

GROUP B STREP AWARENESS



University Center for
Excellence on Developmental
Disabilities (UCEDD)



AMERICAN SAMOA COMMUNITY COLLEGE

UCEDD it!

July is the international Group B Streptococcus (GBS) Awareness month. GBS is a bacteria infection that can cause serious illness to newborn babies, elderly or people with a weakened immune system. This bacteria comes and goes and is present in a woman's genital and/or rectum. Since this bacteria appears mostly during the late stages of pregnancy, testing for GBS is recommended by US public health protocols at the 36th week of every pregnancy. My name is Ropa Mafua and I was tested positive for Group B strep bacteria when I was 37



weeks pregnant with my daughter. I was scared and confused once my doctor notified me, as I was a young mother,

eagerly awaiting the arrival of my first-born child. I did not know what GBS was or the complications it would have on my child. However, I made it a priority to get all the information regarding GBS. I was scared for myself and especially for my child. I was informed by my doctor that nothing can be done until I went into labor. I was couple of weeks away from my expected date of delivery and I was nervous and afraid. I had learned that some children born to mothers diagnosed with positive GBS had developmental disabilities and others died a couple of days after birth. I had worked diligently with my doctor to be aware of GBS is, what I could do, and what my labor team would do to assure my child would not be harmed. I was also notified of options about treatment if I

were to have my child through cesarean delivery. The treatment for GBS to prevent a baby from becoming ill is intravenous antibiotics administered through an IV once labor has begun, and again every four hours during active labor until the baby is delivered. Taking antibiotics greatly decreases the chances of your child developing early-onset or any GBS infection. On October 6, 2010 a seven pound baby girl was born and we named her Brezeyious b.k.a Breezy. Almost a year later, Breezy is healthy, strong, and a happy little girl who is GBS free.



NETWORK AND EXCHANGE TRIP By: Lia Pelenato

Staff from the University Center for Excellence on Developmental Disabilities, a program of the American Samoa Community College were in Apia from July 26 to August 1, 2011 in an effort to build bridges with Samoa's disability community, as well

as for advocacy, capacity building and networking for people with disabilities. The trip consisted of meetings and visitations to various schools, organizations, and ministries which serve and work with Samoa's individuals with disabilities.



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"Being disabled should not mean being disqualified from having access to every aspect of life"

~Emma Thompson

LOTO TAUMAFAI SCHOOL

By: Ernie Seiuli

On Friday July 29th the UCEDD staff visited Loto Taumafai School at Moto'otua, Samoa. The Loto Taumafai School provides quality education to children with disabilities from Level 1 – 8. The school delivers the National Curriculum of English, Math, Social Science, Samoan and Sports, with a special focus on adapting the Curriculum to accommodate the individual needs of each student. They believe that all children have the right to education, and are committed to ensuring that students with disabilities have the opportunity to learn. Their Vocational Unit is committed to providing people with disabilities the opportunity for training and skills development in a variety of vocational settings. The Unit



also supports the rights of all people with a disability to have equal access to training and employment, and is committed to providing avenues for income generating activities. Loto Taumafai has an early intervention program, running parallel to the reha-

runs workshops in carpentry, carving, art, mosaics and crafts, and makes quality low cost items to sell to the community. It

ilitation center for young toddlers with disabilities. The aim is the improvement of the quality and eminence of life for children with disabilities through the early detection and intervention of childhood impairments. Their Early Intervention program follows a community-based rehabilitation framework of locally trained workers, visiting families in their homes and working closely with service providers. Their strategies mainly focus on strengthening disability prevention programs, improving access to information on the causes of disabilities and early intervention measures, and developing a Community Based Rehabilitation Strategy to improve the services for Individuals with Developmental Disabilities.

AOGA FIAMALAMALAMA

By: Lia Pelenato

Tucked away in the village of Alafua is a gated school for students with intellectual disabilities. The UCEDD staff arrived at Aoga Fiamalamalama on July 27 to the cheers and laughter's of students who had just completed a day of activities and were receiving prizes for their efforts. We were introduced to the school by Principal Sharon Suhren-Hope. Lia Pelenato of UCEDD explained the purpose of our organization to the students, who were eager to ask questions. Aoga Fiamalama-

lama educates more than 25 students with intellectual disabilities. It also offers transportation to and from home as well as a daily free lunch. The teachers have a passion to help students achieve academically and become independent in life. In addition to teaching, the principal and staff also go from village to village to locate children with intellectual disabilities and encourage parents to enroll them. With a growing number of students, the teachers are concerned that students must have the proper

diagnosis to assist the teachers in designing lesson plans for them. Aoga Fiamalamalama is fully sponsored and funded by the government of Australia.



NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SAMOA

By: Tafa Tupuola

One of the top agencies on the agenda to visit during the UCEDD retreat was the National University of Samoa (NUS). The purpose of the visit was to see the availability of accommodation services for students with disabilities. We met with the Head Lecturer of Special Education in the Teacher Training program, Mrs. Niusila Fa'amanatu-Eteuati, who explained that accommodation for students with disabilities at the postsecondary level is somewhat new at NUS. Mrs. Eteuati shared that al-



though much assistance is needed to develop policies for students with disabilities at NUS, efforts have been made to provide necessary support for them. In solidarity with our sister island of Samoa, UCEDD will continue to network and exchange resources and materials to facilitate student accommodations. NUS previously had

though much assistance is needed to develop policies for students with disabilities at NUS, efforts have been made to provide necessary support for them. In

a blind student who graduated some years ago, and currently has a student with a disability enrolled. Accommodation for students with disabilities at the postsecondary level is a global effort to ensure that all individuals receive equal education. The Ministry of Women, Community, and Social Development has published the Samoa National Policy for persons with disabilities for 2011-2016. The published policy was developed by the Disability Taskforce established by the Cabinet in October 2008.

