



ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES
OFFICE OF PLANNING, RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

Child and Family Development Research

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 OPRE

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Author: Bill De La Rosa, Truman-Albright Fellow, BSC Contract Policy Analyst

Submitted to:
Mary Bruce Webb, Ph.D.

Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation
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The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) is responsible for Federal programs that promote the economic and social well-being of families, children, individuals and communities. ACF aims to foster health and well-being by providing federal leadership, partnership, and resources for the compassionate and effective delivery of human services.

ACF programs aim to:

- Promote economic, health, and social well-being for individuals, families, and communities;
- Promote healthy development and school readiness for children, especially those in low-income families;
- Promote safety and well-being of children, youth, and families;
- Support underserved and underrepresented populations; and
- Upgrade the capacity of ACF to make a difference for families and communities.

OPRE

Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre>

The Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation (OPRE) studies ACF programs and the populations they serve through rigorous research and evaluation projects. These include evaluations of existing programs, evaluations of innovative approaches to helping low-income children and families, research syntheses, and descriptive and exploratory studies. OPRE aims to build and disseminate knowledge about effective approaches to helping low-income children and families. OPRE's research and evaluation projects are conducted primarily through grants and contracts, and include collaboration with ACF programs offices; HHS's Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE); other Federal entities, and State, Tribal and community partners.

OPRE includes four divisions:

- The Division of Economic Independence focuses on welfare, employment, and family self-sufficiency.
- The Division of Child and Family Development focuses on child care, Head Start, Early Head Start, and child abuse and neglect.
- The Division of Family Strengthening focuses on teen pregnancy prevention, youth development, healthy marriage, responsible fatherhood, family violence, runaway and homeless youth, and home visiting.
- The Division of Data and Improvement focuses on improving the quality, usefulness, sharing, and analysis of data on ACF programs.

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Child and Family Development Research and Evaluation

OPRE's Division of Child and Family Development (DCFD) is responsible for research and evaluation related to Head Start programs, early childhood development, child care, child maltreatment, and child welfare services. OPRE's research in the area of child and family development focuses on young children, parents and caregivers, families, and youth. Examples of recent focal areas include dual language learners, classroom quality, family engagement, and workforce services.

DCFD invests in rigorous research and evaluation on child and family development topics and disseminates findings to a diverse range of stakeholders, including federal and state policymakers, program administrators, researchers, and intermediary organizations. DCFD funds experimental impact evaluations, process and implementation evaluations, descriptive and theory-building research projects, and measure development aimed at informing the design and implementation of programs and improving our ability to capture outcomes. OPRE also invests in building capacity in the research and evaluation community to answer policy-relevant questions.

DCFD works in close partnership with a number of other offices, including, among others:

In ACF:

- The Office of Head Start;
- The Office of Child Care;
- The Children's Bureau; and
- The Office of Early Childhood Development;

In HHS:

- The Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation;
- The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration;
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention;
- The Health Resources and Services Administration; and
- The National Institutes of Health;

In the Department of Education:

- The Institute for Education Sciences;
- The Office of Early Learning;
- The Office of Special Education; and
- The Office of English Language Acquisition

The following pages describe major OPRE/DCFD projects in 2016.

Cross-Cutting Early Childhood Research

DCFD sponsors projects that focus on issues facing low-income children and families who may be served in a variety of settings. These cross-cutting projects may examine populations that multiple ACF programs serve, studies that have several foci, or research methodology that supports high-quality evaluations across OPRE's work.

Assessing Early Childhood Teachers' Use of Child Progress Monitoring to Individualize Teaching Practices

This contract explores the possibility of measuring teachers' use of ongoing assessment for individualization of instruction to support children's early development. The [literature review](#) summarizes research on progress monitoring approaches in early childhood and other contexts. The [conceptual model](#) articulates the theoretical relations between key constructs underlying progress monitoring. The measurement plan includes key constructs, defines relevant terms and mechanisms, and proposes a draft tool to be used to measure teachers' use of assessment for the individualization of instruction. The tool is called the Examining Data Informing Teaching (EDIT) measure and is currently undergoing pre-testing. OPRE released one [brief that summarizes the literature review](#) and another [brief that highlights key findings from the review](#) in the summer of 2015. In the fall of 2016, OPRE released an [additional report](#) that describes the iterative development of the Examining Data Informing Teaching (EDIT) and can serve as a resource for researchers and users of the EDIT measure.

Child Care and Early Education Research Connections

[Child Care & Early Education Research Connections \(Research Connections\)](#) promotes high-quality research in child care and early education and the use of research findings in policymaking. Research Connections' website offers a free, comprehensive, and up-to-date collection of scholarly research, policy briefs, government reports, data sets, and instruments from a wide range of disciplines and sources. Interactive tools allow users to refine searches, download full text documents, build customized tables, and analyze research data online. Research Connections also compiles bibliographies, develops issue briefs, synthesizes research on key topics, and hosts data-training workshops.

Professional Development Tools to Improve the Quality of Infant & Toddler Care

The [Quality of Caregiver-Child Interactions for Infants and Toddlers \(Q-CCIIT\)](#) observation tool was developed between 2010-2014 to assess the quality of early care and education (ECE) settings for infants and toddlers in non-parental care—specifically, the support that caregivers provide for the social-emotional, language and literacy, and cognitive development of infants and toddlers. The Professional Development Tools to Improve the Quality of Infant and Toddler Care (Q-CCIIT PD Tools) project supports ACF's vision for helping ECE programs and staff deliver quality services that promote positive outcomes for young children.

SPOTLIGHT ON EXECUTIVE FUNCTION MAPPING PROJECT: TRANSLATING RESEARCH FOR APPLICATION

The **Executive Function Mapping Project: Translating Research for Application** created a comprehensive “map” of the executive functioning (EF), effortful control (EC), and regulation literatures that connects technical and applied definitions of EF, EC, and regulation across childhood and identified implications for practice and policy.

