

75 Gigs Monthly Data Allotment and One MiFi Box Per Household Not Adequate, Parents Say, Governor to Raise Data Limit, Implement Monitoring

Education / **Published On October 22, 2021 09:13 AM /**

Ernice Gilbert **October 22, 2021**

Image not found or type unknown



Governor Albert Bryan on Friday told the Consortium that his administration will work with Viya to increase the data allotment included on MiFi boxes for public school students, and may also provide multiple MiFi devices for households with more than one child. Along with these changes, the governor said a strategy may be formulated on monitoring the internet usage so that the devices are not abused on activity unrelated to school.

"We're going to up the max up the [MiFi internet devices]," the governor said, stating that he could see instances where the 75 gigabytes of data allotted to each MiFi device monthly would be consumed in less than month — especially in households with multiple school-age children.

The governor's comments follow inquiries from the Consortium placed to the V.I. Dept. of Education and Viya after the publication received messages earlier this week concerning data issues with the MiFi devices."

A St. Croix parent of four said her children have been falling behind on their education because the one MiFi box that D.O.E. provided runs out of data quickly. After the 75 gigs of data is consumed, the box slows to a crawl and is unable to provide the speeds needed for students to participate in virtual classes. This parent, who is disabled, described herself as being "religiously strict" in ascertaining that the MiFi box is only used for school work.

"I'm a strict parent when it comes to my children being on the internet. Religiously, my children only use their devices for school work," the parent said. "My children are on religiously for school [until] the ending of school and then there's an hour that I give them to get homework done. Other than that everything is put back up." The parent said her oldest daughter, a high school student, has papers to write and has to do research on the internet.

This parent also said that after placing multiple calls she spoke to someone at Viya who said the government was 120 days behind on payments. Viya refuted this claim. "Viya has had no issues with the Department of Education related to payment and no account was disconnected," the communications firm said. "Further, it is against Viya's business practices and policies for employees to discuss billing matters with individuals who are not authorized on the account."

The Consortium was seeking answers on a number of questions from the Dept. of Education to no avail, and therefore turned to parents, asking them whether they were having issues with the MiFi boxes, and whether D.O.E. provided boxes per child or one per household.

The questions, [published on the Consortium's Facebook page](#), was seen by well over 30,000 individuals and received roughly 70 responses. Overwhelmingly, parents spoke about the data limitations, contending that the 75 gigs run out quickly.

"I have 3 kids. All doing online. Received on 1 Mifi. It's ridiculous sometimes only one child can log in because it keeps booting out the other 2 due to too much internet being used. It's really ridiculous. Should be one per child to avoid all that," said Maria Robles.

"Same, 1 MiFi for 3 kids. Definitely affecting attendance, grades, morale....everything. Not working out at all," said Nayaz Wrld.

Duckie Dan stated, "They need [to] add more gigabytes if they only giving one per house . With one child it was a struggle."

Some parents said the MiFi device sometimes kick students off, while others spoke of connectivity issues that are oftentimes exacerbated by a person's location.

Viya said some MiFi devices at times lose settings for various reasons. "As such, Viya is committed to resolving these issues, if and when they occur, as with any other service that is provided," the company said.

On the data limitation issue that causes the MiFi boxes to lose speed after the 75 gigs of allotted data is consumed, Education Commissioner Raquel Berry-Benjamin appeared to suggest that using the devices for school work alone would not consume the monthly allotment. Instead, she reminded that the devices should be used for school work only. "We want to remind students and parents that these devices are to be used for students to complete schoolwork. Usage outside of

this may result in monthly overages, which can affect internet connection speed. We thank Viya for its ongoing support and partnership," she said.

Chief Executive Officer Geraldine Pitt said spoke to Viya's and the Dept. of Education's longstanding relationship. "Viya has a long history of supporting educational initiatives and we are pleased to assist the VI Department of Education in their efforts to keep students connected to online learning platforms using our high speed 4G LTE network with the Mi-Fi service," she said.

"We are very proud of the work that the VI Department of Education and Viya's team provides to ensure that our students have the necessary technology during a very challenging time in our history. We have and will continue to work diligently to keep the Virgin Islands connected," Ms. Pitt concluded.