

Vinita Leedom, PhD, MPH, PMP

Blythewood, SC • vinita@optimumapex.com • optimumapex.com

EDUCATION

- Doctor of Philosophy (PhD), Health Services Policy & Management** 2023
University of South Carolina, Arnold School of Public Health, Columbia, SC
Dissertation: Barriers to preventive care and medical screenings among children with Down syndrome in South Carolina
- Master of Public Health (MPH)** 2011
Tulane University, School of Public Health & Tropical Medicine, New Orleans, LA
- Dual Bachelor of Arts in French and International Studies** 2007
Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA

ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

- Adjunct Faculty, Healthcare Administration** Oct 2025 – Present
Columbia International University, Columbia, SC
Teaches graduate healthcare administration coursework; mentors students into healthcare leadership roles.
- Adjunct Faculty and Doctoral Committee Chair** May 2026 – Present
Liberty University, School of Health Sciences, Lynchburg, VA (Remote)
Designs graduate Maternal and Child Health Policy course; chairs doctoral dissertation committees.
- Curriculum Design Contractor, Rural Health** May 2026 – Present
Southwestern Oklahoma State University (SWOSU), Weatherford, OK
Designing graduate-level Rural Health course aligned with Quality Matters standards.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

- Founder and Principal Consultant** May 2026 – Present
Optimum Apex, LLC, Blythewood, SC
Public health and technology consultancy delivering project management, strategic planning, evaluation, research, dashboard development, and technical writing services to nonprofits, government agencies, and health organizations.
- Director of Cancer Programs** May 2023 – May 2026
South Carolina Department of Public Health, Columbia, SC
Directed the Comprehensive Cancer Program, Best Chance Network, and Evaluation Unit; supervised 30+ staff; oversaw a CDC-funded portfolio exceeding \$6.5M. Authored the South Carolina Cancer Plan; served as agency legislative liaison.
- Birth Defects Program Manager and Interim Director, MCH Population Health** June 2013 – May 2023
South Carolina Department of Public Health, Columbia, SC

Built and led statewide active, population-based birth defects surveillance, prevention, and referral programs. Managed team, strategic planning and program design. Designed and launched Early Intervention infant referral system; grew program budget by \$2.5M. Co-authored SC Title V MCH Block Grant (HRSA).

Healthcare-Associated Infections Manager

Feb 2012 – May 2013

Arizona Department of Health Services, Phoenix, AZ

Primary HAI liaison among CDC, AZ DHS, healthcare facilities, and community partners. Chaired HAI Advisory Committee; managed grants; supported infectious disease outbreak investigations.

GRANTS AND FUNDED RESEARCH: PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

- Cancer Prevention and Control Programs, CDC, \$6.5M (2022-2027)
- Advancing Population-Based Surveillance of Birth Defects, CDC, \$300K (2021-2026)
- Surveillance of Congenital Heart Defects, CDC, \$400K (2019-2024)
- Zika Virus Surveillance, Intervention, and Referral, CDC, \$600K (2016-2019)

Additional Grant Management and Federal Reporting

- SET-NET Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity (ELC), CDC
- Healthcare-Associated Infections ELC, CDC
- Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS), CDC
- Maternal and Child Health Title V Block Grant, HRSA

PEER-REVIEWED PUBLICATIONS

1. Leedom VO, Rasmussen SA, Kirby R, Scott GI, Porter DE, Friedman DB. [*Barriers to preventive care and medical screenings among children with Down syndrome in South Carolina as described by parents.*](#) Fam Syst Health.. 2025;43(2):311-323.
2. Shi H, Book WM, Ivey LC, et al. [*A generalized machine learning model for identifying congenital heart defects \(CHDs\) using ICD codes.*](#) Birth Defects Res.. 2025;117(2):e2440.
3. Neelam V, Woodworth KR, Chang DJ, et al. [*Outcomes up to age 36 months after congenital Zika virus infection, U.S. states.*](#) Pediatr Res.. 2024;95(2):558-565.
4. Martin-Giacalone BA, Lin AE, Rasmussen SA, et al. [*Prevalence and descriptive epidemiology of Turner syndrome in the United States, 2000-2017: A report from the National Birth Defects Prevention Network.*](#) Am J Med Genet A.. 2023;191(5):1339-1349.
5. Farr SL, Riley C, Van Zutphen AR, et al. [*Prevention and awareness of birth defects across the lifespan using examples from congenital heart defects and spina bifida.*](#) Birth Defects Res.. 2022;114(2):35-44.
6. Delaney A, Olson SM, Roth NM, et al. [*Prevalence of individual brain and eye defects potentially related to Zika virus in pregnancy in 22 U.S. states and territories, January 2016 to June 2017.*](#) Birth Defects Res.. 2022;114(14):805-811.

