

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Potter Collaborates With ADA For Compliance Of Public Facilities

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ST. CROIX - On December 3, Lieutenant Governor Osbert Potter met with Commissioner Pedro Cruz of the Department of Sports, Parks, & Recreation, and with Jamila A. Russell, territorial American with Disabilities Act (ADA) coordinator, to discuss a plan to make all the public recreation facilities in the Virgin Islands ADA compliant, according to a release Mr. Potter's office issued on Friday.

Mr. Potter, who [initiated the Sports Parks & Recreation Adoption Team \(SPRAT\) Program](#) under the Office of the Lieutenant Governor, recognized the opportunity to improve the public recreational facilities through this initiative, according to the release. SPRAT is a public/private partnership designed to foster serious and long-term

relationships where public sports, parks and recreation facilities will be adopted, and as such, be maintained by private entities, ultimately to the benefit of the territory -- especially the youth.

Mr. Cruz said that there are thirty-five public sports, parks and recreation facilities throughout the territory. Many of these facilities are not in full compliance with ADA standards because they were built prior to the ADA requirements becoming effective, the release further stated.

The Act mandates that recreational facilities, including play areas, be ADA accessible. It also requires that newly constructed and altered local government facilities, places of public accommodation, and commercial facilities be readily accessible to, and usable by, individuals with disabilities.

Under the Act, the term "altered" or "alteration" is generally defined as any change to an existing building or facility that affects usability. This includes remodeling, renovation, rearrangements in structural parts, and changes or rearrangement of walls and full-height partitions. The ADA does not consider normal maintenance, reroofing, painting, wallpapering, asbestos removal, or changes to electrical and mechanical systems to be alterations unless they affect usability.

"Meeting with Commissioner Cruz and Ms. Russell, it is clear that we have a long way to go with making facilities ADA compliant," the territory's second in command said.

"However, this goal is doable and very necessary. We will be doing a full evaluation of the ADA compliance status to include restroom facilities and bleachers. We will continue to seek the private sector's assistance under the SPRAT program and apprise them of the needs for ADA compliance with each facility that is under consideration for adoption."

According to the release, Mr. Potter will have a follow-up meeting with Mr. Cruz and Ms. Russell after a full assessment of each facility has been completed, which is slated for the end of January, 2016.

For more information on ADA, visit www.ada.gov. Persons interested in adopting facilities under the SPRAT program should contact Diana Brown in the Office of the Lieutenant Governor at 340-774-2991, extension 4114.