OPRE released the report, *Untangling the Terms and Skills Related to Executive Function and Self Regulation in Early Childhood* in the fall of 2016. Based on a thorough review of the existing literature, this report outlines key differences and similarities among various executive function and other regulation related skills in research. Those differences and similarities are presented in a visual map to illustrate relationships among these skills. The purpose of the framework is to help stakeholders in early learning and child development consider and articulate research, program, and policy recommendations regarding executive function and other regulation related skills with more accuracy and transparency.

Key project findings include:

- ◆ Executive function (EF) and other regulation related skills are important areas of children’s development and are promising targets for interventions that aim to improve outcomes for children and families living in poverty.
- ◆ Researchers and other stakeholders frequently use the term EF to describe findings that are linked to other skills, such as self control, delay of gratification, and emotion and behavior regulation.
- ◆ Rigorous research has shown that EF along with other regulation related skills may have broad impacts on child outcomes.
- ◆ Particularly in early childhood, research suggests that how children use regulation related skills in situations involving emotions and social interactions is especially important for children’s positive adjustment to school, as well as for diverse long term outcomes across behavior, health, and well being.
- ◆ EF and various regulation related skills are different from one another in four critical ways: skill complexity, developmental stage, developmental domains, and measurement strategy.
- ◆ Important research and programmatic work is still needed to build a robust body of knowledge that can inform effective policy and practice efforts.

Development of a Measure of Family and Provider/Teacher Relationship Quality

The Family and Provider/Teacher Relationship Quality (FPTRQ) project has developed new measures to assess the quality of family and provider/teacher relationships in early care and education programs. The measures examine this relationship from both the parent and the provider/teacher perspectives, and capture important elements of family provider/ teacher relationships, such as attitudes of respect, commitment, and openness to adapting practices. The project developed measures that are appropriate for use across different types of early care and education settings, including Head Start and Early Head Start programs, center-based child care, pre-K classrooms, and home-based child care. In addition, a high priority of the project is to make the new measures culturally appropriate for diverse populations, including lower-income and higher-income families, ethnically/racially diverse groups, and non-English speaking families and providers. OPRE released a [research-to-practice brief](#) in the summer of 2015 to help policymakers, program managers, and practitioners learn how the FPTRQ measures can be used to complement other evaluative approaches. In the recent Parent Engagement special study for Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey (FACES), the short form of the FPTRQ teacher and parent measures were piloted as well as the full form of the Family Service Staff worker and parent measures.

Development of a Measure of the Quality of Caregiver-Child Interactions for Infants and Toddlers

Under this project, DCFD developed a new measure that assesses the quality of caregiver-child interactions in child care settings serving infants and toddlers. The Quality of Caregiver-Child Interactions for Infants and Toddlers (Q-CCIIT) evaluates caregivers' responsiveness

while accounting for the developmental levels of children from birth to three years old.

Researchers will be able to apply Q-CCIIT to a variety of child care settings, including center-based and family child care homes, as well as both single- and mixed-age classrooms. In addition to developing the tool, a psychometric field test was conducted to examine the reliability and validity of the new tool and ensure the soundness of the measure for use with diverse populations and settings. OPRE released the report, [Measuring the Quality of Caregiver-Child Interactions for Infants and Toddlers \(Q-CCIIT\)](#) in the winter of 2015. In 2016, DCFD began working on various strategies for supporting the dissemination and sustainability of the Q-CCIIT, including developing a train-the-trainer protocol for observer certification.

The Early Childhood Secondary Data Analysis Project

The Early Childhood Secondary Data Analysis Project seeks to expand the knowledge base on early childhood development and programming through activities utilizing existing archived datasets that are funded by OPRE. The project entails conducting secondary analysis of the datasets on specific topics identified by OPRE; providing training and technical assistance to those interested in using the archived data to address issues related to early childhood; and disseminating related products. The project focuses on the Head Start Impact Study (HSIS), Family and Child Experience Survey (FACES), Early Head Start Research and Evaluation Project (EHSREP), Early Head Start Family and Child Experience Survey (Baby FACES), and Head Start Classroom-based Approaches and Resources for Emotion and Social skill promotion (Head Start CARES) datasets. Other ACF datasets providing information regarding early childhood development may also be utilized in the future, including, for example, the data from the National Survey of Early Care and Education or the National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-being (NSCAW).

Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships Study

The Early Head Start-Child Care (EHS-CC) Partnerships Study offers a comprehensive review and theory of change model for understanding EHS-Child Care partnerships. The study will identify constructs, including purposes, goals, and key characteristics of partnerships, supports necessary for their success, and challenges or barriers they face. This work will provide the framework for studying the implementation of ACF's EHS-CC Partnerships program and inform future or existing studies or data collections of child care partnerships nationwide. OPRE released the preliminary report, "[Approaches to Measuring Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships: Recommendations and Considerations](#)" in the winter of 2016.

National Survey of Early Care and Education

[The National Survey of Early Care and Education \(NSECE\)](#) documents the nation's current utilization and availability of early care and education (including school age care), in order to deepen the understanding of the extent to which families' needs and preferences coordinate well with providers' offerings and constraints in the U.S. The survey oversamples low-income families because they are a significant component of early care and education/school-age (ECE/SA) public policy. The NSECE includes five survey components and four related questionnaires, including a Household Survey, Household Screener, Home-based Provider Survey, Center-based Provider Survey, and Workforce Provider Survey, and was conducted with nationally-representative samples of parents and programs in all fifty states and Washington, DC. OPRE released several NSECE reports in FY2016, including:

- ◆ [Measuring Predictors of Quality in Early Care and Education Settings in the National Survey of Early Care and Education](#)

- ◆ [Characteristics of Home-Based Early Care and Education Providers: Initial Findings from the National Survey of Early Care and Education](#)
- ◆ [Examining Child Care Subsidy Receipt: An Analysis of Matched NSECE and Illinois Administrative Data](#)
- ◆ [Households' Geographic Access to Center-based Early Care and Education: Estimates and Methodology from the National Survey of Early Care and Education](#)
- ◆ [Early Care and Education Usage and Households' Out-of-Pocket Costs: Tabulations from the National Survey of Early Care and Education \(NSECE\)](#)
- ◆ [Which Early Care and Education Centers Participate in Head Start or Public Pre-Kindergarten?](#)

