

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Local Clergy To Help Dept. Of Health Bring Healthcare To Underserved Communities

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Department of Health (D.O.H.) on Friday launched what it's calling the "Community Mobile Clinic Program", being executed in partnership with local religions organizations, according to the department. D.O.H. said it's partnering with clergymen in underserved communities and training them on how to refer patients. The department will extend needed healthcare to residents who might otherwise be missed by the traditional referral process.

One hundred and twenty members of clergy were expected to attend a training event, D.O.H. said, which took place on Friday at the St. Croix Christian Church. The church's pastor, Gary Moore, hosted the event along with the St. Croix and Pafford Emergency

Medical Services (EMS).

“Because local clergymen know the ailments of their members, they are in an ideal position to identify and connect congregation members who are in need of healthcare, which has the potential to be life-saving, improving the quality of life for our residents. Through this community partnership we will also be able to do outreach by taking D.O.H.’s mobile medical van into the community,” explained D.O.H.’s Paramedic Training Officer, Jackie Greenidge-Payne.

Currently, the mobile integrated health (M.I.H) program's main focus is on patients with wound care, congested heart failure, or diabetes; diagnosis of chronic diseases; and inter-facility transport. Recent Geo-mapping of the current M.I.H. program showed gaps in reaching chronically ill patients in communities like East End, South Shore, and La Valle. Through further analysis, “We realized that our target was mainly located within the Frederiksted area and those patients are chronically ill,” said Mrs. Greenidge-Payne. The Juan F. Luis Hospital, Herbert Grigg Home for the Aged, and the Department of Human Services are referring these patients, D.O.H. said. Many were also frequent and repeated patients from EMS.

The M.I.H. also aims to address gaps in the healthcare system by referring patients to a healthcare home, with their own private primary care physician. “In doing our assessments we basically realized that there were areas not being covered, and this is the solution to fixing it,” said Mrs. Greenidge-Payne.