Activities of the American Academy of Pediatrics in the Zika Program of the USAID Applying Science to Strengthen and Improve Systems (ASSIST) Project in the Eastern and Southern Caribbean

Since the outbreak of Zika virus in 2016, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) has been a leader in the United States (U.S.) response. The AAP, through our Committee on Infectious Disease, Disaster Preparedness Advisory Committee, and other sub-specialty committees, has been instrumental in advising the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and partnering with them to develop interim guidance for diagnosis and screening of Zika. The latest evidence on the impact Zika may have on exposed infants was published in a supplement to AAP’s journal, Pediatrics, in February 2018 (Volume 141, Issue Supplement 2) which included up-to-date evidence on ocular manifestations, motor abnormalities, and epilepsy associated with Zika infection as well as the possible long-term impact on public health and care. In addition, the AAP has disseminated the AAP/CDC guidelines through webinars on screening, diagnosing, evaluating, and managing Zika virus infection in infants and children and has produced tools and resources in coordination with CDC. Since February 2017, the AAP has held regularly occurring Zika Extension for Community Healthcare Outcomes (ECHO) tele-mentoring sessions, which connect a faculty team of experts with primary care providers in the U.S. territories most affected by Zika virus; over 200 physicians have participated to date. AAP’s tele-mentoring efforts have been complemented by technical assistance visits to Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, as well as remote technical assistance to the Health Department in America Samoa, to improve detection and adapt national guidelines to these low-resourced territories.

This report summarizes the activities carried out by the AAP in the Zika Program of the USAID Applying Science to Strengthen and Improve Systems (ASSIST) Project in the Eastern and Southern Caribbean.

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