

BETTER HEALTH



DOH PLANS CONFERENCE ON PUBLIC HEALTH PREPAREDNESS



Photo PHP Archives

Above, a Strike Force member from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services administers an H1N1 vaccine to a student. Below, VI Department of Health nurses and staff work as part of mass vaccinations held by the Public Health Preparedness Division at schools, libraries, supermarkets and DOH facilities territorywide.

USVI – The V.I. Department of Health (DOH) Public Health Preparedness Division (PHP) will hold its first annual Preparedness Conference.

The conference, which is slated for November, will involve public health partners under Emergency Service Function ESF-8 that work to provide necessary medical services to the community during a disaster, according to Francine Lang, Director.

“The focus of the conference will be to heighten awareness of the need for our territory to be prepared to respond to any emergency due to our distance from any source of aid, and to enable us to communicate the roles that our PHP partners are expected to fulfill in such

situations,” Lang said.

As a small territory, it is critical that we join forces and share resources, if we are to be self-sufficient for at least 72 hours, which is the most likely period of



time that it would take for aid to arrive. ”

The conference which is still in its planning stages, will provide DOH with the opportunity to come together as a team to network and leverage the scarce resources each agency

has, which when linked together may provide enough to survive the most critical period of a disaster, Lang said.

The PHP Division was created in 2001 to improve public health preparedness capacity before, during and after public health events by ensuring coordination among territorial, state, and federal agencies.

Local and federal public health authorities have always played an important role in all phases of the emergency management system, including preparedness planning and hazard mitigation, emergency response, and disaster recovery. This new level of commitment to public health preparedness improves local capacity to respond to any health emergency. The PHP Program is funded in part by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services through the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

Cooperative Agreement and the Health Resource and Service Administration (HRSA).

Stay tuned for more conference updates.

*Submitted by Francine Lang,
PHP Director*

DOH Newsletter

Volume 5, Issue 1
September 30, 2010

TIDBITS

- June 2 - First confirmed case of Dengue Reported. Launch of Dengue Education Campaign territory-wide
- June 21- July 3 - STD/HIV/TB program hosts National HIV Testing Day activities
- July 10 - Breast and Cervical Cancer Forum held on St. John
- July 10 - Family Planning teen clinic begins biweekly Saturday program
- July 17 - Family Planning Summer Splash Outreach at Oswald Harris Court
- August 12 - DOH Health Budget Hearing
- September 1-30 - Public Health Preparedness Month; National Addiction and Recovery Month.
- September 28 - Dengue Fever prevention ad featuring Commissioner Sheen on local television and on YouTube via www.healthvi.org
- October 8 - Immunization kicks off flu vaccination outreach.

Inside this edition

<i>Ambulance Boat / EMS updates</i>	2
<i>Diabetes Control Initiative</i>	2
<i>Teen Clinic Kicks Off</i>	2
<i>Executive Staff / Employee Corner</i>	3
<i>National HIV Testing</i>	3
<i>Dental Clinic for kids</i>	4
<i>DOH Gets Grant Millions / New Mission</i>	4

EMS - Serving 24-7

Family Services Set to Improve Teen Health

USVI - The Family Planning Program hopes to encourage teens to take advantage of services by offering Saturday hours.

The pilot program, which was launched in July in the St. Thomas-St. John district and dubbed *Teen Clinic*, is being held on alternate Saturdays through December, said Dr. Marc Jerome, who serves as the Medical Director and is trained obstetrician and gynecologist.

The goal, he said, is to prevent teen pregnancies and STDs by arming young people with information.

"We are thrilled to offer Saturday hours for teens, because once the school year begins, they won't have to miss classes to seek health care services," said Health Commissioner Julia Sheen. "This is also a convenience for parents, who may not be able to take time off during the week to accompany their children."

Mercedes Reyes, Program Administrator, said that in addition to the *Teen Clinic*, outreach events will also be held in communities. A *Summer Splash* kicked off at Oswald Harris Court Housing community and despite inclement weather 21 people took part. The total included eight males and 13 females of which 11 were teens.

"This was just the beginning of something good," Reyes said. "I observed male teens bringing in their friends for testing."

Reyes gave kudos to the following employees: *Kisha Williams; Monique Warner, Loretta Andrews, Carmen Vanterpool and Patricia Sprauve for their team work with kudos to Nurse Vanterpool for their work with the event.* DOH employees from the STD/HIV/TB and Immunization programs also participated as did the community organization HOPE, Inc.

Do You Know?

An employee who goes above and beyond the call of duty?
Email eunice.bedminster@usvi-doh.org

The Emergency Medical Services Division (EMS) is on the move.

Several new EMTs are on board to serve residents and thanks to help from VI Lottery Director, Conrad Francois, and PFA Director Julito Francis, DOH was able to acquire two new ambulances for the island of St. Croix. EMS launched ambulance services, on a limited basis earlier this year in Bordeaux on St. Thomas and Frederiksted on St. Croix and the new ambulances will help beef up services on that island. Plans are underway to provide services in the Coral Bay section of St. John.

