

The Virgin Islands Consortium

U.S. Department Of Health And Human Services Officials In Territory Evaluating 'Areas Of Need And Opportunity'

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ST. THOMAS -- Officials of the United States Department of Health and Human Services are currently visiting the territory to evaluate "areas of need and opportunity," Government House has said. D.H.H.S. Assistant Secretary Mark Greenberg and Region II Administrator Joyce Thomas are keeping a busy schedule of meetings with appropriate local officials in both St. Thomas and St. Croix through Wednesday. They met with Governor Kenneth Mapp today at Government House here.

It is the first visit to the Virgin Islands by Assistant Secretary Greenberg, who said he is here to listen and learn how the Administration for Children and Families can help support local programs established to improve the quality of life for their clients. The Virgin Islands receives \$15 million in human services grants, and \$10 million in grants to assist child support collection efforts annually. One of the meetings the visiting officials attended was with Attorney General Claude Walker, the top local official enforcing child support payment requirements.

The meeting with Mr. Mapp focused on child care, homelessness, and the Head Start Project. Ms. Thomas credited the governor for his “leadership and personal interest,” which she said helped to get the Head start Project in Frederiksted off the ground. The program now serves 200 children in 10 classrooms.

Ms. Thomas said that the Region II office in New York has been working closely with the VI Department of Human Services and the Department of Justice to support families and children, and that she is “thrilled that Assistant Secretary Greenberg is here to see that good working partnership.”

After today’s meetings with the governor, DHS Commissioner Vivian Fludd and Attorney General Claude Walker, along with the D.H.H.S. team will travel to St. Croix on Wednesday. According to Ms. Thomas, federal officials are interested in learning how families and children have been impacted following the closing of the former Hovensa oil refinery four years ago. She said her team also wants to meet with representatives of the Interagency Council on Homelessness.

Feature Image: From left to right: Mark Greenberg and Joyce Thomas. (Credit: Government House)