

logo not found or type unknown

Bryan Averts ICU Disaster at JFL: 'We Have Help, All They Had to Do is Ask'

Health / **Published On December 13, 2021 04:15 PM /**

Ernice Gilbert **December 13, 2021**

Image not found or type unknown



Juan F. Luis Hospital and Medical Center Emergency Room. By. ERNICE GILBERT/ V.I. CONSORTIUM

Governor Albert Bryan told the Consortium Monday afternoon that following meetings with Juan F. Luis Hospital leadership, his administration has warded off a potential disastrous situation at the hospital, with the administration providing funding to prevent the shutting down of the intensive-care unit because of severe staff shortages.

Following the meetings, Mr. Bryan told the Consortium, "We don't understand what the issue was. We have help, all they had to do is ask. They are getting the personnel they need." The governor further confirmed that PTS, or post-thrombotic syndrome patients would no longer be sent away

for care, as had been earlier reported by the Consortium.

Earlier today, Gov't House said that the matter regarding the intensive-care unit at JFL was fluid, meaning the situation was still developing. However, those comments were made before the Consortium's interview with the governor Monday afternoon.

Meanwhile, the V.I. Dept. of Health said it organized a meeting with JFL leadership this morning and was told that the ICU was in dire need of staffing, but that it would not close. The Consortium viewed internal communication regarding the ICU showing otherwise.

Elsewhere, [a post](#) on a Facebook group called "Traveling Nurse Jobs \$5,000 a Week and Up", reads, "ICU nurses (RN) needed in St. Croix USVI. \$20,000 for 30 day contract with option to extend. I am being told it will be 3 to 4 -12 hour shifts per week. \$1000.00 bonus if you can deploy in the next 72 hours. Travel, housing, per diem and vehicle provided. This is a 1099 contract. I am not the recruiter, I am passing along information. I do not have specific salary or contract information. Send resume and any questions to the recruiter: nmoore@paffordems.com"

Government arms sprung into action following a V.I. Consortium [report Monday morning](#). People familiar with the matter told the publication Sunday evening that the ICU at JFL had basically fallen apart and would be unable to provide services to the community for at least four weeks. Additionally, a source with intimate knowledge of the situation told the Consortium Sunday that because of the lack of a functioning ICU at JFL, all PTS, or post-thrombotic syndrome patients would be sent off island for care.

During an interview Monday afternoon, D.O.H. officials said that while the staffing issues were severe, the unit would continue providing services and that D.O.H., which has regulatory oversight of the territory's hospitals, would provide support so that services are maintained.

"The department is assisting the hospital, the staffing levels of course to match the severe needs of the hospital," said Dr. Nicole Craigwell-Syms, D.O.H. Asst. commissioner, adding that the department would seek to mitigate the problems facing JFL, already under pressures on number of fronts.

JFL has been struggling to retain employees, particularly nurses, for a while, and the matter was exacerbated when the territorial hospital board mandated Covid-19 vaccination. To that end, Governor Bryan has provided [a combined \\$16 million](#) to help retain and recruit these essential employees at JFL and the Schneider Regional Medical Center. Mr. Bryan said earlier this month that the first tranche of \$3 million each was in the process of being released as the hospitals try to manage facilities that are lacking adequate staff and in turn straining those who remain to perform critical work.

The funding also coincides with the exit of many Pafford-hired traveling nurses whose contracts have expired or are nearing expiration. Those nurses took advantage of attractive compensation offers, including a \$20,000 a month package.

In October, Mr. Bryan acknowledged that the hospitals were under pressure, singling out JFL. "Right now JFL is going through it," he said. "Every single day we're looking for new ways to help them." According to a JFL schedule examined by the Consortium at the time, the hospital's Critical Care Unit had a shortage of 9 nurses from Oct. 3 through the 9th.

On Friday, the hospital [announced a permanent CEO](#) to replace Dyma Williams, who was the interim chief executive at the facility [since September 2018](#), steering JFL through the turbulent

aftermath of hurricanes Irma and Maria, and more recently through the Covid-19 pandemic.

An ICU provides essential services critical to any functioning society. They include the ability to closely monitor seriously ill patients; the availability of special equipment to aid in patient monitoring; stabilization and recovery; specially trained nurses working around the clock; the ratio of nurse to patient is usually 1:2 usually; and there are resident doctors on call around the clock, according to Kauvery Hospital, a leading, multi-speciality hospital offering best-in-class medical services for nearly 2 decades.

© Viconsortium 2024