

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Mu Variant Confirmed in Territory; Equal Covid-19 Deaths in August Than Previous 324 Days Combined

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Department of Health Infectious Disease Specialist Dr. Tai Hunte-Cesar confirmed the presence of the Mu Variant in the Virgin Islands and shared some worrisome death figures as there has there were 19 Covid-19 related deaths in August, the same number of Covid-19 deaths there were in the previous 324 days during the Bryan administration's Covid-19 response press briefing.

There are 193 Active Cases of Covid-19 in the Virgin Islands with 120 active cases in St. Croix , 68 active cases on St. Thomas and 5 active cases on St. John. The seven day

positivity rate is 3.05 percent. Ms. Hunte-Cesar warned “For each positive case there may be additional 10 or more people infected who they may have exposed.”

There are currently two Covid-19 admissions and no vented patients in Roy Lester Schneider Hospital and Juan F. Luis Hospital reports 6 hospitalizations with two patients requiring ventilators.

She confirmed a Newsweek report that reported the finding of the Mu variant in the territory. “We have previously reported that the delta variant is the dominant Covid-19 strain in the USVI and we have identified others in past sequencing, that includes Mu.”

Ms. Hunte-Cesar said after the latest Covid-19 deaths that there are now 61 territory-wide Covid-19 related deaths.

Ms. Hunte-Cesar shared Chris Finch’s, chairman of the territorial hospital board of directors, words about how the pandemic has affected the territory in August from the territorial hospital board meeting with the community.

She shared that he mentioned that prior to July there were no more than 5 patients hospitalized at a time Juan F. Luis hospital and in August there were more than 15 patients at a time for the entire month with a high of 20 Covid-19 hospitalized patients. On St. Thomas Schneider Regional Medical Center has reported as many as 15 hospitalized patients at one time.

Mr. Finch’s comments in regard to the recent uptick in deaths were shared by Ms. Hunte-Cesar. April 5, 2020 was the first Covid-19 related death in the Virgin Islands and it took until September 11, 2021, or 159 days, for the territory to reach 19 Covid-19 related deaths. It took an additional 324 days for the territory to record its 38 Covid-19 related deaths or the Virgin Islands next 19 Covid-related deaths. In August of 2021, just 31 days, 19 people died from Covid-19.

Ms. Hunte-Cesar said that vaccines have been available in the Virgin Islands for nine months and “it’s the best tool we have” and added “a little more than one-third of our deaths have occurred since the vaccine was widely available, it should be the other way around.”

Richard Motta Jr., communications director, announced that the week 8 winners of the “Vax-To-Win” Lottery were Diane Carol from the St. Croix District and Wubnesh Nelson in the St. Thomas/ St. John District.

Additionally he announced that since in Week 5 of the Vax-To-Win” drawing one of the winners only received 50,000 that there was a special drawing which saw two winners on St. Thomas, two winners on St. Croix and a winner on St. John received \$10,000 each. The two winners on St. Croix were Marcus Davis and Aida Rios, On St. Thomas the winners were Taffrone Testamark and Rosa De Cruz, and the winner on St. John was Donna Smith.

Child Tax Credit and Tax Returns

Mr. Motta said that last week that the administration mailed out more than 8,500 checks to Virgin Islands Families that qualify for the child tax credit. He did add “some issues with the US. Postal Services have been causing delays with that payment getting to you and for that we are terribly sorry.”

He added that if you qualify for that program then you should get five monthly payments of \$300 and you will get the balance of the child tax credit on your income tax return.

Mr. Motta announced that this week the Bureau of Internal Revenue and Department of Finance sent out an additional \$10.1 Million in Income Tax refunds to Virgin Islands residents. There were 3,753 checks in this week’s batch and should cover people who filed their 2019 taxes no later than April of 2020.

This follows last week’s payout of \$10 million for income tax returns.