Study of Coaching Practices in Early Care and Education Settings

To explore how coaching practices are implemented and vary in early care and education (ECE) classrooms serving children supported by Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) subsidies or Head Start grants, OPRE is sponsoring a project that aims to advance understanding of how core features of coaching are implemented in ECE classrooms, how they may vary by key contextual factors, and which are ripe for more rigorous evaluation. Tasks will include establishing an empirically supported conceptual model for how core features may contribute to desired changes in teacher knowledge and practice, designing and conducting a descriptive study to examine the occurrence and variability of coaching features in ECE classrooms, and conducting case studies to examine program or systems-level drivers of coaching and the features being implemented.

SPOTLIGHT ON NETWORK OF INFANT/ TODDLER RESEARCHERS (NITR)

The **Network of Infant/Toddler Researchers (NITR)** answers questions concerning children's first three years of life by bringing together researchers interested in policy and practice that pertains to infants and toddlers. NITR members collaborate to identify relevant existing research and translate it for a variety of audiences. NITR builds capacity by facilitating networking and coordination among the participants to conduct future research that will inform programs. NITR members include staff from OPRE and other ACF/HHS agencies, researchers in academia, and contractors that are working on issues related to the first three years of life. In FY2016, OPRE released several products related to this project:

Developmental Foundations of School Readiness for Infants and Toddlers: A Research to Practice Report

This report summarizes research about development during the first 3 years of life. It highlights research in domains that are foundational for later school readiness and success, including:

- ◆ Perceptual, motor, and physical development
- ◆ Social and emotional development
- ◆ Approaches to learning
- ◆ Language and communication
- ◆ Cognition

Programs can use this information as a guide to inform their practices and policies and to help them think about their theories of change

and what outcomes they are focused on improving for young children.

Including Relationship Based Care Practices in Infant Toddler Care: Implications for Practice and Policy

This review of research on relationship based care practices outlines consideration for implementing these practices in Early Head Start and childcare centers serving infants and toddlers. Furthermore, the report emphasizes two specific relationship based care supports—primary caregiving and continuity of care—and includes considerations at the center level, for parents and families and for staff. The brief also discusses federal and state policies related to adopting these practices. Additionally, the brief discusses how licensing, Quality Rating and Improvement Systems, and Early Head Start performance standards relate to implementing these practices.

Creating a Culture of Continuous Quality Improvement in Child Care and Head Start Settings

The purpose of this project is to leverage implementation science to close the gap between knowledge and practice in early childhood programs. ACF is interested in understanding how child care and Head Start programs can improve the quality of services received by young children, and also how such quality improvement can be institutionalized to create a culture of ongoing quality improvement at the program level. The project will design and assess the feasibility of implementation for a specific collaborative strategy to promote the uptake and success of evidence-based practices in both child care and Head Start settings.

Variations in Implementation of Quality Interventions

This project will study the relationship of initial child care and early education (CCEE) classroom process and/or domain-specific quality to intervention-induced changes in observed quality and children's outcomes, through a rigorous experimental design. The study will provide the conditions to test association between process/domain-specific quality and child outcomes above and below predetermined levels of quality. Questions about the quality-child outcomes relationship will be addressed in the context of an in-depth implementation study to understand the conditions necessary to plan, install, and implement an evidence-based intervention that will produce changes in process and/or domain-specific quality and in child outcomes in CCEE classrooms at different levels of initial quality. CCEE classrooms will include those in Head Start, child care, and pre-K programs serving children birth through age four-years, not yet in kindergarten.

Cross-Site Evaluation of Project LAUNCH

This evaluation, funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) through an interagency agreement between OPRE and SAMHSA, focuses on the outcomes of Project LAUNCH (Linking Actions for Unmet Needs in Children's Health) for children and families. Project LAUNCH grantees implement a range of evidence-based public health strategies to support young child wellness. The multi-site evaluation involves primary data collection of child-specific outcomes from parents recruited from schools and early childhood education centers randomly selected from LAUNCH grantee locations and matched control schools and centers from non-LAUNCH grantee locations. The evaluation design also involves the structured collection and compilation of data regarding system changes in LAUNCH target areas and control areas.



SPOTLIGHT ON NATIONAL RESEARCH CONFERENCE ON EARLY CHILDHOOD

The Administration for Children and Families was proud to present the [National Research Conference on Early Childhood 2016](#) (formerly the Head Start National Research Conference). Since 1991, the conference has highlighted innovative research on low income families with young children. The new name for the conference is our effort to welcome participation from researchers, practitioners, and policymakers across early childhood research fields.

The 2016 conference was July 11-13, 2016 at the Grand Hyatt Hotel in Washington DC.

The theme for the 2016 conference was increasing access to high quality early care and education and building the evidence base for policy and practice.

Over the past decade, there has been substantial public investment, at the national, state, and local levels, aimed at improving the quality of early care and education (ECE) and expanding services, including Head Start, child care, Home Visiting and pre kindergarten.

Many of the conference presentations reflected ACF's interest in how families access high quality programs to serve young children, including the following topics:

- ◆ The extent to which high quality ECE is available in different geographical areas;
- ◆ How families obtain and use information in order to inform their decision making about ECE;

- ◆ What factors constrain and facilitate the use of different types and quality of ECE;
- ◆ Conceptualization, measurement and evaluation of quality services;
- ◆ Practical ways to build sustainable and effective high quality program models that can be readily accessed by families with young children;

ACF's National Research Conference on Early Childhood 2016 brought together prominent researchers and practitioners from the broader early childhood research field to explore these questions and more regarding early childhood practice, research, and evaluation.

The [2016 conference program](#) highlights the cutting edge research on low income families with young children taking place today.

