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Hand, Foot & Mouth Cases Plummet in the Virgin Islands After Aggressive Health Department Campaign

The V.I. Department of Health announced a sharp drop in HFMD cases, falling from over 270 in early 2024 to just 11 in April, thanks to coordinated education campaigns, daycare support, and partnerships with Education and Human Services.

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Following a recent public health response, the V.I. Department of Health has announced a notable decline in Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease (HFMD) cases throughout the territory. The coordinated effort, involving education, targeted outreach, and collaboration between various governmental agencies, has resulted in a sharp drop in infections, according to the department.

The outbreak initially surged between January and March, with over 270 HFMD cases reported, predominantly concentrated in daycares on St. Thomas. The rapid spread prompted an immediate response from health authorities, focusing on public awareness and effective containment measures.

By contrast, the latest figures from the Department of Health show a significant reduction, with just 11 reported HFMD cases across the entire territory during the latter weeks of April, DOH said.

Health Commissioner Justa Encarnacion attributed this dramatic decrease to the swift and collective actions implemented by the department and its partners. She highlighted the successful strategies deployed, including an informative, parent-friendly explainer video, direct support from the Epidemiology Division to affected schools and daycare centers, and robust interagency cooperation with the departments of Education and Human Services to ensure essential information reached parents and educational staff promptly.

“We are grateful for the partnership and immediate action of our team and supporting agencies,” Commissioner Encarnacion stated. “This is a strong example of how timely education, targeted outreach, and proper hygiene can protect our children and contain the spread of illness.”

DOH stressed the continued importance of vigilant hygiene practices, particularly in educational and childcare settings, to sustain the gains made. Parents and caregivers have been advised to monitor children closely for HFMD symptoms, which typically include fever, sore throat, mouth sores, and rashes on the hands and feet. The DOH recommends keeping affected children at home to prevent further transmission.

Furthermore, schools and childcare providers are encouraged to maintain active communication with the Epidemiology Division by reporting any suspected cases to epi@doh.vi.gov.

The Department of Health assured the public of its ongoing monitoring efforts and its readiness to offer further guidance as needed. To access more detailed information about Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease, along with effective prevention and care strategies, residents can visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's resource page at <https://www.cdc.gov/hand-foot-mouth/about/index.html>.