

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Behavioral Health Town Hall Scheduled for Friday Evening at CAHS as Part of Ongoing Effort to Tackle Mental Health Issues In Territory

Health / **Published On October 08, 2019 08:53 AM /**

Robert Moore **October 08, 2019**



ST. THOMAS -- Experts will be on hand Friday to discuss behavioral health issues and answer questions at a town hall-style meeting at Charlotte Amalie High School. The gathering goes from 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at the high school's auditorium.

The Virgin Islands Department of Health (D.O.H.), along with the VI Department of Education, Insight Psychological Services LLC and Mind/Body Health & Psychology LLC, and the University of the Virgin Islands are collaborating on the “Town Hall on Stress, Anxiety and PTSD.”

“We are encouraging all in the community who are interested in learning about what the department has to offer with respect to behavioral health to please attend,” said Government House Communications Director Richard Motta during the Bryan administration’s weekly press briefing on St. Thomas.

Mr. Motta said the town hall at C.A.H.S. is just a part of the administration’s push to increase access to mental health resources in the territory. Gov. Albert Bryan Jr. in February declared a Mental Health State of Emergency in the territory because of mental and behavioral health issues that may have been made worse by the passage of Hurricanes Irma and Maria in 2017.

Last week the health department celebrated the [re-opening of The Clubhouse on the grounds of the Charles Harwood Complex](#) on St. Croix. The clubhouse is, essentially, “... a sanctuary for individuals with behavioral health and substance abuse issues.”

According to D.O.H., the Clubhouse is the territory’s home for a “psychosocial rehabilitation model” used to restore lives by helping people with a history of mental illness in many ways.

Further, D.O.H.’s Encounter Program is preparing for launch, Mr. Motta said. The Encounter outreach program will send behavioral health professionals out into the community to contact people with mental and behavioral health issues. “They (D.O.H.) will do an initial assessment and try to connect them with the services that they may require.

“We know some of these issues are longstanding, and a lot more needs to be done,” he said.

The emergency declaration has enabled D.O.H. and the territory’s hospitals to begin recruiting and hiring professionals in the mental health sector. And it clears the way for federal funding to help with recruiting and hiring, the governor said at the time. The order will remain in effect until D.O.H. confirms that there are enough providers of psychiatric care in the territory, or for 180 days unless renewed by the governor.