7. Romeo AN, Leedom V, Nance A, et al. [*Promoting collaborations to improve birth defects surveillance, research, and prevention: A joint editorial from the National Birth Defects Prevention Network and the Organization of Teratology Information Specialists.*](#) Birth Defects Res.. 2021;113(2):117-122.
8. Samson ME, Leedom V, Mai CT, Humphries B, Yeung LF. [*Evaluation of an active population-based surveillance system for major birth defects in South Carolina.*](#) Birth Defects Res.. 2021;113(2):128-133.
9. Smoots AN, Olson SM, Cragan JD, et al. [*Population-based surveillance for birth defects potentially related to Zika virus infection, 22 states and territories, January 2016-June 2017.*](#) MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep.. 2020;69(3):67-71.
10. Delaney A, Mai C, Smoots A, et al. [*Population-based surveillance of birth defects potentially related to Zika virus infection, 15 states and U.S. territories, 2016.*](#) MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep.. 2018;67(3):91-96.

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

- Leedom V, Revels K, Carroll T, Myer M.. *Birth Defects and Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI) Referrals.* Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs (AMCHP) Annual Conference. April 2023. [Oral Presentation]
- Leedom VO.. *Co-Chair, Health Disparities within Communities of Color Symposium.* Society for Birth Defects Research and Prevention Annual Meeting. Virtual. June 2023. [Symposium Co-Chair]
- Martin-Giacalone BA, Lin AE, Rasmussen SA, Kirby RS, Leedom V, et al.. *Prevalence and Descriptive Epidemiology of Turner Syndrome in the United States: A Report from the National Birth Defects Prevention Network.* Society for Birth Defects Research and Prevention Annual Meeting. Virtual. June 2022. [Poster]
- Humphries B, Leedom VO.. *Increased Body Mass Index and Birth Defects Prevalence Across South Carolina, 2016-2018.* Society for Birth Defects Research and Prevention Annual Meeting. Virtual. June 2020. [Poster]
- Leedom VO, Humphries B, Zielke KC, Kotagiri LM.. *Exploratory Data Linkage of Active Surveillance Data to Healthcare Administrative Data to Enhance Case Finding of Critical Congenital Heart Defects in South Carolina, 2007-2017.* Society for Birth Defects Research and Prevention Annual Meeting. Portland, OR. June 2019. [Poster]

HONORS AND AWARDS

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| Marie W. Taubeneck Award for Student Research | June 2022 |
| <i>Society for Birth Defects Research and Prevention</i> | |
| Doctoral research award recognizing outstanding research on children with birth defects. | |
| Chair's Award for Outstanding Public Health Service | May 2023 |
| <i>USC Arnold School of Public Health, Department of Environmental Health Sciences</i> | |
| Maternal and Child Health Catalyst Award | March 2023 |
| <i>University of South Carolina</i> | |

Student presentation award.

Associate Public Manager (APM) Certification

May 2018

SC Department of Administration

Leadership, Excellence and Achievement Program (LEAP) Graduate June 2018

SC Department of Public Health

Selected for and graduated from the agency's second cohort; subsequently served as keynote speaker.

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE AND AFFILIATIONS

Board Member

Jan 2024 – March 2026

SC Cancer Alliance

Member

2021 – 2025

National Birth Defects Prevention Network

Research Affiliate

Ongoing

University of South Carolina

CERTIFICATIONS AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Project Management Professional (PMP), PMI, #2692055
- Higher Education Teaching Certification, Quality Matters, August 2025
- Artificial Intelligence Fundamentals, DataCamp, June 2025
- Leadership in Remote Work, UC Irvine, February 2025
- Results-Based Accountability, Clear Impact, January 2025
- Evaluation 101, American Evaluation Association, Fall 2022
- Lean Six Sigma Quality Improvement, Greenville Tech, October 2013

LANGUAGES AND SERVICE

- Languages: English, Spanish, French, Hindi (additional languages in progress)
- International humanitarian service with orphaned children, India