

The Virgin Islands Consortium

DHS Partners With Dept. of Education to Introduce Important Program Aimed at Preventing Pregnancies and STIs

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Staff Consortium **March 14, 2023**



The V.I. Department of Human Services has announced that it will partner with the V.I. Department of Education beginning today commence a series of professional development sessions with DOE educators. The partnership will see participants being introduced to the V.I. Personal Responsibility Education Program (VIPREP).

VIPREP seeks to help Virgin Islands youths and adolescents gain skills on abstinence, refusal skills, and making proud choices. Educators territory-wide will gain skills in the implementation of this evidence-based program, which will take place virtually from 1:00

pm-3:00 pm.

Through the State Personal Responsibility Education Program (State PREP), the Family & Youth Services Bureau (FYSB) awards grants to state agencies to educate young people on both abstinence and contraception to prevent pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV/AIDS. The VI PREP project will replicate effective, evidence-based program models, and incorporate elements that have been proven to delay sexual activity, increase condom or contraceptive use for sexually active youth, and/or reduce pregnancy and STIs among the youth.

DHS said the VIPREP program will target services to youth ages 10—19, who are at high-risk for pregnancies. This group includes youth in or aging out of foster care, homeless youth, youth with HIV/AIDS, victims of human trafficking, pregnant and/or parenting youth who are under age 21, and youth who live in areas with high teen birth rates.

Programs must place substantial emphasis on both abstinence and contraception education for the prevention of pregnancy and STIs. The VI PREP project will also educate young people in at least three of the six congressionally mandated subject areas below:

- Healthy relationships, including marriage and family interactions.
- Adolescent development, such as the development of healthy attitudes and values about adolescent growth and development, body image, racial and ethnic diversity, and other related subjects
- Financial literacy
- Parent-child communication
- Educational and career success, such as developing skills for employment preparation, job seeking, independent living, financial self-sufficiency, and workplace productivity.
- Healthy life skills, such as goal-setting, decision-making, negotiation, communication and interpersonal skills, and stress management.

In a statement, DHS Commissioner Kimberley Causey-Gomez said, "The Department of Human Services is pleased to continue the great work that the VIPREP program has facilitated within the community through earlier rounds of funding. The opportunity to provide capacity building opportunities via the Department of Education serves to strengthen intra-agency collaboration and maximize manpower and fiscal resources. The positive impact this program provides to young persons in our community will have a lasting impact on the reduction of STIs in our community and leads to increased conversations regarding healthy intimate partners relations and peer-to-peer conversations."

The VIPREP Program is federally funded via Section 2953 of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010 (Public Law (Pub. L.) No. 111-148) established PREP. PREP is authorized and funded by Section 513 of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. § 713), as amended by Section 50503 of the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018 (Pub. L. No. 115-123) extended by Section 3822 of the CARES Act, 2020 (Pub. L. No. 116-136).

