

ABSTRACT

Commonwealth of Puerto Rico Preschool Development Grant Proposal

This Grant represents a unique opportunity for Puerto Rico to strengthen its preschool services and develop a high quality continuum of services. Puerto Rico's Department of Education (PRDE) is the Grant's Lead Agency. The Departments of Family, Health and the State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care (SAC) are the Grant's strategic collaborators.

A significant outcome of the Program will be the establishment of formal and comprehensive agreements between Head Start Programs and Puerto Rico's Department of Education (PRDE) for the joint provision of voluntary preschool services in Puerto Rico's public schools. Through the Preschool Development Grant award PRDE along with its Advisory Board will select sub grantees to provide high quality preschool services in high need geographical clusters. Another significant outcome of the Program will be to strengthening and expansion of the Quality Rating and Improvement System (PASITOS) and the Statewide Longitudinal Data System.

In Puerto Rico, forty-five percent (45%) of the population lives below the poverty level and twenty-five percent (25%) live in Extreme Poverty. By comparison, the proportions of people living in Poverty and Extreme Poverty in the US were fifteen (15%) and six point six (6.6%) percent respectively. Puerto Rico's poverty rates are significantly higher than the rates of US states with the highest levels of poverty.

In order to select high need clusters for Program implementation, a Composite Community Needs Index was created to help determine (1) whether there were communities with both high levels of socioeconomic deprivation and low levels of service; and, (2) whether any geographical concentrations of the two risk indices can be identified. The concentration of geographically contiguous High-Need counties, as per the second criterion, would potentially enable implementation via a *regional service delivery model*, which simultaneously allows maximizing investment by ensuring returns to scale in the use of resources and enables depth in the delivery of high quality services to otherwise underserved communities.

Puerto Rico's Preschool Development Grant Program establishes an ambitious yet achievable plan to serve two thousand (2,000) children at the end of the fourth grant year through High Quality Preschool Programs. A total of 192 existing preschool slots will be improved to meet High Quality service standards and 1,808 new slots will be created for children under the 200% level of poverty.