

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

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**Team Project Abstract
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Background:

- A critical need in the U.S. Virgin Islands (USVI) is timely, accurate, and early diagnostic assessments.
- Health care options are limited due to the geographic isolation of the USVI, and limited access to full federal Medicaid funding.
- In addition, 55% of 5-year-old children entering public school were six months to over a year behind developmental age-expectations in language and comprehension skills.
- 40% of USVI children entering public kindergarten also lacked adequate, age-expected cognition skills.
- It is necessary to build the capacity of the USVI to meet health care needs through systems change initiatives by increasing infrastructure capabilities.

Objective(s):

- To explore the possibility for a Tele-Health Initiative in the U.S. Virgin Islands.
- To promote increased access to healthcare.

- To increase the early screening and diagnosis of developmental disabilities.

Methods: A mixed-method study design will be used to measure attitudes and interest toward telehealth services by current and potential users. Investigators will utilize an anonymous survey, which is shown below.

The survey will be printed and hand-delivered to the following sites:

- Two (2) federally qualified health centers in the territory;
- Two (2) hospitals;
- Head Start centers (at least 20 locations);
- V.I. Department Human Services two Medical offices;
- Private health care providers (at least 5 in each district);
- All pharmacies in the territory, which we believe is no more than 20; and,
- University of the Virgin Islands Health Centers if they are operational.

Surveys will be placed in a box for collection and analysis by LEND participants.

Community Partner(s): Disability Rights Center of the Virgin Islands, Maryland Center for Developmental Disabilities (Advisory Capacity), other local partners.

Discussion/Next Steps: IRB approval of this study is currently pending. Results are anticipated to guide recommendations for increasing telehealth capacity of the USVI. Ultimately, this can improve general access to health care services as well as increase opportunities for quality early screening and detection for developmental disabilities among children.