

The Virgin Islands Consortium

School Monitor Training Focuses On Active School Shooters

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ST. CROIX -- The Virgin Islands Department of Education, St. Croix District recently held its annual School Monitor Professional Development training that primarily focused on effective strategies for engaging active shooters, the Department of Education made known Monday.

The intensive, three-day training saw participation from more than 40 of the district's monitors and was held July 11-13 at the St. Croix Educational Complex High School auditorium.

St. Croix Insular Superintendent Colleen Williams expressed the importance of the gathering.

"This training is important because it gives our monitors the technical skills, the hands-on skills that they need to be the security arm at each of our schools," she said.

At last year's training, the topic of active shooters was briefly discussed. However, due to the many occurrences of school shootings across the United States, Williams said it was important to give the topic greater focus this year.

"It's something that has hit the nation very hard in terms of the school system," she said. "Several situations across the nation where individuals are taking it among themselves to shoot up schools and many children have lost their lives."

While the territory's schools have not suffered such tragedies, ensuring monitors are fully prepared for any emergency is the goal.

"We always hope and pray that a situation like that never happens in the Virgin Islands, but we have to be proactive and expect that anything can happen at any time," Williams added. "So, as a result of that our monitors are receiving specific training on active shooters, what they should know, how they should handle themselves in the situation, being a support to VIPD or any other police authority that shows up."

Dr. Johnny R. Purvis, Lt. Jamie Booth and Captain Justin Tapley of the University of Central Arkansas Police Department facilitated the training. In addition to active shooter training, other topics included school law and social media, baton training, handcuffing, posttraumatic stress disorder, anger management, ground avoidance, defensive-takedown, and weapon defense disarming.

Monitors also had the opportunity to learn basic first aid skills, such as tourniquet applications, how to properly apply pressure to a wound and how to remove an injured person from harm's way in order to receive medical assistance.

As part of the training, monitors were required to undergo a mandatory psychological evaluation. Participants received a certificate of completion at the conclusion of the workshop.

"It's an opportunity for our monitors to hone their skills and be more proactive in terms of the kind of work they need to be doing in schools," Williams concluded.

In August, a group of four monitors -- Kevin Dowdy, Kysha M. Watley, Shaleem Williams and Don Cornelius -- will travel to New Mexico for a suicide bombing training.