

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Digitization Continues: Bryan Convenes Workgroup Focused on Implementing Telehealth Services in USVI

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Governor Albert Bryan on Wednesday continued his administration's efforts to digitize government by convening the first meeting of the telehealth workgroup to begin the planning and implementation of telehealth services in the territory, Government House has announced.

The workgroup, which comprises key stakeholders from both the public and private sectors, will spearhead the regulation and implementation of health information technology in the territory and will lead the coordination of telehealth services among healthcare providers, according to the release.

Government House said one of healthcare's fastest-growing initiatives, telehealth, is the use of mobile technology to extend the reach of physicians and healthcare providers beyond traditional clinical settings and includes video doctor visits and remote patient monitoring.

On Wednesday, Mr. Bryan said telemedicine is changing the future of healthcare and will prove critical to providing access to medical care for people living in rural areas like the U.S. Virgin Islands.

"We have a great opportunity now as we rebuild our healthcare infrastructure in the territory to ensure that we include telehealth services as a key component," he said. "Telemedicine can improve access to healthcare for those specialties with low volume and no provider readily available on the island and making sure that we put the right plans and infrastructure in place will amount to greater access to healthcare for Virgin Islands residents."

In its work to implement telehealth services in the territory, the governor's workgroup will focus on policy and regulation, including Medicaid and Medicare reimbursement, malpractice insurance coverage, licensing of providers, and the implementation of enabling legislation.

The workgroup will also focus on mapping out technical infrastructure, including assessing broadband capacity and access to broadband services, as well as planning disaster resiliency and redundancy.

The group will also focus on practitioner and patient readiness and expects to utilize available federal resources to fund the coordination of its activities, Government House said.

In October, the administration was awarded \$14 million from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services to build a Health Information Exchange for VI Medicaid recipients.