Child Care: Raising Quality and Supporting Parental Employment

A growing body of research demonstrating the link between early care and education and positive child and family outcomes has encouraged efforts to enhance early care and education programs. Early care and education programs serve as resources for families, supporting young children’s development in a variety of domains, assisting parents, and providing comprehensive services for families. Research in this area focuses on early learning education standards, improving quality in care settings, innovative interventions, and supporting parental employment through access to high quality health care. This section contains descriptions of some of the completed and ongoing studies, initiatives, and areas of interest in this portfolio.

Child Care Administrative Data Analysis Cooperative Agreements

Child Care Administrative Data Analysis Cooperative Agreements support Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Lead Agencies in conducting rigorous, policy-relevant research that primarily utilizes child care administrative data. Grantees pursue research questions of national and state relevance, developing their methodology and research questions in partnership with local and state child care researchers and other stakeholders.

Child Care and Development Fund Policies Database

Since 2008, the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Policies Database has collected, coded, and disseminated CCDF policies for all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and U.S. territories and outlying areas. It captures detailed information on eligibility, family

payments, application procedures, and provider-related policies, including dates of enactment and some of the policy variations that exist within states/territories. The project disseminates information in different forms to meet the needs of various users—quantitative and qualitative researchers, policymakers, and administrators at all levels of government. In the spring of 2016, OPRE released three briefs regarding the [“Implications of Child Care and Development Block Grant Reauthorizations for State Policies,”](#) and a [brief that describes the process](#) of linking case-level information on subsidized families and children with detailed policy information from the Child Care and Development Fund Policies Database.

Child Care and Early Education Policy and Research Analysis

The Child Care and Early Education Policy and Research Analysis (CCEEPRA) project provides expert advice, assistance, and consultation to researchers and policymakers. It conducts assessments, analyses, and summaries of policies, practices, and research relevant to the Administration for Children and Families, informing OPRE’s research priorities. CCEEPRA also identifies and refines measures and instruments to improve data collection and convenes early care and education experts conducting research relevant to the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) and other early childhood programs and systems in States, Territories, and Tribes. This contract supports the production of literature reviews, measures compendia, meeting summaries, briefing papers, webinars, research briefs, and research-to-policy and research-to-practice briefs. OPRE released several reports in 2016, including:

- ◆ [Examining the Associations Between Infant/Toddler Workforce Preparation, Program Quality and Child Outcomes: A Review of the Research Evidence](#)
- ◆ [Describing the Preparation and Ongoing Professional Development of the Infant/Toddler Workforce: An Analysis of the National Survey for Early Care and Education Data](#)
- ◆ [Two publications that address issues facing early care and education providers because of monitoring by multiple agencies and organizations](#)
- ◆ [Proposed Revisions to the Definitions for the Early Childhood Workforce in the Standard Occupational Classification](#)
- ◆ [Best Practices in Creating and Adapting Quality Rating and Improvement System \(QRIS\) Rating Scales - Brief & Report](#)

Child Care Policy Research Grants

The Child Care Policy Research Grants facilitate partnerships between institutions and public child care agencies to address research questions that are relevant to current policy work. The goals of these grants include: addressing issues of current relevance to decision makers at the local, state, and national levels; encouraging active communication, networking, and collaboration among prominent child care researchers and policymakers; and increasing the dissemination capacity for child care research at the national, state, and local levels.

Early Care and Education Research Scholars: Child Care

The Early Care and Education Research Scholars: Child Care program supports dissertation research on child care policy issues in partnership with state Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) lead agencies, and builds capacity in the field to focus research on questions that

inform child care policy decision-making. The specific goals of the Child Care Research Scholars grants are: (1) To directly support graduate students as a way of encouraging the conduct of child care policy research; (2) To foster mentoring relationships between faculty members and graduate students who are pursuing doctoral-level research in the child care field; (3) To encourage active communication, networking, and collaboration among graduate students, their mentors, and other senior child care researchers; and (4) To encourage active communication, networking, and collaboration among graduate students, their mentors, and policymakers.

Child Care and Development Block Grant Implementation Research and Evaluation Planning Grants Cohort I

This grant program will fund planning grants (Cohort 1: Phase I) for Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Lead Agencies to develop a research-based evaluation of the implementation of policies and initiatives to support quality improvements in early care and education programs in response to the goals of the CCDBG Act of 2014. During the period of this grant, CCDF Lead Agencies will identify the policies and/or initiatives they would like to evaluate and develop a research and evaluation plan with researchers either within their organization or with an outside partner. These planning grants may be followed by a second competition (Cohort 1: Phase II), to support execution of the research and evaluation plans. At the end of the planning grant, grantees are expected to articulate how the evaluation will be implemented in Phase II by documenting and measuring implementation of policies, including funding of implementation; tracking child, family, and provider level variables; developing and sustaining research partnerships; and executing their research plan.

Head Start and Early Head Start: Enhancing Health and Human Services for Low-Income Families

Head Start research over the past decade has provided valuable information not only for guiding program improvements in Head Start itself, but also the larger field of early childhood programming and development. Dozens of Head Start programs have collaborated with researchers in making significant contributions in terms of program innovation and evaluation, as well as the use of systematic data collection, analysis and interpretation in program operations.

Early Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey

The Early Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey (Baby FACES) is a nationally representative descriptive study of Early Head Start programs and the children and families they serve. It provides information about key characteristics of families served in Early Head Start, investigates what services are offered and how programs individualize services to meet family needs, describes how Early Head Start children and families are faring, and explores associations between the type and quality of services and child and family well-being. The first cohort of Baby FACES was funded in 2007; a second cohort was funded in 2015. In FY2016, OPRE released the report, "[Early Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey \(Baby FACES\) Design Options Report](#)," which describes ways that future descriptive studies of Early Head Start may be designed to build on past work and address information needs for research, policy, and practice.

