Dr. Rafaela (Fafi) Robles “Mentor of Mentors” a life dedicated to the development of leaders and researchers in the fields of Substance Abuse and HIV in the Hispanic Community.

Dr. Robles had a Bachelor’s Degree in Sociology from the Inter American University of Puerto Rico, She continued her studies in Case Western Reserve University, where she earned a Master’s Degree in Arts in Social Administration. Later she attained a Doctorate Degree in Education in Sociology at Columbia University. Dr. Robles was a pioneer in the fields of Substance Abuse and HIV/AIDS research. She contributed to the development of these fields as a consultant, professor, researcher and director of various entities. Some of the entities where she collaborated include: Department of Health of Puerto Rico, the School of Sciences, Dentistry, and Medical Sciences Campus of the University of Puerto Rico, and the Mental Health and Anti-Addiction Services Administration of Puerto Rico. Dr. Robles founded and directed for many years the Institute of Research, Education, and Services in Addiction (IRESA) of the Universidad Central del Caribe, School of Medicine, which housed the Caribbean Basin and Hispanic ATTC from (1993-2012) and from 2013-2017 the National Hispanic and Latino ATTC.

Dr. Robles received several honors including: Most Distinguished Professor from the Graduate School of Public Health of the University of Puerto Rico n 1982; Professoris Eminentis from the Universidad Central del Caribe, School of Medicine in 1998; and Outstanding Mentorship Award from the National Hispanic Science Network on Drug Abuse in 2001. In 2007, Dr. Robles was acknowledged as n Honoree by the Latino Behavioral Hispanic Institute in Los Angeles, California for her dedication to helping the lives of the Latino Community.

Dr. Robles participated in several advisory board committees where she was able to contribute to the Federal Government’s development of HIV/AIDS and addiction research. These include: AIDS and Related Research Integrated Review Group of the Center for Scientific Review in the National Institute of Health (NIH): Expert Panel Minority HIV/ Substance Abuse Prevention; Executive Committee of the Addiction Technology Transfer Center Directors, SAMHSA/Center for Substance Treatment; Executive Committee of the National Hispanic Science Network, NIH/National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA); and the National Advisory Council on Drug Abuse, NIH/NIDA.

Dr. Robles, was a woman of commitment, strong convictions and passion for her work. We will continue to carry out her legacy of work of excellence based on dedication and commitment to the field, evidence-based practices, rigorous research, addressing issues of health care disparities and team work which was one of the keys to her success. She was passionate about her work and did not have time for regrets, when something went wrong one of her favorite lines was “deal with it”!