



Navigating Change: Developmental Monitoring in the U.S. Virgin Islands

Karen Harris Brown, Ph.D., CCC-SLP - University of the Virgin Islands (UVI)

AUCD Annual Conference - Poster Symposium: Monday, December 5, 2016



EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION

Remarkably, more than half (53%) of USVI children entering public kindergarten lack age-level expectations for language skills (comprehension, communicating needs). In fact, they demonstrate deficits six months to one year behind the developmental expectations. Similarly, one third (34%) of USVI children entering public kindergarten lack age-level expectations for cognitive skills (problem-solving, counting, recognition of patterns, etc.) (Kids Count, 2014). Less than half (47%), of these children demonstrate average age-level expectations in fine motor skills such as cutting with scissors and picking up objects, and self-help skills (36%), such as developing independence in personal care (e.g., wiping nose). Only 28% of USVI parents for children under the age of six years had predictive concerns about their child's development (Kids Count, 2013). Further, of the 7,978 children in the USVI from birth to preschool age in 2013, approximately 4,739 (60%) were *not* enrolled in a licensed child care setting. This data suggest that young children are receiving early care and education in informal settings with family members, friends, and/or neighbors.

Unfortunately, many young children with developmental delays and disabilities, including autism, are not benefiting from early identification and intervention across the territory. This information justifies the critical need for increased coordination among agencies and programs designed to serve young children and their families, preparation of qualified personnel to participate in coordinated developmental monitoring and screening processes, and parent/guardian empowerment through knowledge of developmental expectations/milestones.

LEARN THE SIGNS. ACT EARLY. (LTSAE)

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) campaign
 - National Center on Birth Defects & DD (NCBDDD)
 - Purpose: To improve early identification of children with autism and other developmental disabilities
- Act Early Ambassador to the USVI
- Developmental Monitoring within State Systems grantee
- CDC LTSAE Partners: AMCHP, AUCD

ACT EARLY GOALS

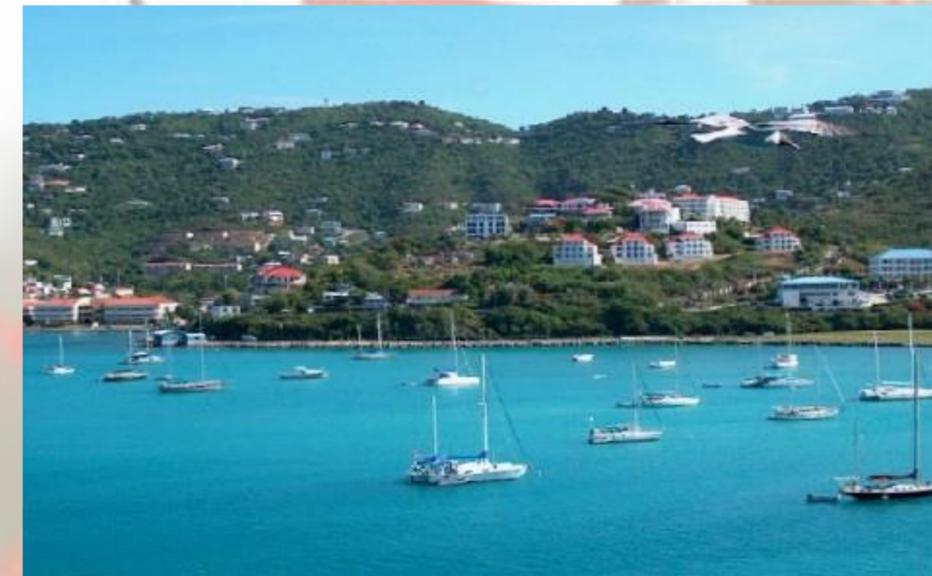
- Engage Early Care and Education Providers and preservice early education majors in developmental monitoring and training by integrating use of LTSAE materials and resources in 3-5 agencies
- Engage allied health professionals and primary care providers in developmental monitoring by integrating use of LTSAE materials in inpatient/outpatient services and well-baby/child visits, respectively, in 6-8 agencies/practices.
- Establish an Act Early Territory Team of stakeholders by March 2017

ACT EARLY ACTIVITIES

- Provided Watch Me! Sharing Concerns group training to early care and education providers across the territory
- Watch Me! Training now mandatory part of Inclusive Early Childhood Education Program curriculum at the University of the Virgin Islands
- Conducted interactive presentation on developmental monitoring at Head Start Father and Child Activity Day using LTSAE materials
 - Presentation Title: It's Busy Being Me!
 - Read Amazing Me It's Busy Being 3! to fathers and their toddlers as they read along with their own copy
 - Provided tote bag with Act Early website and Milestones Moments Booklet and brochure
 - <50% fathers monitored milestones prior to training
- Presented to early care and education providers at Best Beginnings Conference for early childhood development
- Established first VI ACT Early Territory Team
 - Team members include two pediatricians and representatives of 5 local agencies
 - First meeting held with vision and strategic priorities developed

U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS DEMOGRAPHICS

- An incorporated territory of the United States and twice the size of Washington, D.C.
- A collection of four main islands: St. Croix, St. Thomas, St. John, and Water Island, and approximately 50 small, mostly uninhabited islands
- East of Puerto Rico (50 miles)
- Estimated population of 105,080 people
- Most residents descendants of African slaves brought during the slave trade period or who later emigrated from other Caribbean islands
- English is official language, spoken by 76% of the population
- Twenty-one percent of population speaks English as a second language.



RESOURCES

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (n.d.) Act early. Retrieved from: <http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/index.html>
 Kids Count Data Book (2014). Our commitment matters. Retrieved from: <http://www.cfvi.net/documents/2014%20KIDS%20COUNT%20Data%20Book.pdf>

