

Image not found or type unknown

## DoD-IRT and DOH Serve Over 2,100 Residents with \$2.25 Million in Free Medical Services

The collaborative effort between the VI Department of Health and the DoD-IRT team resulted in the successful delivery of free medical services valued at \$2.25 million to more than 2,100 residents during the USVI Wellness Fair

Health / **Published On July 01, 2024 06:01 AM /**

Staff Consortium **July 01, 2024**

Image not found or type unknown



**Eye care at the recent USVI Wellness Fair** By. VIDOH

The V.I. Dept. of Health has announced the successful completion of the USVI Wellness Fair, facilitated by the Department of Defense Innovative Readiness Training Program (DoD-IRT). The event, held from June 1 to June 8, 2024, delivered approximately \$2.25 million in medical services to residents across the territory at no cost.

According to data from the DoD-IRT, the initiative provided medical care with an estimated fair market value of \$2,252,313. The military medical professionals served 2,112 residents and performed 14,256 procedures over the course of the event, which took place on three islands. Additionally, the service members received 28,967 hours of valuable training, valued at \$1,227,189.

"We are incredibly grateful to DoD-IRT and for the services provided to our residents. Their efforts far exceeded our expectations," said VI Health Commissioner Justa Encarnacion. "Our top priority is to improve access to quality healthcare for the people of this Territory, especially those who are uninsured or underinsured and face challenges in accessing care. Our collaboration with the DoD-IRT has made a significant impact in that effort."

The DoD-IRT team, comprising more than 300 personnel from units such as the 349th Aerospace Medicine Squadron, the 439th Aerospace Medicine Squadron, and the 184th Medical Group, arrived in the territory on May 30-31 with necessary medical equipment. Over eight days, the team provided medical evaluations, dental care (including fillings and extractions), complete eye exams with prescription glasses, and pediatric physicals and vaccinations.

Ms. Encarnacion assigned Dr. Tai Hunte-Cesar, Chief Medical Officer for the VI Department of Health, to lead the coordination effort with the DoD-IRT. DOH said the planning process, which took a year, involved close collaboration with the Office of the Governor, the departments of Education, Police, Human Services, Property and Procurement, Management and Budget, the VI National Guard, VI Fire EMS, Schneider Regional Medical Center, University of the Virgin Islands, and the Bureau of Information Technology.

"This large-scale event was the first of its kind and would not have been possible without the support of our partners across the GVI, the healthcare community, FEMA and other federal partners, and the generosity of the USVI business community," said Dr. Hunte-Cesar. Despite challenges such as power interruptions, reaching provider capacity, and supply shortages, the IRT collaborated with the local community to address these issues effectively.

Critical support came from Viya, which donated MiFi and Link devices for both the St. Thomas and St. Croix fair sites, and FEMA, which provided generator support. The healthcare community contributed medical supplies, with notable contributions from Wilson Healthcare Consultants, The Medicine Shoppe, Neighborhood Pharmacy, Diamond Pharmacy, Apotheek Pharmacy, Golden Rock Pharmacy, Mt. Welcome Pharmacy, Connor Dental Center, VI Dental, Dental 360, Plessen Ophthalmology, Roy Lester Schneider Hospital, and Juan F. Luis Hospital.

Local healthcare providers and centers, including Urban Foot Care Center, Paradise Chiropractic and Wellness Center, Dr. Luis Frais (neurologist), Tropical Behavioral Services, Frederiksted Health Center Inc., St. Thomas East End Medical Clinic, VI Diabetes Center of Excellence, the DHS Medicaid Program, and the Office of the Lieutenant Governor's VI State Health Insurance Assistance Program (VI SHIP), ensured continued care following the IRT services.

"Most of all we want to thank our residents for their patience and understanding while they waited for services and for sharing their words of appreciation with the medical team," Dr. Hunte-Cesar said.

Ms. Encarnacion supported Dr. Hunte-Cesar's proposal to bring the DoD-IRT medical mission back to the USVI and acknowledged her dedication to reducing disparities and ensuring linkage to care remains a top priority. The VI Department of Health has already applied for the DoD-IRT to return in 2025, and preliminary planning is underway.

"There is a tremendous need specifically for the services that will be provided, and we look forward to continuously working together in the future," Commissioner Encarnacion stated.

© Viconsortium 2025