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Office of Gun Violence Prevention Allocated \$2 Million; Person to Lead Office to be Announced Jan. 18

Crime / **Published On January 14, 2022 06:45 AM /**

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Crime scene on St. Croix By. V.I. CONSORTIUM

The Office of Gun Violence Prevention has been allocated \$2 million over a four-year period and the person to head that office has been selected but the name will be revealed on January 18 by Governor Albert Bryan.

Jenifer O’Neal, director of the V.I. Office of Management and Budget made the disclosure to the Committee on Disaster Recovery and Infrastructure during a Wednesday hearing when she provided the committee with an overview and [a detailed update](#) on the proposed plan submitted for federal funding under the American Rescue Plan Act.

An opening for the director position for the Office of Gun Violence Prevention [was still active](#) on the V.I. Division of Personnel website as of Friday morning.

“This \$2 million will be spread over four years,” Ms. O’Neal said while confirming that the Police Department will not benefit directly from that funding. “It is \$2 million for the Office of Gun Violence Prevention to deal with the staffing and the programs that will be coming from that office,” she said.

[Bill 33-0126](#), now Act [8423](#), was introduced to the community [during a June 11, 2020 Senate hearing](#). It authorized the creation the V.I. Office of Gun Violence Prevention within the Office of the Governor. The office, according to the Act will be tasked with formulating effective and innovative strategies designed to reduce and prevent gun violence in the Virgin Islands. The measure was sponsored by former Senator Myron Jackson.

The office will also “make recommendations to the Legislature of the Virgin Islands for legislation to strengthen gun laws and for initiatives that provide recreational, vocational and economic opportunities for young adults in the Virgin Islands.”

According to a description of the office's mission as seen in the Act, the office's objectives shall be met by establishing strong alliances and partnerships with the law enforcement community; social service agencies and organizations; non-profit and faith-based organizations; community leaders, including elected officials; concerned residents, victims, survivors, violence interrupters; private and public sector and local and federal government agencies and partners.

Among the staff of the office shall be an executive director, district directors, survivor engagement specialists, community engagement coordinators, analysts, an office manager, and violence interrupters, according to the law.

The office shall also help organize and take part in initiatives that bring awareness to the effect of gun violence in the community such as press conferences, marches, prayer vigils, town halls, community meetings, training, conferences, seminars, workshops, retreats, and healing circles.

The legislation also required that the office establish a resource line for referrals and counseling; liaise with the business community to assist the office in developing and promoting its initiatives; liaise and work with other entities and persons who offer programs geared toward youth development, delinquency reduction, and rehabilitation such as guidance counselors, mentorship programs and vocational programs, among other efforts.