

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Dept. Of Human Services Awarded \$725,112 For Preschool Development

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The Department of Human Services (DHS) has been awarded a \$725,112 Preschool Development grant through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Five Initial Grant (PDG B-5) from the Administration for Children, according to a Government House release issued Tuesday.

The territory's PDG B-5 project is called Road to Success: Developing an early child care and education mixed delivery system for the B-5 population in the USVI. The project will be implemented by the University of the Virgin Islands' Caribbean Exploratory Research Center (UVI CERC), which has been designated as the State entity for ensuring the completion of the work associated with the grant award, according to the release.

The release said the purpose of the project is to strengthen early childhood care and education in the territory by improving the quality of care; promoting collaboration and partnerships among persons who provide early childhood care and education services; providing high quality early childhood care and education options for low-income and disadvantaged families; and ensuring that parents/guardians are provided with information and the opportunity to make an informed choice about their options for early childhood care and education programs and providers in the USVI. The grant award will be administered from December 31, 2018, through December 30, 2019. The DHS may also apply for future Renewal Grant funding for 2-4 more years. UVI- CERC will be developing a Needs Assessment and Strategic Plan for this initial grant.

“We are very pleased to serve as the State entity selected to implement this grant and look forward to our partnership with the V.I. Department of Human Services to complete the key deliverables,” said Dr. Noreen Michael, Principal Investigator for the project. “One of the most important aspects of the project is the collaboration that will be fostered through work with the State Advisory Council, which will include broad representation from organizations and entities that provide care and education services to our children, birth through five years of age.

She continued, “This will allow for persons most familiar with the issues and challenges of our current early childhood care and education system to be at the table as we work to strengthen early childhood care and education in the Territory, toward the achievement of academic success for our children when they enter the K-12 system.”

Acting D.H.S. Commissioner Felecia Blyden expressed excitement about collaborating with the university on such an important initiative.

“This preschool development grant will help us to understand further the needs of families, as well as how services can be improved. Ultimately, the value placed on assisting families through the early development of children should positively impact how they achieve personal goals with early childhood care and education programs,” she said.

This strategy is significant and will prove beneficial as a key component for a strong K through 12 educational system territory-wide.