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## Communication Accommodation Card for Deaf Community Launched By BMV, Office of the Governor ADA Coordinator

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rom left, VIPD Officer Alicia Chemont; St. Thomas-St. John Police Chief Steven Phillip; ADA Coordinator Julien Henley Sr., St. John Administrator Shikima Jones-Sprauve; Stephanie Brown; Deputy Police Commissioner Walwyn By. GOVERNMENT HOUSE

Government House announced this week that the Office of the Governor ADA Coordinator and the V.I. Bureau of Motor Vehicles (BMV) have launched a new tool designed to assist drivers in the deaf/hard of hearing community if they get stopped by police.

The Deaf/Hard of Hearing Communication Accommodation Visor Card was designed to be easily recognizable by law enforcement officers and to bridge any communication gap that can be

difficult for both parties, said Gov't House. The card carries the official seals of all government agencies that have peace officers on the staff.

“One of the final decisions was for VIPD to determine the best way to make this process a success,” said ADA Coordinator Julien Henley Sr., who spearheaded the project. “As one can imagine, having a communication barrier during a traffic stop can cause immediate compliance concerns, and a great deal could go wrong within five seconds. As such, all peace officers from various departments have been trained on its usage.”

“This is an important tool to remove communication barriers as we seek to accommodate all Virgin Islands motorists,” said BMV Director Barbara McIntosh. “We believe it is vital to communicate effectively, and this initiative will create a better working relationship with our officers and individuals in the deaf/hard of hearing community. The card is tool to improve communication and is not meant to replace the VIPD’s rules and procedures.”

According to the release, during the program, which took place at the University of the Virgin Islands on St. Thomas, Mr. Henley mentioned that the BMV has begun using a new Disability Parking Placard design and the requirements for where it should be placed inside a vehicle and now must hang from the rear-view mirror instead of being placed on the dashboard.

The new disability card design employs two designations: Blue placards are issued to persons with a permanent disability, and red placards are issued to persons with a temporary disability, Gov't House said.

Additionally, each recipient will be issued a Disability ID Card with the matching placard number and expiration date, which will assist the V.I. Police Department in enforcing the proper use of Disability parking spaces.

A similar numbering security measure will also help monitor the use of Communication Accommodation Visor Cards.

Mr. Henley extended his gratitude to those who worked collaboratively with his office to bring this important project to fruition including Ms. Camellia Williams, the Center for Independent Living staff, members of the VI Deaf/Hard of Hearing Advocates, Mr. Ricky Joseph, who assisted with the design.

Communications visor cards will be available to residents beginning Monday, July 12, 2021, and Disabled Parking Placards currently are available at any BMV office. To be eligible for either card, the driver is required have their physician fill out the Disability Application which is available for download at [bmv.vi.gov](http://bmv.vi.gov).

For more information, call the BMV at 340-713-4268 on St. Croix; 340-774-4268 on St. Thomas; 340-776-6262 on St. John; or send an email to [info@bmv.vi.gov](mailto:info@bmv.vi.gov).