

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

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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.

## Objectives

- 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.



## Community Partners

Disability Rights Center of the Virgin Islands, Maryland Center for Developmental Disabilities (Advisory Capacity), and other local partners

## 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.

## 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.

Virgin Islands University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities

We are conducting a study to measure attitudes and interest toward telehealth services by individuals and families living in the Virgin Islands. Telehealth is defined as the use of electronic information and telecommunications to support and promote long-distance clinical health care and patient education. Participation in this study is voluntary; your responses will be kept confidential.

1. What is your age? \_\_\_\_\_ years
2. What is your gender?  Male  Female
3. What is your marital status?  Single  Married  Divorced  Widowed  Unmarried Partnership
4. Do you have children?  No  Yes, ages: \_\_\_\_\_
5. How long have you lived on the Virgin Islands? \_\_\_\_\_ years
6. Are you familiar with telehealth services?  No  Yes
7. Have you used telehealth services in the past?  No  Yes

If yes, please describe your experiences below:

Brief Description	Overall Experience			
	Good	Fair	Poor	No Rating
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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11. What concerns, if any, do you have in using telehealth services? \_\_\_\_\_
12. Do you feel that you have the computer skills necessary to access health services over a computer?  No  Yes  Uncertain  
If not or uncertain, would you be willing to be trained so you could access telehealth services over a computer?  No  Yes
13. If you had a choice, would you prefer to have telehealth services in your home or in a community location?  Home  Community location  
If community location, which locations might best facilitate your use of telehealth services?  Community Clinic  Church  Library  Other: \_\_\_\_\_
14. Do you feel that having access to telehealth services would improve your ability to get quality medical care?  No  Yes  Uncertain
15. Do you feel that you might lose the personal touch of a doctor or nurse if healthcare services were delivered via a computer screen or telephone?  No  Yes  Uncertain  
If so, what would you recommend to make the services feel more personal?  Video / FaceTime / Skype connection  Initial in-person meeting prior to telehealth services  Nothing  Other: \_\_\_\_\_

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8. What types of health care services have you and/or your family used and how often?

Services	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
General Medicine	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pediatrics	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gynecology	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cardiology	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other: _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other: _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. How likely would you and/or your family be to use telehealth services for healthcare needs if they became available?

	Not at All	Somewhat	Very	Uncertain
For myself	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
For my spouse / partner	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
For my children	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Why would you be likely or unlikely to use telehealth services? \_\_\_\_\_
10. What benefits, if any, do you see in using telehealth services? (check all that apply)  
 Quick and ready access to my doctors  
 My records will be easily accessible to my doctors in an emergency  
 The ability to check prescribed medication to avoid interaction  
 Other: \_\_\_\_\_

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16. Do you sometimes find it difficult to be honest with your doctor or nurse or health provider because the island is small and everyone usually knows each other?  No  Yes  
If yes, do you feel that you might be able to be more honest with a doctor or nurse who lived in a place other than the USVI?  No  Yes  Not applicable
17. Do you sometimes feel that your health information will not be held confidentially given everyone on the island knows each other?  No  Yes  
If yes, do you feel that your health information may be more likely to be held confidentially if you were treated by a doctor or nurse who lived in a place other than the USVI?  No  Yes  Not applicable
18. If you have children, would you consider having them assessed for developmental disabilities using telehealth services?  No  Yes  Not applicable
19. If telehealth services ended up working out well for you, would you encourage your friends and family members to access healthcare from telehealth sources?  No  Yes
20. In general, how would you rate your overall health?  
 Excellent  Very good  Good  Fair  Poor
21. In general, how would you rate your overall mental or emotional health?  
 Excellent  Very good  Good  Fair  Poor