Evaluation of the Head Start Designation Renewal System

In the fall of 2011, the Office of Head Start (OHS) significantly expanded its accountability provisions with the establishment of the Head Start Designation Renewal System (DRS). The DRS was designed to determine whether Head Start and Early Head Start grantees are providing high quality comprehensive services for children and families. Where they are not, grantees are denied automatic renewal of their grant and must apply for funding renewal through an open competition process. DRS determinations are based on seven conditions assessing quality in three broad categories—service quality, licensing and operations, and fiscal and internal controls. In 2012, DCFD launched an evaluation of the DRS to examine how the system is being implemented, the validity of the DRS, and its role in improving quality in Head Start and Early Head Start. OPRE released the results from the evaluation in the report "[Early Implementation of the Head Start Designation Renewal System: Volume I & II](#)" in the fall of 2016.

Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey

The Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey (FACES) is a periodic survey of a nationally representative sample of Head Start children that provides descriptive information on the characteristics, experiences, and outcomes of Head Start children and families, as well as the characteristics of the Head Start programs that serve them. The most recent data collections occurred in the fall of 2014 and the spring of 2015. Data collection will be repeated in the spring of 2017. OPRE released a technical report in the fall of

SPOTLIGHT ON EARLY HEAD START UNIVERSITY PARTNERSHIP GRANTS: BUFFERING CHILDREN FROM TOXIC STRESS

The **Early Head Start University Partnership Grants: Buffering Children from Toxic Stress** is a set of 6 grants examining the implementation and efficacy of different promising parenting interventions in Early Head Start settings to help buffer children from toxic stress. These grants have three overarching goals: identify the children and families most vulnerable to stress; enhance Early Head Start (EHS) services by implementing parenting interventions that are designed to ameliorate the effects of chronic stress on children's development; and advance applied developmental neuroscience. Ultimately, they are answering the question: Can parenting interventions buffer children from toxic stress?

- ◆ The 6 grantees, OPRE staff, and EHS staff from the national office have formed a consortium in which they have identified measures of risk and protective factors to assess across all of the projects (e.g., SES, poverty, and financial hardship; neighborhood characteristics; maternal depression, anxiety, and substance use; parenting stress).
- ◆ Grantees include New York University, University of Colorado, University of Delaware, University of Maryland, University of Denver, and Washington University.
- ◆ Each grant is testing a different preventative intervention (e.g., The Playing and Learning Strategies Intervention (PALS), Promoting First Relationships (PFR), Filming Interactions to Nurture Developments (FIND), etc.)

- ◆ Results from this research will help build a cumulative knowledge base regarding the role Early Head Start can play in promoting practices that buffer children from toxic stress.

Progress:

Data Collection is either complete or nearing completion at most of the grantee sites. All grantees are working on data analyses and dissemination. In addition, a database that will include the common measures that were collected at baseline across the different sites is underway. This database will facilitate cross site collaboration. Grantees have mapped out topics for several cross site webinars, policy/practice briefs, and peer reviewed papers.

2016, which examines data from three successive cohorts (2006, 2009, 2014) for trends in observed classroom quality.

Early Care and Education Research Scholars: Head Start Graduate Student Research Program

The Head Start Graduate Student Research grant program is designed to build research capacity in and knowledge of effective early childhood interventions with low-income children and families. The grant program does this by providing support for dissertation research conducted by graduate students working in partnership with local Head Start or Early Head Start programs. The immediate goals of the grant program are to: (1) support the completion of high quality research projects directed at the current concerns of Head Start and Early Head Start programs and policy makers; (2) encourage research with Head Start and Early Head Start populations; (3) promote mentor-student relationships that provide project supervision in the field and support students' professional development; (4) emphasize the importance of developing working research partnerships with Head Start and Early Head Start programs, thereby increasing the effectiveness of the applied research work; and (5) support active communication, networking and collaboration among the group of grantee graduate students, their mentors and other prominent researchers in the field.

Head Start Health Manager Descriptive Survey

The Head Start Health Manager Descriptive Survey describes the characteristics of health managers and related staff in Head Start and Early Head Start programs. It also identifies the current landscape of health programs and services for children and families, determines how health initiatives are prioritized, implemented, and sustained, and identifies the programmatic features and policy levers that exist to support health ser-

vices, including staffing, environment, and community collaboration. OPRE released several reports in FY2016, including:

- ◆ [Head Start Health Matters: Findings from the 2012-2013 Head Start Health Manager Descriptive Study for Regions I-XII](#)
- ◆ [Head Start Health Matters: Tabulations by Region from the 2012-2013 Head Start Health Manager Descriptive Study for Regions I-XII](#)
- ◆ [Head Start Health Manager Descriptive Study: Findings and Implications for Head Start and Early Head Start Programs](#)
- ◆ [Addressing Mental Health, Behavioral Health, and Social and Emotional Well-Being in Head Start: Insights from the Head Start Health Manager Descriptive Study](#)
- ◆ [Addressing Overweight and Obesity in Head Start: Insights from the Head Start Health Manager Descriptive Study](#)
- ◆ [Family Engagement in the Delivery of the Health Services Component in Head Start and Early Head Start](#)
- ◆ [Addressing Oral Health in Head Start: Insights from the Head Start Health Manager Descriptive Study](#)

American Indian and Alaska Native Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey

The American Indian and Alaska Native Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey (AI/AN FACES) is designed to provide information on Head Start programs and the children and families they serve in Region XI, whose programs are designed to serve predominantly AI/AN children and families. The design of AI/AN FACES has been informed by members of the AI/AN FACES workgroup which includes tribal Head Start directors, researchers with expertise working with tribal communities, federal officials

the Office of Head Start, Region XI, and OPRE. Data collection with Region XI children, families, classrooms, and programs began in the Fall of 2015, to be repeated in the Spring of 2016 and Spring of 2017. Twenty-two Region XI Head Start programs were included. In the winter of 2017, the initial findings from the first nationally representative study of Region XI Head Start programs run by tribal communities were to be presented.

Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Supplement to the National Agricultural Workers Survey

The Migrant and Seasonal Head Start (MSHS) Supplement to the National Agricultural Workers Survey (NAWS) is a project that DCFD has collaborated with the Office of Head Start and the Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration to develop, pilot, and implement. This supplement will provide a demographic portrait of families who are currently accessing or eligible to access MSHS nationwide. OPRE released [two briefs](#) and the report, "[Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Supplement to the National Agricultural Workers Survey 2015 Report](#)" in FY2016.

Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Study

The Migrant and Seasonal Head Start (MSHS) study is a four-year study that will examine MSHS programs and practices and the children and families served by the MSHS program. MSHS provides early childhood support for migrant and seasonal farmworkers. The study will examine program practices in multiple domains, including enrollment, recruitment, and dual language support. The study will also explore the well-being of children and families receiving services. A particular focus of the MSHS Study will be language practice and language assessments utilized across centers. The results of our work on the [Design for Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Survey](#) provides further information regard-

ing the MSHS program and design options under consideration.

Head Start University Partnership Grants: Dual-Generation Approaches

The goal of this grant program is to examine how Head Start can promote family well-being, including health, safety, and financial security, as well as children's school readiness. Researchers working in partnership with one or more Head Start programs lead these studies, evaluating promising dual generation approaches, which combine child-focused programs with intensive adult-focused services to support both parents' well-being and children's school readiness. Each of the four grantees is conducting an implementation study and evaluating the effectiveness of the selected intervention or approach.

Early Head Start University Partnerships: Building the Evidence Base for Infant/Toddler Center-based Programs

The overall goal of the Early Head Start University Partnerships research grant program is to contribute to the knowledge base regarding how Early Head Start (EHS) and other early care and education programs can promote and improve early child development by supporting both parenting and caregiving. Researchers are working in partnership with one or more EHS center-based programs and/or EHS-Child Care Partnership programs. Together, they will implement and examine promising models, curricula, programs, or interventions that target both parents and center-based teachers as a means of achieving child development goals. Each grantee will conduct an implementation study and evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention in one or more settings. Results of these studies will provide valuable information that can help guide center-based programs in their decisions regarding interventions to promote and improve early child development.

Promoting Child Welfare

The promotion of children’s safety, permanence, and well-being are the principles that guide child welfare practice and policy. OPRE’s child welfare research portfolio includes studies on children who have experienced or are at risk for maltreatment, families who are investigated by Child Protective Services, and children and families who access child welfare services. OPRE partners with ACF’s Children’s Bureau to conduct research covering a broad array of topics, including identification of antecedents and consequences of child maltreatment, strategies for its prevention, and service needs and outcomes for children who experience it. This section contains descriptions of some of the completed and ongoing studies in this portfolio.

Design Options for Understanding Child Maltreatment Incidence

This project seeks to develop design options for a potential study or group of studies that would leverage existing administrative data, innovative methods, and advanced statistical techniques to obtain accurate and ongoing surveillance on both the incidence of child abuse and neglect and types of related risk. This project will allow for the identification and prioritization of key research questions; exploration of design options, including innovative methodological approaches; review of existing administrative datasets and ongoing surveys; examination of measurement issues; and consideration of resource allocation.

Evaluation of Domestic Human Trafficking Demonstration Projects

In 2014, ACF’s Family and Youth Services Bureau (FYSB) awarded three grants to carry out demonstration projects to provide coordinated case management and comprehensive direct victim assistance to domestic victims of severe forms of human trafficking. In 2015, FYSB awarded three additional demonstration project

grants. The intent of the grant program is to improve organizational and community capacity to deliver trauma-informed, culturally relevant services for domestic victims of human trafficking. Specifically, this project seeks to identify the knowledge base related to human trafficking and child welfare in order to assist the Children’s Bureau (CB) in creating a research agenda, to include: children and youth in child welfare settings who are victims of human trafficking or at risk of human trafficking; current program policies and practices related to this population; risk factors that may make certain individuals more vulnerable to force, fraud, and coercion and more likely to become a victim of human trafficking; and promising models to address human trafficking in the child welfare population.

Evaluation of the National Human Trafficking Hotline Program

The primary objective of this project is to develop and execute an evaluation of the National Human Trafficking Hotline (NHTH). Additionally, this project will explore design options and feasibility for a more extensive evaluation that involves follow-up data collection with callers to the NHTH, while protecting the safety and privacy of the callers.

Planning a Next Generation Evaluation Agenda for the John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program

In collaboration with ACF’s Children’s Bureau, OPRE designs and conducts evaluations of selected programs funded through the John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (CFCIP). The Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 called for these evaluations, which use rigorous, random assignment designs. The goal is

to determine the effects of CFCIP-funded Independent Living Programs in achieving key outcomes for participating youth, including increased educational attainment, higher employment rates and stability, greater interpersonal and relationship skills, reduced non-marital pregnancy and births, and reduced delinquency and crime rates. In the fall of 2016, OPRE released the brief, [*“Disadvantaged Youth: Ongoing Program Evaluation Efforts.”*](#)

National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being

The National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being (NSCAW) is a nationally-representative, longitudinal survey of children and families who have been the subjects of investigation by Child Protective Services. NSCAW examines data from first-hand reports of children, parents, and other caregivers, as well as reports from caseworkers, teachers, and administrative records data. The Survey also addresses child and family well-being outcomes in detail and seeks to relate those outcomes to experience with the child welfare system, as well as family characteristics, community environment, and other factors. In the fall of FY2015, OPRE awarded a new contract to begin work to field a third cohort for the study.