SAMOA VICTIM SUPPORT GROUP (SVSG)

By: Lia Pelenato

While driving around Samoa, it's hard to miss the big yellow boards posted by the roadside. The messages delivered by these posters are well-known to victims, offenders, and the community at large, including one created by the Samoa Victim Support Group (SVSG), which is located next to the Samoa Ministry of Police. On the morning of August 1, the UCEDD staff toured the facilities and met with SVSG President

Lina Chang and her staff. The SVSG provides services to victims with or without disabilities in Samoa. As individuals with disabilities are more likely to become abused, there is a growing need for services targeted to accommodate them. The SVSG is a non-profit organization that recently started an education component to continue education for adolescent victims. SVSG works closely with Samoa's Attorney

General and Judges as well as other professionals to provide justice and services for victims with or without disabilities in Samoa.



NUANUA O LE ALOFA (NOLA) DISABILITY COUNCIL By: Tafa Tupuola

UCEDD had the privilege to meet with the Nuanua o le Alofa (NOLA) organization on July 28 at the Amanaki Hotel. Empowered to advocate for the disability community in all aspects of life, their mission "Nothing About Us, Without Us" sends a strong message on inclusive planning for services and policy development. Inclusiveness is not about planning for, but planning 'with' individuals with disabilities. Driven and represented by people with disabilities within the organization, NOLA was represented by approximately 20 of its members. Having regular meetings, developing work plans, and providing training to the disability community are just a few activities they

lead. Through this network connection, UCEDD was particularly interested in NOLA's exemplary reputation of advocacy, its determination, and its effort to share their expertise on best practices within their community. The Ministry of Women, Community, and Social Development, which is responsible for policy development, invited NOLA and other agencies to the table to share this expertise. Shared dialogue over several meetings produced two National Policies, one for persons with disabilities and another for children. These combined voices express both equality and a self-determination in improving the lives of people with disabilities. Any service provider

would appreciate the empowering ambience shared at the meeting, which in-



cluded discussion on International Disability day and other issues. The UCEDD will continue its partnership with our neighboring islands to empower people with disabilities. The NOLA officers include President Mr. Nofovaleane Mapusua, Vice President Ms. Fa'atino Utumapu and Secretary Ms. Louise T. Leauanae.

MINISTRY OF WOMEN, COMMUNITY & SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT (MWCSO) By: Lia Pelenato

The Ministry of Women, Community, and Social Development (MWCSO) is the government agency that spearheads the research, policy, and planning information for the disability community in Samoa. The Research and Policy Division, under the MWCSO, ensures the provision of policy, coordinates research, manages information, and monitors and evaluates the process of services available to individuals with disabilities. The UCEDD met on July 29 with the MWCSO Division Managers regarding the disability component within the Samoa government. In previous years, the Ministry of Education, under the special supervision of Prime Minister Tuila-

epa Sailele Malielegaoi, was the first government sector to initiate any disability services in Samoa. Later on, the MWCSO was formed to lead the coordination of and the mainstreaming of services for persons with disabilities. In the early 2001, MWCSO established special needs units in



various schools around Samoa to facilitate inclusive education. However, due to limited resources the

units were discontinued. The MWCSO is also working closely with National University of Samoa (NUS) to train teachers, particularly in the area of Education in Special Needs. For the past two years, the Research and Policy Division has worked together with individuals with disabilities in putting together the Samoa National Policy for Persons with Disabilities handbook which is disseminated to various organizations and Ministries within Samoa. This handbook initiated the inclusion of individuals with disabilities working together with government employees to form policies, evaluate services, and provide information and consultation.

PREVENTION, REHABILITATION & EDUCATION By: Ernie Seiuli

The UCEDD Staff visited the Prevention of Blindness, Rehabilitation and Education of Blind Persons (PREB) at Mulivai, Apia on Friday, July 28th. PREB teaches blind and visually impaired students how to write and read in Braille, with the aim of mainstreaming these students into regular schools. Their range of services is designed to ensure that individuals with visual impairment have maximum independence and safety in their daily lives. The PREB provides services such

as transcribing books and other reading materials in order to enable the blind and visually-impaired to read and write. PREB Director Mailo Pesamino, explained how they provide and make available Braille for students and individuals both in school and home settings. They also work with teachers and parents in the promotion of Braille, and promote general literacy in Samoa. With only three trained staff, they also transcribe information into Braille, or vice

versa. PREB also provides extension programs in the field by training individuals who are blind or their families, as well as assisting those with low vision impairment in Savai'i and outskirt villages in Upolu. The UCEDD office will be working with the PREB staff to transcribe some of its documents and fact sheets in order to improve UCEDD's services for individuals who are blind here in American Samoa.



MISSION STATEMENT

ACRONYMS/MEANINGS

- ASCC:** American Samoa Community College
- PREB:** Prevention, Rehabilitation & Education for the Blind
- DD:** Developmental Disabilities
- GBS:** Group B Strep
- MWCSD:** Ministry of Women, Community, Social Development
- NOLA:** Nuanua o le Alofa
- NUS:** National University of Samoa
- SVSG:** Samoa Victim Support Group
- UCEDD:** University Center for Excellence on Developmental Disabilities

The University Center for Excellence on Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD) assures that individuals with developmental disabilities of all ages and their families participate fully in activities that will design and promote self determination, independence, integration and inclusion in all facets of life in American Samoa. The UCEDD will ensure the delivery and purpose of the Developmental Disabilities Act through culturally competent activities.

SEND US YOUR COMMENTS

We would love to hear from you if you have comments about our newsletter, or if you would like to be added to our newsletter list!

Drop us a line at: ucedd@amsamoa.edu

UCEDD

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