

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Judgement Day Nears For Juan Luis Hospital As CMS Begins Inspection

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ST. CROIX -- The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid (CMS) arrived here on Monday morning and is already conducting its inspection of the Juan F. Luis Hospital and Medical Center -- expected to last for one week -- as the federal agency readies its decision on whether to bless the hospital with accreditation, completely decertify the facility, or give more time for compliance.

The Consortium was informed of CMS' arrival by a well-placed source just before 10:00 a.m. this morning. At 1:36 p.m., Senator Kurt Vialet, chairman of the Committee on Health, Hospital & Human Services, issued a press release welcoming the agency, and at 4:34 this afternoon, JFL's Public Information Officer, Erica Parsons, issued a press

release notifying the media of the team's arrival.

CMS pulled its accreditation from the facility in September, 2014, informing the hospital that it would no longer continue reimbursement payments to JFL as of Oct. 9 of that year. The loss of accreditation was attributed to multiple scenarios; most pointedly was the facility's budget being halved from about \$33 million in 2008 to about \$17 million in 2014. The budget cuts had forced JFL to cut back in key departments, producing a chain reaction leading to the lack of staff to perform critical tasks, nursing deficiencies and other problems.

But after heavy lobbying by local leaders, including then-Delegate to Congress Donna M. Christensen, and efforts by the hospital's staff led by former CEO Kendall Griffith, [who recently resigned](#), a [Systems Improvement Agreement](#) (SIA) was signed between JFL and CMS that gave the hospital until August, 2015 to come into compliance. That agreement was [later extended](#) to December, 2015.

According to JFL's release, a five-member team arrived at the hospital this morning to conduct what is being referred to as a Conditions of Participation hospital survey. The release further revealed that the inspectors will be looking at JFL's improvements, and the efforts the hospital's team has put into the SIA to achieve compliance, as well as sustaining that compliance. The surveyors, the release went on, would not be taking questions from the media.

Mr. Violet, a strong advocate for JFL, said he believes the hospital has made tremendous strides, and that many positive changes have taken place over the last year.

And the medical facility should pass the test well beyond average; if hospital officials are to be believed. Because on numerous occasions, they have claimed to be ready.

"We are on full alert," [said Dr. Griffith in August](#) in regards to CMS. "We are in a state of readiness and we're expecting them any day now. And I have to say that we feel very confident that we are ready for the survey."

Feature Image: Outside shot of part of the Juan F. Luis Hospital and Medical Center.

Image Credit: VIC.