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# Public-Private Partnership to Provide Healthcare and Support Services to Virgin Islanders Living With Diabetes and Their Families Announced

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**Woman Testing Glucose Level With Continuous Glucose Monitor On Mobile Phone** By. GETTY IMAGES

During the first quarter of 2022 hundreds of diabetes patients and thousands more who are indirectly affected by the disease will be able to access information and other specialized services about living and caring for others with the medical condition.

Diabetes affects almost 17 percent of the USVI population and Governor Albert Bryan on Monday announced a public-private partnership with the Virgin Island Diabetes Center of Excellence to address the problem.

“Today, we are pleased to announce a partnership to combat diabetes in our community. This is a program that will bring the services of true diabetes management right to your doorstep," Mr. Bryan said during a press briefing Monday. "It combines the use of telehealth, nutritionist and outreach plans equipped with teams of specialists to help Virgin Islanders live healthier lives and live those lives with diabetes."

“It also gives family members and loved ones the support needed to cope with the illness and make the necessary lifestyle changes,” he said while reminding citizens that earlier in the month, his administration committed \$1 million for the construction and operations of an independent dialysis center on the island of St. Croix.

Disclosing that more than 30 percent of Virgin Islanders are obese, the governor said that obesity is a precursor to diabetes, hypertension and other illnesses. “So, there is a need for us to get healthy and avoid medical institutions altogether. It is possible, so this is one of the main reasons we're launching the Healthy Horizons because as they say in most adages, an ounce of protection is worth a pound of cure,” he said.

“The key to management of this disease is helping our residents understand how to implement the tools needed to change to a healthy lifestyle and to live with this disease,” he said.

Ganesh Prasad, executive director of the Virgin Island Diabetes Center of Excellence who spoke on the vision of the new entity, said that a range of services with specialists in the field will be available and all services at the center will be free.

Health challenges linked to diabetes include vision loss and impairment, heart disease, strokes, kidney disease, and nerve damage. “The job for the center is to prevent diabetics from ending up in the end-stage problems or complications associated with diabetes,” he said while pointing out that services will range from providing lifestyle decisions and how they impact on those who are diagnosed with diabetes.

The Center of Excellence is a locally registered 501c3 nonprofit organization and it's currently located on St Croix with scheduled expansion into St. Thomas and St John.

“Our mission is simple: to prevent the onset of diabetes and its complications, health promotion, education treatment, and research. Our goal is to reduce the burden of the disease and improve the quality of life for all those who have or are at risk for diabetes,” he said.

The center will achieve its goal by focusing on several initiatives which include developing and implementing a comprehensive rural health outreach program to bring diabetes services to VI residents.

“This will include utilizing a mobile outreach van, outfitted with diabetes care services to include rapid A1C testing, feet, and eyes exams,” Prasad promised.