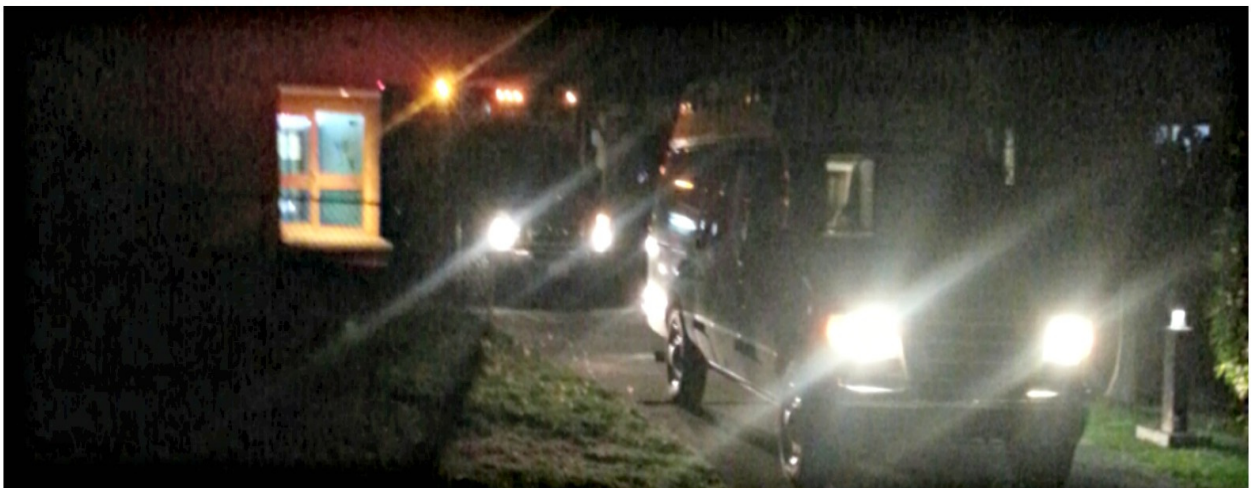


# The Virgin Islands Consortium

## D.H.S. Scrambles To Remove Patients From Sea View Nursing Home Following Federal Directive

Health / **Published On September 28, 2016 12:15 PM /**

Ernice Gilbert **September 28, 2016**



ST. THOMAS -- On Monday afternoon and into the night, government vehicles representing various departments and agencies descended on the Sea View Nursing Home here and began busing away the patients to other facilities, leaving some onlookers -- one of whom contacted The Consortium and even provided pictures of the scene to the publication, seen in the collage above -- concerned about what was taking place.

One day later, on Tuesday, the Department of Human Services (D.H.S.) Commissioner-Designee, Dr. Anita Roberts, held a press conference to explain to the media what had happened.

Turns out the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (H.U.D.), Office of Residential Care Facilities had given D.H.S. 24 hours to remove patients from Sea View and place them in safer facilities, citing multiple areas where the beleaguered facility had failed to comply with safety standards.

The facility [was notified](#) by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Associate Regional Administrator William Roberson in June, 2015 that CMS would stop reimbursements for medicare and medicaid patients after June 30 of the same year, because the nursing and rehab center "had failed to maintain compliance with Medicare requirements."

Ms. Roberts, in an interview with The Consortium late Tuesday, explained that D.H.S. received help from a surfeit of government departments and agencies -- including the Virgin Islands Territorial Emergency Management Agency, D.O.H., Department of Public Works, the Department of Justice, and others -- in removing the patients from Sea View, and placing them at veritable facilities.

According to Ms. Roberts, a CMS surveyor had been examining Sea View since 2013 and found the facility to be out of compliance during every survey.

"This has been going on for a while and as recent as May 9 and 10 of 2016, CMS conducted an unannounced evaluation of Sea View and again found that it was non-compliant with the CMS program," Ms. Roberts said.

"So at the end of the day, what has happened resulted in a settlement agreement between Sea View and CMS dated July 30, 2015, where CMS agreed to make federal payments for Medicare and Medicaid-eligible residents at Sea View until January 30, 2016. They subsequently entered into a settlement agreement where CMS agreed to continue the federal payments until July 30, 2016. So on August 1, CMS informed the former commissioner of Human Services that effective July 30 it would no longer provide any federal funding for the eligible and enrolled, and that's where we are: CMS has stopped funding Sea View, and Sea View has not been able to meet its financial obligation," Ms. Roberts said.

Critical issues cited by HUD in its [letter to Ms. Roberts](#) include the following:

- Facility is unlicensed
- Reports of severe cashflow issues that are impacting ability to operate the facility
- Bi-weekly concerns over funding of payroll and losing staff
- Numerous vendors not being paid
- Federal taxes and other liens on property
- Default on HUD-insured mortgage
- Facility has no professional liability coverage
- No plan to resolve current issues

According to Ms. Roberts, there were a total of 18 patients at Sea View, of which D.H.S. has moved ten; seven of whom were moved to the Queen Louise Home of the Aged in St. Thomas, and 3 determined to need critical attention were moved to the Roy Lester Schneider Hospital. Ms. Roberts said the hospital later determined that only one of the three patients needed the type of urgent care the hospital provides, so D.H.S. will move the other two patients to other facilities.

Ms. Roberts said D.H.S. is working overtime to provide new homes for the 8 remaining residents, and mentioned Herbert Grigg Home For The Aged on St. Croix as an option as well.

Critically, Ms. Roberts -- who said she once took care of her aging mother and is very sensitive to how the elderly are treated -- reached out to all the patients' families before moving them. She made known that the immediacy of the situation has led D.H.S. to take steps necessary to ensure speedy placement, but the commissioner said once the urgency subsides and all patients are adequately relocated, D.H.S. would begin a conversation with HUD and CMS -- calling them the power brokers -- relative to who's funding what, "so that we could get our seniors in a place where there's comfort."

She concluded: "I believe Queen Luis will be fine and more permanent. But we do need new facilities, and I'm working on that."