Permanency Innovations Initiative Evaluation

The Permanency Innovations Initiative (PII) is a multi-site federal demonstration project designed to improve outcomes among children in foster care who have the most serious barriers to permanency. This 5-year, \$100 million initiative supports six grantees, each with a unique intervention to help a subgroup of children leave foster care in fewer than three years. PII aims to reduce long-term foster care stays, use an implementation framework that will guide technical assistance activities, rigorously evaluate these efforts, and disseminate findings to build knowledge in the child welfare field. OPRE, in

collaboration with the Children’s Bureau, provides oversight for a comprehensive evaluation of the initiative. A PII Evaluation Team is currently designing and conducting rigorous studies that document the implementation and effectiveness of projects that the initiative funds. OPRE released a [brief that highlights](#) ACF research and program evaluation efforts related to disadvantaged youth, as well as the reports [*“Findings from the RISE Youth Qualitative Interviews”*](#) and [*Using Child Welfare Administrative Data in the Permanency Innovations Initiative Evaluation*](#) in FY2016.

Building Capacity to Evaluate Interventions for Youth/Young Adults with Child Welfare Involvement At-Risk of Homelessness

In phase I of this project, the Children’s Bureau awarded 18 two-year planning grants that provide evaluation-related technical assistance to organizations for the development of interventions for youth with child welfare involvement who are most likely to experience homelessness. In phase II, after the two-year planning grant, a limited number of grants were funded to implement the planned projects. A contract managed by OPRE is working with the grantees to implement strong models for the further development and testing of interventions for youth with child welfare involvement who are most likely to experience homelessness.

Supporting Evidence Building in Child Welfare

The overall purpose of this project is to support OPRE and the Children’s Bureau (CB) in increasing the number of evidence-supported interventions for the child welfare population by conducting rigorous evaluations and supporting the field in moving toward rigorous evaluations. The project will focus initially on interventions that have been fully implemented previously in at least one setting, undergone formative testing, and have shown some significant impacts through summative evaluation, rather than those that are in earlier stages of development and testing. Key project tasks include identification of priority areas and interventions ripe for moving to the next level of evidence; review of existing evidence and feasibility issues; rigorous impact evaluations of interventions (implementation of which will not be funded under this contract); and consultation around complex evaluation designs or statistical methods relevant for testing interventions in one or more sites. The results of the evaluations will be disseminated to meet the needs of ACF, CB, policy makers, practitioners, and other key stakeholders. They will also be published in peer-reviewed journals, for inclusion in appropriate evidence reviews.

Recognizing Cultural Diversity

Although a variety of recent research projects have greatly advanced knowledge of child and family development, many of these works have not adequately accounted for the diversity of cultural features (e.g., language) among families accessing federal resources. DCFD seeks to better represent Hispanic, American Indian/Alaska Native, and other cultural minority groups in studies geared toward improving policy and practice. OPRE has launched several projects that aim to expand the knowledge base and improve resources for these communities.

Human Services Research Partnerships: Puerto Rico

The Human Services Research Partnerships: Puerto Rico initiative expands understanding of the most promising human services approaches to improving quality of life in the region, focusing on topics related to the Head Start and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families programs. The Inter American University of Puerto Rico Metropolitan Campus (IAUPR) supports partnerships among researchers, local governments, and community-based organizations to define and address research questions regarding the social and economic well-being of low-income children and families. The research partnership released the report, "[*The Characteristics of Participants in the TANF Program in Puerto Rico in April 2016*](#)" and the literature review, "[*Lessons and Recommendations from Research Studies on Temporary Assistance for Needy Families in Puerto Rico, 1998-2009*](#)" in FY2016.

Human Services Research Partnerships: Virgin Islands

The Human Services Research Partnerships: Virgin Islands project aims to establish an accessible, comprehensive research infrastructure to

support the provision of quality human services for Head Start and TANF clients. It seeks to develop a secure data collection system, provide training to support the development of research capacity, and implement two human services research studies, which will address questions of interest to Head Start and TANF programs locally. The Virgin Islands partnership is currently reaching out to community-based participatory research experts.

National Research Center on Hispanic Children & Families

The [National Research Center on Hispanic Children and Families](#) (NRCHCF) conducts, translates, and provides research concerning three priority areas—poverty reduction and self-sufficiency, healthy marriage and responsible fatherhood, and early care and education—informing ACF programs and policies that support Hispanic families and children. The Center additionally has three primary goals: advancing a cutting-edge research agenda, building research capacity, and implementing an innovative communication and dissemination approach. In FY2016, NRCHCF released several publications, including:

- ◆ [*The Changing Geography of Hispanic Children and Families*](#)
- ◆ [*A National Portrait of Hispanic Children in Need*](#)
- ◆ [*Using Existing Large-Scale Data to Study Early Care and Education Among Hispanics: Search and Decision-Making*](#)
- ◆ [*Using Existing Large-Scale Data to Study Early Care and Education Among Hispanics: Families' Utilization of Early Care and Education*](#)

- ◆ [Using Existing Large-Scale Data to Study Early Care and Education Among Hispanics: How Hispanic Parents and Children Experience ECE Settings](#)
- ◆ [Online Data Tools for Exploring Local Demographics: A Focus on Hispanics](#)
- ◆ [Making National Data Local: Using American FactFinder to Describe Local Hispanic Communities](#)
- ◆ [Hispanic Children's Participation in Early Care and Education: Parents' Perceptions of Care Arrangements, and Relatives' Availability to Provide Care](#)

Tribal Early Childhood Research Center

The Tribal Early Childhood Research Center (TRC) seeks to address gaps in early childhood research with American Indian and Alaska Natives through partnerships with tribal Head Start, Early Head Start, child care, and home visiting programs. The goals of the TRC are to engage in a participatory research process and to build capacity for researchers to work effectively with early childhood programs in tribal communities and advance research on young children's development. OPRE released the report, "[Tribal Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting: A Report to Congress](#)" in the spring of 2016.

