

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Dept. of Health Provides Hearing Screenings, Vaccines To Eulalie Rivera Elementary School Students

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The Department of Health's Maternal Child Health staff conducted hearing screenings and administered vaccines to 18 and 20 Eulalie R. Rivera Elementary School students respectively, D.O.H. has announced. M.C.H. staff visit elementary schools annually to provide care directly to children in need of health services.

According to the release, M.C.H.'s Adopt-A-School Program bridges the gap between students and the healthcare services they need. Senator Oakland Benta, chairman of the 33rd Legislature's Health, Hospitals and Human Services Committee, and D.O.H. Commissioner Designee Justa Encarnacion collaborated to bring necessary vaccinations to students on their way to junior high school.

Some students were referred by Special Education staff for suspected issues with hearing. M.C.H. staff conducted otoacoustic emissions (OAE) screenings, which are used to find out how well the inner ear works. If a child fails the initial OAE screening, they are referred to an audiologist for more in-depth testing, the release said.

"Since we currently have no school nurse, having Nurse [Jacqueline] Canton and the Department of Health's M.C.H. Staff here is a blessing," said Eulalie Rivera Elementary School Principal Loretta Moorehead. "This partnership with Senator Benta's office has helped us tremendously. These students having their immunizations done before moving on to the 7th grade is critical."

According to the release, Mr. Benta expressed how grateful he was to be able to assist students in receiving hearing screenings and immunization shots. "Thankfully, the Department of Health recognizes the barriers that exist in providing easy access to quality healthcare services to segments of our community. They were enthusiastic in their response to my request," he said.

The senator added, "Eulalie Rivera is one of the schools I've adopted. As Chairman of the Legislature's Committee on Health, Hospitals and Human Services, I plan to do more outreach and partnerships to ensure that health and wellness are fully incorporated in our schools and homes."

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, babies and little children get shots called DTaP to protect them from diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis (whooping cough). But as kids get older, the protection from the DTaP shots starts to wear off. This can put your preteen or teen at risk for serious illness. The tetanus-diphtheria-acellular pertussis (Tdap) vaccine is a booster shot that helps protect your preteen or teen from the same diseases that DTaP shots protect little kids from.

Ms. Canton, M.C.H. assistant head nurse and other M.C.H. staff have worked with schools like Eulalie R. Rivera and Alfredo Andrews, among others for the past few years. "We encourage parents to utilize M.C.H.'s immunization program for children. Vaccines save lives," Ms. Canton said.

Additional services provided by MCH include hearing screenings and prenatal services. For more information, call (340) 718-1311 extension 3875 or (340) 514-6839 on St. Croix and (340) 777-8804 extension 2600 on St. Thomas.