



CERC-SON-UVI

A RICH VI NEWSLETTER

HSRP-VI Year III Highlights—Part I

NOREEN MICHAEL, PHD

Notable Tidbits:

- The Human Services Research Partnership: Virgin Islands (HSRP-VI) has a Memorandum of Cooperative Agreement with the V.I. Department of Human Services.
• The Partnership roster has included current and former Head Start and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families clients.
• Members of the Core Research Team attended the ACF's National Research Conference on Early Childhood (NRCEC 2018) held on June 25 - June 27, 2018 .

THE RESEARCH PARTNERSHIP: Year III of the Human Services Research Partnership: US Virgin Islands (HSRP-VI) was filled with notable successes! In the first half of Year III, the Research Partnership deepened its engagement in the research process. Partners came together twice in the first quarter and once in the second quarter of Year III. Partners convened for a special meeting in the 1st quarter, during which the Core Research Team provided Partners highlights of TANF findings documented in the Environmental Scan report. TANF consultants then led a facilitated discussion that resulted in the prioritization of TANF issues and the translation of key issues into a research project.



of the partners and input of the clients and staff of the HS/EHS and TANF programs.

RESEARCH ACTIVITY: Major research achievements during the first half of Year III included the completion of the Environmental Scan Report and the approval of two HS/EHS research applications and the TANF research application by UVI's IRB. The studies approved were: the Wait List study (IRB No. 997483) focused on examining factors related to program eligibility and selection of HS clients in the USVI Head Start Program; the Health Care Providers study (IRB No. 1001923) which investigates the factors that contribute to perceptions that there are insufficient health care providers in the USVI to timely address the needs of HS/EHS clients; and the TANF Pilot Study: (IRB No. 999605) An Enhanced Approach to Goal Planning for USVI TANF Clients-Impact on Client and Family Outcomes.

COMMUNICATION, ENGAGEMENT, & DISSEMINATION: Significant achievements included: Dissemination of completed Environmental Scan Report; completion of inaugural Newsletter: updating of project Fact Sheet; submission of abstract for panel presentation at the National Association for Welfare Research and Statistics (NAWRS); and uploading of key outputs to the HSRP-VI microsite.

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SPOTLIGHT ON PARTNERSHIP MEMBERS

PARTICE HALLIDAY, [EDUCATION MANAGER, HEAD START PROGRAM – ST. THOMAS]—



The Head Start program prepares young children ages three to five years from low income families to be secured in school and life beyond school. The program promotes school readiness goals which help to support the developmental needs of these children. To achieve this the Head Start Program delivers services to the children and families in core areas of early learning, health and family wellbeing, while engaging parents as partners.

MIGUELINA NEPTUNE, [EDUCATION MNER, OFFICE OF PRE-SCHOOL SERVICES, HEAD START PROGRAM, ST. CROIX] —



My involvement with the HSRP-VI provides additional opportunities to positively impact the lives of young children and their families in this community. The Head Start program promotes school readiness of young children by supporting their development with the provision of comprehensive services, to include early childhood education, health, nutrition, disabilities and parent involvement.

HSRP-VI—CONTRIBUTIONS FROM CONSULTANTS

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HSRP-VI CORE TEAM

Lead PI: Noreen Michael, PhD
Co-PI: Gloria B. Callwood, PhD, RN, FAAN
Co-I: Janis M. Valmond, MS, DrPH, CHES®
Post-Doctoral Fellow: Deborah E. Brown, PhD
Research Associate: E. Aracelis Francis, PhD
Project Coordinator: Velma A. Abramsen, MPA

Based on support from our Project Officer in the second half of Year I, the HSRP-VI was able to engage an HS consultant in the first quarter of Year II. Since his engagement, our consultant, Daryl Greenfield PhD, has participated in engaging the members by making presentations and communicating research strategies to support the activities of the Partnership. He has been on site for Partnership meetings as well as for discussions to identify and refine research questions for the HS/EHS studies and moving the proposed research projects forward.

Additionally, Zoom meetings were scheduled, generally bi-monthly, to discuss approaches to maximizing the consultancy relationship and to provide feedback on drafts of the Environmental Scan report that was completed in December 2016. Before the disruption wrought by Hurricanes Irma and Maria, Dr. Greenfield was poised to play a major role in a groundbreaking HS/EHS project intervention pertaining to parent involvement in their children's learning of science in the USVI.

In Year II of the HSRP-VI Project, Michelle Derr and Jonathan McCay of Mathematica Research Policy were also engaged to provide consultancy services. The consultants have provided support through bi-weekly, check-in telephone conversations. They have been onsite on several occasions: for a week-long site visit, which provided the HSRP-VI Core Team a better understanding of the TANF program, as well as insights into the TANF program as it is administered in the US Virgin Islands; for Special Partnership Meetings, to identify and refine research questions for the TANF study; and for training of the Core Team and TANF staff. The Mathematica team has supported the HSRP-VI Core Team and Partnership members by providing subject matter expertise related to the TANF program research and intervention design components.

The HSRP-VI has benefited immensely from the contributions of our consultants. Their involvement is demonstrated evidence that the partnership draws on many different resources to achieve the best results for the research projects. We will continue to do this with the support and help of our partners!!

HSRP-VI: A USEFUL APPROACH TO LEARNING AND RESILIENCE?

LAVERNE E. RAGSTER PHD

It is unusual to find research or community partnerships in the US Virgin Islands that are able to demonstrate the characteristics and tenets of an effective, learning partnership and produce outcomes that benefit all participants. In the case of the Human Services Research Partnership – US Virgin Islands (HSRP-VI), the challenge was to focus the collective efforts of policy makers from the VI Government and semi-autonomous agencies, representatives of community based organizations (CBOs), middle managers and line staff from the Head Start/Early Head Start (HS/EHS) and the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) programs, clients of the programs, and researchers from UVI on identifying research priorities and conducting research on identified HS/EHS and TANF program areas of need. These objectives needed to be addressed under conditions where the local team worked with Federal liaisons from the US Department of Health and Human Services.

From my multi-dimensional position of reviewer of the Environmental Scan Report produced by the partnership, resource person and facilitator of some of the engagement activities, it was heartening and exciting to observe a process that consistently worked at adhering to the rules of participatory research with a diverse group of stakeholders across the Territory. At all stages of the project, stakeholders were kept informed, constantly reminded of the value they brought to the project, and provided with learning opportunities. The process included an emphasis on openness, fairness and accountability that was directed at all participants. The researchers at the UVI Caribbean Exploratory Research Center (UVICERC) managed to guide, provide leadership where appropriate, and support the maturation of the partnership over time. This approach is extremely rare in the USVI, partially because it is very time intensive, requiring a commitment to the rules and guidelines of community-based research, and because it also requires trans-

parency and significant attention to documentation of activities and outcomes.

The project successfully completed the first two objectives and now continues its efforts, without being completely derailed by two Category 5 hurricanes in 2017, to conduct research on areas identified as important by the HSRP-VI participants. The research is being conducted by individuals and institutions managing the challenges of hurricane recovery as they prepare for the possibility of a hurricane this year. I think this is a great example of resilience and the type of success that is possible in the USVI.



Dr. LaVerne E. Ragster is the fourth and first female president of the University of the Virgin Islands (UVI). She served as President of UVI from 2002—2009. She is also a retired professor and a dedicated Rotarian.