Moreover, in June, Governor John P. de Jongh, Jr. announced that the territory was a step closer to acquiring a state-of-the-art vessel, to aid in both medical and maritime emergencies.

This was good news for EMS as the new boat would replace the *Star of Life*, a boat that has been in use since being donated in 1991 by the U.S. Coast Guard after a seizure.



Photo by Jackie Greenidge

Above, one of two new ambulances recently acquired for St. Croix will help beef up services in Frederiksted. Below, Services began on part-time basis earlier this year following an MOU with the Fire Department to operate from its station.

The boat, a 45 ft to 55 ft catamaran-hull design, ensures a highly stable working platform and handles four to six stretchers and crew of five. In comparison, the *Star of Life* only accommodates



two patients.

The new boat will be responsible for providing medical support and transportation for patients from the island of St. John and is being built locally by Gold Coast Yachts with an expected date of completion in February.

Governor Praises Joint Venture on Diabetes Projects



Governor John P. de Jongh, Jr. is urging residents to take charge of their lives and learn more about managing diabetes through programs offered by a joint venture with a Danish pharmaceutical company.

DEEP or Diabetes Education Empowerment Program is funded through a partnership the Novo Nordisk Pharmaceutical Company and the Virgin Islands. The company pledged \$300,000 over a three

year period for projects aimed at reducing diabetes in the VI and will fund education programs for residents.

The Department of Health (DOH) has identified diabetes as a major focus among key strategic objectives for the next three years.

Epidemiologist Dr. Eugene Tull, who is also Deputy Commissioner for Health Promotion and Disease Prevent, said that the prevalence of diagnosed diabetes in the Virgin Islands

is 10 percent; undiagnosed diabetes is about 5 percent with the overall prevalence at 15 percent and is among the highest in the United States.

Data show that among people with diabetes, the frequency of end-stage renal disease is at an epidemic level and is reflective of poor diabetes control and low level of diabetes education. According to DOH's Behavior Risk Factor Surveillance Survey (BRFSS), 30 percent of residents receive formal diabetes education.

The Novo Nordisk funds will address educating residents. Tull and Anne Thurland, the Director of DOH's Bureau of Health Education, including Sandra Charles and Azalea Macedon worked with local organizations including the AARP and other government agencies to bring this project to fruition.

EXECUTIVE STAFF CORNER



Julia Sheen-Aaron, MPH
Health Commissioner
Julia Sheen, MPH

Numerous changes have occurred since I last addressed you from these pages. First, historic Health Care Reform became the law of land, forever

changing the landscape of preventative healthcare options for the uninsured and underinsured.

As part of health care reform, more funding will be available for the Medicaid Assistance Program (MAP). Currently, the Department is in the process of revamping MAP (see newsletters on website www.healthvi.org) to include raising the cap for qualification from \$5,500. Funding under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) and Affordable Health Care Act has also opened up funding for the Department to improve its infrastructure, establish a home visiting program and for youth substance abuse prevention.

Locally, we've made a few improvements in the way we do things.

The Department is now an *in-network* provider and now able to bill Medicare as well as private insurance companies at cost. We have also instituted electronic billing -- something that we had been unable to do for quite a few years. I want to thank all of the staff who were key in making these improvements. Our next step will focus on the restructuring of fees for the clinical services we provide as it has not been an increase in 16 years.

Other improvements of note include the hiring of a mental health director; a medical director for the district of St. Thomas-St. John; new EMTs to shore-up emergency services as well as an Asst. Health Information Technology Director who will work with Health Information Exchange so that our physicians territory wide will share health information.

By January 2011, we expect to have implemented an Electronic Health Record System (EHRs) to take advantage of the incentives under health reform.

We have purchased new ambulances and looking forward to the receipt of a new state-of-the art ambulance boat by February. Our outreach events, to include diabetes training; free testing on National HIV Testing Day; screenings for prostate, breast & cervical cancer ; immunizations

and annual health fairs have served the community well.

With the flu season upon us, we continue to educate residents about the 2009 Novel H1N1 virus and recall that exactly one year ago, we were awaiting the vaccines to be released by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to kick off mass vaccinations - at times via partnership with private and civic organizations - in a host of places to include our Health facilities, shopping centers, schools, and grocery stores across the Territory. Our posters are still readily seen around the territory's entry ports, hospitals, clinics and shopping centers.

Currently, we are facing a Dengue outbreak on the district of St. Thomas-St. John and we ask that you take precautionary measures and follow the advisories issued. I would like to thank the staff from both the Public Health Preparedness and Environmental Health divisions for their hard work in keeping the public informed.

Finally, we have a **Facebook page** and **Flickr** account on our website. Get your information to the Public Relations Office and help tell the world of our many accomplishments !

EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

Changes

Lesa Mc Farlane, Office of the Commissioner; **Delta Edney**, Environmental Health; **Sandra Charles & Azalea Macedon**, Public Health Preparedness.

Promotions

Robert Bryan, Janice Roberts, Lousilyn Morris, Victor Adams - EMT-Basic to EMT Intermediate. **Christian Harley, Kelvin Howard II**, Intermediate to Paramedic.

