

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Dept. of Health Receives \$300,000 Grant For Hospital Preparedness Program

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The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has provided a \$300,000 grant to the U.S. Virgin Islands Department of Health as part of the Hospital Preparedness Program (HPP), Delegate to Congress Stacey Plaskett made known in a release issued Wednesday.

HPP provides funding and technical assistance to every state and territory to prepare the health system to respond to and recover from a disaster. HPP is the only source of federal funding for these efforts. The program also seeks to build capacity of healthcare coalitions -- regional collaborations between healthcare organizations, providers, emergency managers, public sector agencies, and other private partners -- to meet the

disaster healthcare needs of communities. HPP builds resilience in the healthcare delivery system by increasing their ability to operate and provide care during a disaster, saving lives and ensuring the earliest possible recovery of the system.

"When people experience a disaster, they may experience a variety of reactions, many of which are natural responses to difficult situations. Most people show resilience after a disaster," said Ms. Plaskett. "Resilience is the ability to bounce back, cope with adversity, and endure during difficult situations. Thankfully, resilience in disaster recovery is ordinary, not extraordinary, and people regularly demonstrate this ability. This grant will help with the resources needed to address stress and other hardships."

HPP appropriations have been cut in half from \$514 million in FY03 to \$255 million in FY17, including a \$100 million cut – one-third – in FY14. According official HPP analysis found that funding reductions have resulted in capabilities taking longer to achieve and an inability to sustain the progress that has been made, and the National Health Security Preparedness Index finds that healthcare delivery remains an area of vulnerability.

Given the criticality of HPP's funding to key preparedness activities, impacts of future budget cuts to HPP would have direct effects on awardee's abilities to perform and sustain essential health care system preparedness and response activities, according to the analysis.

Feature Image: Medical evacuees being transported from the Schneider Regional Medical Center to the Juan F. Luis Hospital following Hurricane Irma's impact on St. Thomas and St. John in 2017. The evacuees were soon after airlifted to Puerto Rico and the U.S. (Ernice Gilbert, VIC)