We also produced the grouping software and supporting materials and continue to assist CMS in activities related to payment system implementation.

## Evaluating a national community-based health program

The Healthy Start program’s goal is to reduce disparities in birth outcomes by increasing access to and utilization of health services. Abt Associates is working with the Maternal and Child Health Bureau of the U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration to conduct the national evaluation of Healthy Start. We are conducting a survey with the 100 Healthy Start grantees and conducting analyses of the performance measures reported annually to MCHB.

## Evaluating drug utilization and coverage and the new Medicare benefit

Abt Associates worked with CMS to assess the impact of prescription drug coverage on Medicare expenditures, to address design issues for the evaluation of prescription drug programs, and to analyze the determinants of per capita drug spending for Medicare beneficiaries. In addition, we conducted a survey of Medicare beneficiaries for CMS to assess their understanding of the new Medicare drug plan when it was initiated. Finally, Abt Associates is working with CMS to design a better methodology for estimating the cost of prescription drugs to pharmacies and physicians.

## Contact

For more information on Abt Associates and our work in Health Program Evaluation and Policy Analysis, contact:

Terry Moore  
Principal Associate  
617.349.2463  
terry\_moore@abtassoc.com

Deborah Klein Walker, Ed.D.  
Vice President/ Senior Fellow  
617.349.2390  
deborah\_walker@abtassoc.com

**Abt Associates** is a mission-driven, global leader in research and program implementation in the fields of health, social and environmental policy, and international development. Known for its rigorous approach to solving complex challenges, Abt Associates is regularly ranked as one of the top 25 global research firms and one of the top 40 international development innovators. The employee-owned company has multiple offices in the U. S. and program offices in nearly 43 countries.

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