

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Education Suspends Feeding Initiative in St. Thomas-St. John District Citing Rise in Covid Cases Among Food Service Workers

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The V.I. Department of Education on Friday announced the suspension of its 'No V.I. Child Goes Hungry' Feeding Initiative in the St. Thomas-St. John District until further notice, due to the rise in Covid-19 cases among food service workers.

The meal-distribution program was slated to resume on Aug. 23 across the territory; however, only the St. Croix District program will operate as planned, D.O.E said.

“The health and safety of students and staff are critical,” said Assistant Commissioner Victor Somme III. “This was a difficult decision for us to make, but with the recent rise in infections and the low vaccination rates among this employee population, the right thing to do was to postpone operations. We hope to reopen soon to provide warm and nutritious meals to students in the St. Thomas-St. John communities.”

According to the release, food service workers in the two districts have undergone a number of trainings around Covid-19 protocols since March 2020, when Covid-19 first began impacting the territory. Another round of trainings and workshops with health officials is planned for Aug. 18, D.O.E. said.

There have been at least eight confirmed cases of Covid-19 among food service workers in the St. Thomas-St. John District in recent months, with two of the eight occurring this week, leading to potential exposure to other workers.

The department said contact tracing and Covid-19 testing are being conducted by the V.I. Department of Health. While cooking has not resumed, food service workers in the two districts report to their campuses to undergo training and prepare their kitchens, according to the release.

D.O.E. said it continues to work closely with D.O.H. to educate its employees on Covid-19 protocols and encourage vaccination among employees.