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Following Errors and Confusion, Dept. of Health Clarifies \$250 Vaccine Gift Card Program, But Issues Give Rise to New Questions

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The V.I. Department of Health late Tuesday sought to clarify qualification criteria for Governor Albert Bryan's vaccine program after confusion arose during the initial rollout this week.

The VITEMA text alert system on Tuesday issued the following message: "\$250 vaccine incentive cards are available for eligible recipients at V.I. Dept. of Health CVCs [Community Vaccination Centers]. Reports to the contrary not accurate."

D.O.H. Commissioner Justa Encarnacion told the Consortium the department experienced some glitches but that by Tuesday afternoon the matter was rectified. She was not able to comment on what occurred to the vaccine data of St. Thomians seeking the gift cards who got vaccinated at

East End Medical. D.O.H. reportedly told those individuals that their information was not showing in the department's system. People familiar with the situation told the Consortium about missing data. It was not clear at time of publishing how widespread the problem may be, or whether it was a temporary error.

Until more information is available, the severity of the matter remains unknown, but it gives rise to questions regarding the integrity of the vaccine lottery process if the information of all Virgin Islanders was not part of the pool of potential winners. The commissioner is expected to provide more information on the matter.

Relative to the \$250 gift card rollout, D.O.H. said the cards are being distributed to individuals who meet the following criteria:

- If they received 1 dose of a 1-dose vaccine series or Janssen between August 9, 2021 and September 30, 2021
- If they received their second dose of a 2-dose vaccine series (Pfizer or Moderna) between August 9, 2021 and September 30, 2021

Those who do not meet these criteria are not eligible to receive a gift card and should not visit any of the department's distribution sites requesting a gift card. Examples of persons who meet the criteria to receive a \$250 gift card:

- Rihanna got her first dose of the Pfizer vaccine on July 22, 2021 and her second dose of the Pfizer vaccine on August 12, 2021.
- Steve got his first dose of the Janssen vaccine on September 15, 2021.

Examples of persons who do not meet the criteria to receive a \$250 gift card:

1. Nikita got one dose of the Janssen vaccine on March 15, 2021.
2. Jennifer got her first dose of the Pfizer vaccine on July 16, 2021 and her second dose of the Pfizer vaccine on August 6, 2021.
3. José got his first dose of the Moderna vaccine on September 4, 2021 and is not due for his second until October 2021.

Distribution is from Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. on St. Croix and St. Thomas, and 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. on St. John. These sites will issue gift cards through November 30, 2021.

Only those who are eligible or the parent of a minor can pick up their gift card. Minors age 12 to 17 are not permitted to pick up their card without their parent. However, parents or guardians are permitted to pick up their child's gift card in the child's absence, but must present a valid picture ID and the child's valid picture ID and birth certificate.

Anyone unable to pick up their card by the deadline, will have an opportunity to retrieve their card through September 30, 2022 by alternative means which will be announced at a later date.

Locations for pick-up are:

- St. Croix Community Vaccination Center at the old Nissan Building in La Grande Princesse
- St. Thomas Community Vaccination Center in Community Health at the Schneider Regional Medical Center

- Morris de Castro Clinic on St. John

A vaccination card, digital vaccination record, and a valid picture ID is required. To ensure a smooth process it is advised that individuals have their identification and vaccination cards in-hand before walking into any of the distribution sites, D.O.H. said.

The paper insert that comes with the gift card includes instructions and the card's PIN number. All recipients must read the insert carefully. The gift card cannot be used without the PIN number and a new PIN number cannot be issued by the bank.