Welcome

St. Croix - **Dorris Farrington-Hepburn**, Director, Mental Health; **Dr. Moise Mamourette**, OB-GYN with MCH; **Latifa DeGraft-Johnson**, Family Physician, Community Health;

Nicole Fregiste, EMT-Basic, EMS; **Alric Gardine**, Paramedic, EMS.
H. Glaberson, Paramedic, EMS.

St. Thomas-St. John - **Karissa Cave**, Data Entry Operator I, STD/Operator I, STD/HIV/TB; **Rashida Francis**, Ryan White Title B/ADAP Coordinator, ST/HIV/TB; **Linda Clarkson, RN**, Staff Nurse, Mental Health; **Wendy Davis**, EMT-Basic, EMS; **Clarence Stephenson**, EMT-Basic, EMX; **Magabe Calixte**, EMT-Basic, EMS; **Michelle Saunders**, EMT-Basic; EMS; **Jacquelyn Parsons-Browne**, EMT-Basic, EMS; **Sonia Innocent**, EMT-Basic, EMS; **Lee Whitaker, MD**, Medical Director; **Lavida Joseph-Brown**, Prevention Coordinator, STD/HIV/TB.

NATIONAL HIV TESTING DAY

Take the Test, Take Control

The STD/HIV/TB Division held a series of activities leading up to and following HIV National Testing Day, observed annually on June 27.

Activities included testing at Seaborne Airlines terminals territorywide as well as various night clubs, made possible because of the division's recently acquired mobile units.

The Division also held testing in conjunction with Seventh-Day Adventist churches including an activity held July 3 during the church's Health Fair.

Health Commissioner Julia Sheen, in a released statement announcing the activities, said that while June 27 is observed annually as National HIV Testing day, "every days is HIV testing day."

"We encourage residents to live up to the theme and take the test and take control of their lives."

VI Department of Health

3500 Estate Richmond
Charles Harwood Memorial Complex
Christiansted, US Virgin Islands 008201

Phone: (340) 773-1311
Fax: (340)773-1376
E-mail: vidoh@usvi-doh.org

**We're on
the Web!**
www.healthvi.or



*To Reduce Health Risks, Increase Access to Quality
Care and Enforce Health Standards*

DOH Completes New Strategic Plan; Mission Statement

The Department of Health (DOH) has reached a milestone, in that it has an updated plan by which it can examine the overall strength and weaknesses of its operation.

Employees, including general, mid-level and management staff, took part in a two-day workshop with TSI Consulting Partners and provided input for a new Strategic Plan (SP), which had not been updated since 2001.

Why a Strategic Plan?

Studies show that companies with high strategic effectiveness can quickly formulate plans to implement immediately, review regularly and make adjustments based on what is working as well as focusing on results as opposed to activities. A new plan would not only benefit employees but services to the public as well.

DOH had not had an updated SP since 2001. Thus, Health Commissioner Julia Sheen-Aaron, following her confirmation delved into completing what she had told members of the 28th Legislature would be one of her top priorities.

The SP was completed in December 2009 to be shared with all staff. Sheen said it was important that the work was completed by a team as the SP will serve as a guide for the Department and used to evaluate its performance on an ongoing basis. At the end of the two-day workshop, employees developed a new mission statement: *To Reduce Health Risks, Increase Access to Quality Care and Enforce Health Standards*

Health Gets Millions In Grant Funds

The VI Department of Health has received over seven million in grants for infrastructure improvement and to fund programs benefiting the public.

In August, the Department received a \$500,000 grant or \$100,000 over a five-year period to improve infrastructure. Another \$500,000 was awarded to Maternal and Child Healthcare and Children with Special Needs Programs (MCH & CSHCN), under the Territory's healthcare reform initiative. The special funding will facilitate home visits to the department's clients, an expansion in healthcare services for new mothers and children.

This is the sixth grant award that the Department has received in the last eight months following successful applications. The funding will help improve healthcare services in the Virgin Islands as part of continued

efforts by Governor John de Jongh Jr. to make health care services readily available and accessible to residents. readily available and accessible to residents.

Earlier this year the Department received \$1.2 million for HIV medication and treatment services; a \$3.5 million grant over five years for youth drug abuse prevention; over \$600,000 earmarked from Congress which the Department will use to purchase two new mobile health vans to replace the Department's ailing unit for use during outreaches such as the free Breast and Cervical Cancer Screening activities held in William's Delight on St. Croix and Estate Tutu on St. Thomas and a \$1 million grant that would provide funding to assist in the planning and establishment of a Health Information Exchange (HIE) in the Territory.

Dental Health Services Available for Headstart

USVI - The Department of Health, in collaboration with the Department of Human Services, is providing dental evaluations for children in the Head Start Program territorywide.

The services include screenings, in-depth examinations and dental cleanings for children enrolled in Head Start as well as new and returning students. However, as part of the agreement between the departments of Human Services and Health, parents must schedule appointments through the Head Start Program.

Parents can call at 773-1972 ext. 234 or 235 for dental appointments in the St. Croix district and 774-5370 in the St. Thomas-St. John district.