

The Virgin Islands Consortium

VIUCEDD to Host Grand Opening of Autism Research Center

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ST. CROIX -- The Virgin Islands University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities(VIUCEDD) will hold the grand opening for its Autism and Developmental Disabilities Research Center (ADDRC) from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on April 15, at the VIUCEDD Center on the Albert A. Sheen Campus on St. Croix.

The ADDRC is a research, training and technical assistance center that focuses on early screening and detection of developmental disabilities. It provides the best practices for early intervention, treatment, language development and the development of adaptive behaviors in infants and toddlers, aged zero-five.

Dr. Kimberly Mills, associate director of VIUCEDD, played a key role in bringing the ADDRC to the island. Dr. Mills' involvement and background in helping children with learning disabilities has given her access to cutting edge research and development strategies, which help children suffering from autism. Dr. Mills started as a special education teacher in Hawaii, led a prevention center in Bermuda, ran a school for kids with autism in New York, and in 2015 participated in the world's largest study on effective autism treatments. She is proud of the ADDRC, which offers some of the best services and resources in the world.

"The goal of ADDRC is to combine the best in the world in relation to early screening and early detection and most importantly methodologies to remediate these problems once they identify them," Dr. Mills said. "Moreover, ADDRC provides training space so parents and professionals can come in and learn how to work with their children who may have developmental delays."

Along with the other services mentioned, ADDRC will provide registered behavior technician (RBT) training. "RBT is a fantastic credential to have when working with people with disabilities," Dr. Mills said. "We will provide training for students who are preparing to sit for their credentialing exam. The RBT credential will make them much better practitioners when working with children, and will be useful not only in the Virgin Islands and U.S. mainland, but around the world."

The opportunity to work with children in the Virgin Islands will also allow ADDRC to generate research and publish their findings.

"Some companies when they open their new business, they put their first dollar bill on the wall," Dr. Mills said. "Well we actually framed our first set of data. It's a great example of the outcomes achieved when working with researched based methodologies."

Dr. Mills is hopeful that ADDRC and the UVI School of Education will develop a strong relationship, beneficial to both students and ADDRC, in the near future.

"We are hoping that this credential will be part of their teacher training and preparation. It's another marketable credential that could come in addition to students' schooling," Dr. Mills said.

The center has partnered with the Maryland Center for Developmental Disabilities, the Kennedy Krieger Institute and Island Therapy Solutions, which is a local clinic that will be a key partner to help with screening, assessment and treatment.