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VI Department of Health Loses \$3.3 Million as Federal Government Pulls Funding, Affecting 12 Public Health Positions

The V.I. Health Department says COVID-19 and ARPA-linked federal funds are being pulled, impacting behavioral health and immunization programs. Officials say alternate grants will preserve mental health services, but 8 immunization jobs are cut.

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The V.I. Department of Health announced on Thursday that it has been notified by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services that several federal funding streams tied to the COVID-19 response and the American Rescue Plan Act are being withdrawn. The overall

reduction amounts to \$3,312,444, and affects 12 staff positions across the department's public health operations.

According to the DOH, the funding cut impacts two primary areas: the Behavioral Health Division and the Immunization Program.

A total of \$751,336 is being withdrawn from the Behavioral Health Division, impacting four positions — one case manager, two behavioral health therapists, and one psychiatrist. However, the department said it had anticipated potential changes to federal support and took preemptive steps to secure alternate grant funding. As a result, there will be no interruption to behavioral health services in the territory.

“The community will continue to have full access to the support and care provided by our behavioral health team,” DOH stated.

The larger share of the funding reduction, totaling \$2,561,108, will affect the Department's Immunization Program. This includes the loss of eight staff positions such as a licensed practical nurse and several community health workers. These team members had been central to plans for transitioning the Health Disparities Team into a broader effort aimed at improving vaccination rates across the Virgin Islands, according to the statement.

DOH noted that this loss comes at a particularly challenging time, as measles outbreaks have been reported on the U.S. mainland.

Despite the setback, health officials emphasized that the Health Department remains committed to its mission. Efforts are already underway to identify and secure alternative sources of funding to support immunization work and ensure continuity in public health services.

“Our team remains resilient, and we will continue to deliver essential services with the highest level of care and dedication,” the Department affirmed.