

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Governor Mapp Declares State Of Emergency In Mental Health Care

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ST. THOMAS -- A state of emergency in mental health care has been declared by Virgin Islands Governor Kenneth Mapp, Government House announced late Friday.

Noting the need to facilitate immediate emergency delivery of acute and chronic mental health services throughout the territory, the governor is suspending temporarily statutory and contractual limitations on conditions of employment and compensation for retired psychiatric physicians. This will allow the Schneider Regional Medical Center, the Governor Juan F. Luis Hospital, and the Department of Health to increase the now inadequate number of psychiatrists by rehiring retirees or by recruiting from other jurisdictions, and will permit a competitive level of compensation.

Mr. Mapp's order declaring a state of emergency in mental health care also requests through the United States Secretary of Health and Human Services the immediate deployment of the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps, or other Federal Deployment Programs, to assist in providing acute and chronic mental health services at the territory's two hospitals and in the V.I. Department of Health.

The mental health emergency declaration takes effect immediately, and unless modified sooner, will expire only after confirmation by the hospitals and health department that are enough providers of psychiatric care in the territory, or 30 days following the effective date unless renewed by the governor, according to Government House.