

The Virgin Islands Consortium

With Cost Of Health Insurance For Gov't Employees At \$165 Million Annually, Mapp, Davis, Head To Mainland In Search Of Options

Health / **Published On October 10, 2016 11:03 AM /**

Staff **October 10, 2016**



ST. CROIX -- Governor Kenneth Mapp, along with Department of Health Commissioner Dr. Michelle Davis, have traveled to the mainland to evaluate options for wellness programs that may be incorporated into healthcare offerings for employees of the Virgin Islands government, Government House announced via press release Sunday.

According to the release, the governor is seeking to identify opportunities to control premiums and improve the health of all Virgin Islanders. The current cost of insurance for Government of the Virgin Islands employees is approximately \$165 million annually, and

is estimated to exceed \$200 million by 2018, according to Government House.

Nationally, 86 percent of all health care spending in 2010 was for people with one or more chronic medical condition.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention defines workplace programs as "a health promotion activity or organization-wide policy designed to support healthy behaviors and improve health outcomes while at work." These programs consist of activities such as health education and coaching, weight management programs, medical screenings, on-site fitness programs, and more.

Workplace health programs also include policies intended to facilitate employee health, including allowing time for exercise, providing on-site kitchens and eating areas, offering healthful food options in vending machines, holding "walk and talk" meetings, and offering financial and other incentives for participation. Effective workplace programs, policies, and environments that are health-focused and worker-centered have the potential to significantly benefit employers, employees, their families, and communities, according to research.

"We love our food in the Virgin Islands and we need to teach our youngsters the importance of a healthy diet. As a community, we are struggling with high numbers for cancer, diabetes, cholesterol and high blood pressure. We know that diet and weight are significant contributors to these conditions and as a community we need to make changes to our lifestyle choices," Mr. Mapp said.

Government House spoke of the governor's Farm to School effort, which sees local schools using locally grown produce for meals. The territory's Farm to School effort [kicked off in earnest on Wednesday](#) at the Claude O. Markoe Elementary School with an event dubbed Melonmania. The program is a joint collaboration between the Department of Education and the Department of Agriculture.

Lt. Governor Osbert Potter will be acting governor during Mr. Mapp's travel from October 8 to October 21, 2016.