Links to Projects and Reports

Cross-Cutting Early Childhood Research

Assessing Early Childhood Teachers' Use of Child Progress Monitoring to Individualize Teaching Practices
<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/research/project/early-childhood-teachers-use-of-progress-monitoring-to-individualize>

Child Care and Early Education Research Connections
<http://www.researchconnections.org/content/childcare/federal/ccprc.html>

Professional Development Tools to Improve the Quality of Infant & Toddler Care
<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/resource/professional-development-tools-improve-quality-of-infant-toddler-care-review-literature>

Spotlight on Executive Function Mapping Project: Translating Research for Application

Executive Function Mapping Project: Translating Research for Application
<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/resource/untangling-the-terms-and-skills-related-to-executive-function-and-self-regulation-in-early-childhood>

Development of a Measure of Family and Provider/Teacher Relationship Quality
<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/research/project/development-of-a-measure-of-family-and-provider-teacher-relationship-quality-fptrq>

Development of a Measure of the Quality of Caregiver-Child Interactions for Infants and Toddlers
<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/resource/measuring-the-quality-of-caregiver-child-interactions-for-infants-and-toddlers-q-ccit>

The Early Childhood Secondary Data Analysis Project
<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/research/project/early-childhood-secondary-data-analysis-project>

Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships Study
<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/research/project/early-head-start-child-care-partnerships-study>

National Survey of Early Care and Education
<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/research/project/national-survey-of-early-care-and-education-nsece-2010-2014>

Spotlight on Network of Infant/ Toddler Researchers (NITR)

The Network of Infant/Toddler Researchers
<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/research/project/network-of-infant-toddler-researchers-nitr>

Study of Coaching Practices in Early Care and Education Settings
<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/research/project/study-of-coaching-practices-in-early-care-and-education-settings>

Creating a Culture of Continuous Quality Improvement in Child Care and Head Start Settings
<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/research/project/creating-a-culture-of-continuous-quality-improvement-in-child-care-and-head-start-settings>

Variations in Implementations of Quality Interventions
<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/research/project/variations-in-implementation-of-quality-interventions-examining-the-quality-child-outcomes-relationship>

Cross-Site Evaluation of Project LAUNCH
<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/research/project/cross-site-evaluation-of-project-launch-linking-actions-for-unmet-needs-in>

Spotlight on National Research Conference on Early Childhood

National Research Conference on Early Childhood
<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/events/head-start-national-research-conferences>

Child Care: Raising Quality and Supporting Parental Employment

Child Care Administrative Data Analysis Cooperative Agreements
<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/research/project/child-care-administrative-data-analysis-cooperative-agreements>

Child Care and Development Fund Policies Database
<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/research/project/child-care-and-development-fund-ccdf-policies-database-2008-2013>

Child Care and Early Education Policy and Research Analysis
<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/research/project/child-care-and-early-education-policy-and-research-and-technical>

Child Care Policy Research Grants
<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/research/project/child-care-policy-research-grants-2000-2010>

Early Care and Education Research Scholars: Child Care

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/research/project/head-start-graduate-student-research-program>

Child Care and Development Block Grant Implementation Research and Evaluation Planning Grants Cohort I

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/research/project/child-care-development-block-grant-cdbg-implementation-research-and-evaluation-planning-grants>

Head Start and Early Head Start: Enhancing Health and Human Services for Low-Income Families

Early Head Start Family and Child Experiences Study

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/research/project/early-head-start-family-and-child-experiences-study-baby-faces>

Evaluation of the Head Start Designation Renewal System

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/research/project/evaluation-of-the-head-start-designation-renewal-system-drs>

Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/research/project/head-start-family-and-child-experiences-survey-faces>

Spotlight on Early Head Start University Partnership Grants: Buffering Children from Toxic Stress

Early Head Start University Partnership Grants: Buffering Children From Toxic Stress

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/research/project/early-head-start-university-partnership-grants-buffering-children-from>

Early Care and Education Research Scholars: Head Start Graduate Student Research Program

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/research/project/head-start-graduate-student-research-program>

Head Start Health Manager Descriptive Survey

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/research/project/head-start-health-managers-descriptive-study>

American Indian and Alaska Native Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/research/project/american-indian-and-alaska-native-head-start-family-and-child-experiences-survey-faces>

Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Supplement to the National Agricultural Workers Survey

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/research/project/migrant-and-seasonal-head-start-supplement-to-the-national-agricultural>

Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Study

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/research/project/migrant-and-seasonal-head-start-study>

Head Start University Partnership Grants: Dual-Generation Approaches

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/research/project/head-start-university-partnership-grants-dual-generation-approaches>

Early Head Start: University Partnerships: Building the Evidence Base for Infant/Toddler Center-based Programs

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/early-head-start-university-partnerships-building-the-evidence-base-for-infant/toddler-center-based-programs-2015-2020>

Promoting Child Welfare

Design Options for Understanding Child Maltreatment Incidence

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/research/project/design-options-for-understanding-child-maltreatment-incidence-2015-2017>

Evaluation of Domestic Human Trafficking Demonstration Projects

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/research/project/evaluation-of-domestic-human-trafficking-demonstration-projects>

Evaluation of the National Human Trafficking Hotline Program

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/resource/coming-soon-evaluation-of-the-national-human-trafficking-hotline-program>

Planning a Next Generation Evaluation Agenda for the John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/research/project/planning-a-next-generation-evaluation-agenda-for-the-john-h-chafee-foster>

National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/research/project/national-survey-of-child-and-adolescent-well-being-nscaw>

Permanency Innovations Initiative Evaluation

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/research/project/permanency-innovations-initiative-pii-evaluation>

Building Capacity to Evaluate Interventions for Youth/Young Adults with Child Welfare Involvement At-risk of Homelessness

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/research/project/building-capacity-to-evaluate-interventions-for-youth-with-child-welfare-involvement-at-risk-of-homelessness>

Supporting Evidence Building in Child Welfare

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/resource/supporting-evidence-building-in-child-welfare-2016-2021-overview>

Recognizing Cultural Diversity

Human Services Research Partnerships: Puerto Rico

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/research/project/human-services-research-partnerships-puerto-rico>

Human Services Research Partnerships: Virgin Islands

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/research/project/human-services-research-partnership-us-virgin-islands>

National Research Center on Hispanic Children & Families

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/research/project/center-for-research-on-hispanic-children-families>

Tribal Early Childhood Research Center

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/research/project/tribal-early-childhood-research-center>

