

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Op-Ed | USVI On Cusp Of Health Information Exchange

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The U.S Virgin Islands is about to embark on establishing a Health Information Exchange (HIE). It is something we have been engaged in with several local, federal and non profit partners for almost a year, and now as the process is about to begin, it is important that the larger public be informed not only that it is coming, but on its benefits. Those listed below are taken from the US Department of Health and Human Services website.

Health Information Exchange: The Benefits

Electronic exchange of clinical information is vital to improving health care quality, safety, and patient outcomes. Health information exchange (HIE) can help your organization:

- ? Improve Health Care Quality: Improve health care quality and patient outcomes by reducing medication and medical errors
- ? Make Care More Efficient: Reduce unnecessary tests and services and improve the efficiency of care by ensuring everyone involved in a patient's care has access to the same information
- ? Streamline Administrative Tasks: Reduce administrative costs by making many administrative tasks simpler and more efficient
- ? Engage Patients: Increase patient involvement in their own health care and reduce the amount of time patients spend filling out paperwork and briefing providers on their medical histories
- ? Support Community Health: Coordinate with and support public health officials to improve the health of your communityElectronic exchange of clinical information allows doctors, nurses, pharmacists, other health care providers, and patients to access and securely share a patient's vital medical information electronically—improving the speed, quality, safety, coordination, and cost of patient care.It is important to further reassure VI healthcare consumers that while generic data will be used by the health department to monitor community health, prevent disease and better plan to protect the public health, the HIE will meet all federal privacy guidelines and that every patient will be in control of their personal information.

As the process ensues all healthcare providers will be involved to ensure that their needs are met, and the public will be kept informed and any questions or concerns answered.

We are excited about the potential the HIE brings to create a 21st century, fully integrated, patient centered healthcare system.

Submitted by: Donna M. Christensen, former USVI delegate to Congress, on Sunday.