Tele-health in The U.S. Virgin Islands: Investigating the Possibility of Increasing Early Screening and Diagnosis of Developmental Disabilities

Sandra K. King, R.N., B.A., Carla Perkins, MSSW, LCSW, LEND Trainees
Kimberly Mils, Ph.D, BCBA-D, LEND Faculty

Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and related Disabilities (LEND) Program
Westchester Institute for Human Development and Virgin Islands University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities
and
New York Medical College

Team Project Abstract
2016-2017

Background: There was a consensus among local partners that timely, accurate and early diagnostic assessment remains a critical need in the territory. These findings support previous findings and conclusions from other needs assessment investigations that have taken place in the USVI in recent years. According to *U.S. Virgin Islands Kids Count Data Book 2015:*

- 6% of U.S. Virgin Islands children, 0 to 17 years old, were identified as delayed or at risk of delay
- 139 children, 0 to 3 years old, were receiving early interventions services

These numbers are likely a gross underestimation. Parents, teachers and school administrators indicate a backlog of timely psychological assessments, and deficits in timely developmental evaluations.

Objective(s): The goal is to explore the capacity in the Virgin Islands to increase access to quality screening, diagnostic and treatment opportunity for families of children with developmental delays, for those suspected of having developmental disabilities, and to strengthen the practitioners who serve these families through the use of telemedicine.

This exploration of the capacity of the Virgin Islands to have an active tele-health system to aid in general access to better health care services, and to increase opportunities for quality early screening and detection for developmental disabilities will help to build the robust assessment system we are envisioning and lead to better health outcomes in general.

Methods:

- Mixed Method Study Design
- Sample Population
  - Culturally and ethnically diverse groups of adults over 18yrs of age
  - Participants will be of varying educational levels and income ranges
  - Recruitment will occur through flyers, posters, online list serves and word of mouth
- Instrument
  - A researcher created questionnaire developed from various tele-health survey instruments including *HTF 402 National First Nation's Tele-health Research Project's: Patient Satisfaction Survey*.
  - Additional questions were devised based on the review of literature, and personal experiences as USVI residents and consumers of health care services.
  - Intended to measure attitudes and interest toward tele-health services by potential and current tele-health users.
  - Reveal general information related to participant demographics and current medical usage rates and types.

Community Partner(s):

- Disability Rights Center of the Virgin Islands
- Maryland Center for Developmental Disabilities (Advisory Capacity)
- Other local partners will be involved formally for the next iterations s study.

Results or Progress-to-Date:

- Completed Institutional Review Board (IRB) Application process
- Designed Questionnaire
- Began preparation of the research manuscript

Conclusions or Next Steps:

Develop Spanish language informed consent forms. Upload online version of survey onto Survey Monkey.