

## Human Service Research Partnership: US Virgin Islands

**Organization:** School of Nursing, University of the Virgin Islands

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### **Project Abstract:**

Currently, there is a paucity of research on Head Start programs (Giambruno et al., 1997), and no research data on the quality or the impact of the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) programs in the US Virgin Islands (VI). Thus, the Human Service Research Partnership seeks to fill critical gaps in the research on the human service needs and assets, and to identify the most efficacious approaches to improve the quality of life for residents of the USVI who participate in the Head Start and TANF Programs. This will be done through the following objectives:

- 1. By the end of Year 3, the project proposes to establish an accessible, comprehensive research infrastructure to support the provision of quality human services programs to clients in the Head Start and TANF programs in the USVI.** This objective will be operationalized through the following strategies: establishing a research partnership group; develop a secure data collection system; provide training to support the development of research capacity in USVI.
- 2. By the end of Year 3, the project proposes to conduct two human services research studies.** This objective is a priority for USVI policy makers involved in the delivery of public assistance programs. Though the specifics of the research studies to be conducted will be determined by the members of the Research Partnership, based on key informant interviews with VI Department of Human Services personnel, it is expected that the Head Start study will examine factors that negatively impact the healthy development and optimal school readiness of children enrolled in Head Start programs. The TANF study would develop and implement a model collaborative TANF intervention program, and assess its impact.

Anticipated outcomes include: a redundant, reliable, comprehensive, secure database of information on public assistance programs and participants; greater collaboration among USVI policy-makers; data-driven policy recommendations to improve human service programs; an increase in the cadre of local researchers engaged in human service research; completion of two empirical studies; dissemination of research findings; and contributions to the literature on the Early Head Start, Head Start and TANF programs in the USVI.