

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Dept. Of Health, Public Works Assessing Land In Anna's Hope For Behavioral Health Facility

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The Department of Health said on Monday that it has begun initiatives to address the behavioral health needs of the territory, and that it would soon be announcing its new director for the Behavioral Health, Alcoholism, and Drug Dependency Services Division.

The department also said that it along with the Department of Public Works began assessment of Plot No. 184 of Estate Anna's Hope for development of a behavioral health facility.

The announcement follows Governor Albert Bryan's state of emergency declaration on mental health in the U.S. Virgin Islands, which enables the hiring of professionals in the

mental health sector by D.O.H. along with the territory's hospitals, according to Government House. It also clears the path for D.O.H. to ramp up its search effort for behavioral health professionals.

"Every week our behavioral health partners participate in weekly behavioral health steering committees. The conversations revolve around maximizing fiscal and human resources for the provision of services and establishing accountability between agencies in upholding respective responsibilities to the community. Tasks are assigned and weekly updates are provided," the department said Monday.

Mr. Bryan's declaration via means of executive order creates avenues to increase services that have been decreased in some areas and non-existent in others, D.O.H. said. The department said its goal is to promote mental wellness that can be accomplished through out-patient rapid responses to acute psychotic episodes.

"Overall, the Department of Health is excited for the opportunities to continue serving the Virgin Islands community," said D.O.H. Commissioner Nominee Justa Encarnacion. "As commissioner, I am hopeful of the future of behavioral health in the Virgin Islands and look forward to providing you more positive updates in the near future."

The department also approached the Senate Committee on Health, Hospital and Human Services to relay needs and work to close gaps.