The Virgin Islands Consortium

Blue Cross Blue Shield Proposes Individual Health Insurance Plans In the Virgin Islands

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Blue Cross Blue Shield (BCBS) has made a proposal to offer individual health insurance policies in the U.S. Virgin Islands through a three-tier product featuring bronze, silver and gold membership plans, Government House has made known in a recently released press release.

The proposal was submitted to the Division of Banking and Insurance in the Office of the Lieutenant Governor, and aims to cover "the segment of our community who are not covered by a group policy or Medicaid, and currently cannot obtain or purchase any individual insurance policies in the local market," the release said.

BCBS officials and VI Equicare met recently to continue ongoing discussions about individual health insurance in the territory. Of the discussions, Taetia Dorsett, health policy advisor in the Office of the Governor, said, "Eventual access to this policy is highly dependent on the local private physician community and both hospitals and community health centers to negotiate terms acceptable to BCBS and that will be approved by the Insurance Commissioner, and this is why our round table of discussions are so critical."

Governor de Jongh said his Administration has adopted the approach of the Affordable Health Care Act that has allowed it to reach uninsured and financially strapped residents. He revealed government officials have spoken to various health insurance providers who have shown interest in launching products in the local market, and have encouraged those carriers to review a study the government conducted in 2013 in order to price their products at a competitive rate and keep it low.

"While we were not afforded the option of a suitable premium assistance federal subsidy to cover our costs or parity on cost-sharing, we have embraced the objectives of the Affordable Care Act with an approach that has broadened our reach to those that are uninsured and required financial support," de Jongh said. "This is being achieved with the current phases of Medicaid Expansion. Yet, we have outreached to various carriers that have expressed interest in launching a product to review the results of the actuarial study completed in 2013 to competitively price their product and keep it affordable.

"This is what BCBS has sought to achieve by proposing a tier medal plan individual product via bronze, silver and gold plans. John McDonald, the Banking and Insurance Director, and Taetia Dorsett are working closely with both parties to reach consensus on a product that is affordable and meets the needs of our community," de Jongh said.

Those who attended the discussions include: Dr. George Rosenberg, President/CEO of VI Equicare, Inc., Dynel Soto, Director, VI Equicare, Inc., Dr. Frank Odlum, member of VI Equicare, Inc., Wilfredo Rabelo Millan, Network Management Division Director, BCBS, Omar Haedo of Elan Insurance Solutions, LLC on behalf of BCBS and Taetia Phillips-Dorsett, Policy Advisor, Office of the Governor.