

Mayagüez and Humacao Host Action Planning Workshops Focused on Needs of Children in Disasters

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SAN JUAN, PR (October 17, 2019) –

As Mayagüez and Humacao continue their recovery from Hurricanes Irma and María, a team of disaster planning experts is working to create a child-focused plan aimed at protecting the community's most vulnerable citizens when the next disaster strikes.

Regional and local government officials gathered last Tuesday in Mayagüez and Thursday in Humacao with community partners convened through the National Center for Disaster Preparedness at Columbia University's Earth Institute with the support of IDJ and the Puerto Rico Children and Youth Taskforce to develop strategies aimed to help increase the resilience of children who experience disasters in the regions.

The action-planning workshops brought together more than 60 representatives from over 15 organizations who serve thousands of children. The workshop also showcased community preparedness data on the needs of children as well as broader resilience to future disasters. Participants identified areas to further develop institutional and community-wide preparedness plans and strengthened connections across various sectors that contribute to the well-being of children in the community.

This important child-serving institution-focused workshop is being conducted as part of the second phase of the Resilient Children/Resilient Communities (RCRC) Initiative. The RCRC Initiative is a national project led by the National Center for Disaster Preparedness and funded by a grant from global healthcare company GSK. The Initiative has worked with communities in Arkansas and New York for the last three years and most recently, in Puerto Rico and North Carolina, to support the development of local Community Resilience Coalitions (CRCs). These coalitions work to build child-focused community resilience through enhanced emergency and disaster preparedness planning, education, and awareness building.

The second phase of this project, started in early 2019, will provide two years of institutional support from NCDP to Mayagüez and Humacao, PR managed by the Institute for Youth Development. Yesenia Delgado Castillo, collective action and partnerships of the Institute for Youth Development (IDJ) and coordinator of the work of the Puerto Rico Children & Youth Task Force, commented: "This is a great opportunity to maximize resources and strengthen partnerships. We have to work as a collective to make the needs of children before, during and after a disaster a priority".

“This work will not only benefit Mayaguez and Humacao, but other communities recovering across Puerto Rico and elsewhere”, said Jeff Schlegelmilch, deputy director of NCDP, and director of the RCRC Initiative. “This initiative brings together the strength of community partners in Puerto Rico, and throughout the United States to share best practices, develop new tools and approaches, and to ensure that the trajectory of a child’s development is not altered by disasters”

“We are proud to support NCDP and partners across Mayagüez and Humacao as part of the Resilient Children, Resilient Communities Initiative,” said Becki Lynch, Director of US Community Partnerships at GSK. “The community is making important investments to prepare families, and the institutions that they rely on, to keep children safe and help them to bounce back from the impact of disaster.”

For more information on the RCRC Initiative please see: <https://ncdp.columbia.edu/rcrc>

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About NCDP

[The National Center for Disaster Preparedness at the Earth Institute](https://ncdp.columbia.edu) of Columbia University works to understand and improve the nation’s capacity to prepare for, respond to and recover from disasters. NCDP focuses on the readiness of governmental and non-governmental systems; the complexities of population recovery; the power of community engagement; and the risks of human vulnerability, with a particular focus on children. Learn more about this initiative: <http://ncdp.columbia.edu/rcrc>

About the RCRC Initiative

The Resilient Children/Resilient Communities Initiative (RCRC) is funded by a grant from GSK and is led by the National Center for Disaster Preparedness. Launched in 2015 in partnership with Save the Children, the three-year RCRC initiative has brought together local stakeholders in two pilot communities in New

York and Arkansas to create emergency plans that meet the substantial needs of children in disasters. In both locations, the project team established “Community Resilience Coalitions,” which brought emergency management officials together with child-serving institutions, schools, after school programs, social service providers, health care providers, parents, and dozens of other stakeholders to address gaps in the infrastructure that protects children in the event of a major disaster. In 2019, the project expanded to include communities recovering from disaster in North Carolina and Puerto Rico. The Resilient Children Resilient Communities Initiative has also developed the RCRC Toolbox (<https://rcrctoolbox.org>), a curated collection of child-specific preparedness and planning resources.

About the Youth Development Institute (IDJ)

The Youth Development Institute (IDJ) is a nonprofit organization that is dedicated to promoting public policies, both federally and statewide, to eradicate child poverty and improve the life and development of children and youth in Puerto Rico. Our work includes research, data collection and dissemination, public policy recommendations and advocacy efforts based on both data and the voice of young people and their families. To learn more, access our website at www.juventudpr.org; on Facebook: [www.facebook/IDJ.PR](https://www.facebook.com/IDJ.PR); Twitter: @IDJ_PR; or write us an email to: info@juventudpr.org.

About the Puerto Rico Children & Youth Task Force

The Puerto Rico Children & Youth Task Force is a working group co-led by the Institute for Youth Development, Save the Children and the Administration for Children and Families. The group is an initiative fosters active collaboration between government agencies, community-based organizations, academia and private entities that work with children and youth. The group was formed in 2017 with the purpose of satisfying the immediate needs of children and youth after the onslaught of Hurricane Maria. Initially, it served to share information and coordinate response efforts during the emergency period. Subsequently, the group began specific initiatives to address the mental health status of children post-emergency and to help communities and families with children prepare for future emergencies.

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