GOVERNMENT HOUSE
UNITED STATES VIRGIN ISLANDS

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Health Commissioner Stresses Importance of Self-Monitoring as COVID-19 Moves from Pandemic to Endemic Phase in USVI

U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS — During Monday's weekly Government House briefing, Health Commissioner Justa Encarnacion talked about the importance for residents to self-monitor as the Territory transitions from the pandemic phase of COVID-19 to the endemic phase of the virus.

In an endemic phase, a virus will always be circulating among the community in some like, like the flu or the common cold. Some portion of the population will always be positive for infection, whether they know it or not.

"We now need to shift our thinking toward self-monitoring," Commissioner Encarnacion said. "Right now, while our numbers are high and transition is likely, the department is asking everyone to become vigilant about self-monitoring and respond appropriately with mask-wearing and social distancing when in unsafe, crowded surroundings."

The Commissioner also said the Department of Health has aligned it's guidance with that of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) regarding isolating and quarantining for those who test positive for COVID-19.

People who test positive, regardless of vaccination status, must isolate for at least five full days and remain quarantined until there are no symptoms.

Those who have tested positive can come out of isolation once they have been fever=free for 24 hours without the use of a fever-reducing medicine, such as Tylenol. They also should take precautions for 10 days and wear a mask for the entire 10 days, especially if they are around persons who are immunocompromised.

It is not necessary to re-test for COVID-19 after coming out of isolation, Commissioner Encarnacion said.

Quarantining is for anyone exposed to a positive COVID-19 case, and there are three categories:

- Persons who are not up-to-date on having the COVID vaccine should quarantine for five days; wear a mask while around others and watch for symptoms for 10 days and get tested on Day 5, even if no symptoms develop.
- Persons who are up-to-date on vaccines (fully vaccinated and boosted) do not need to quarantine unless symptoms develop, should get tested on Day 5 regardless of whether symptoms develop and wear well-fitted mask for 10 days from the date of exposure.
- Persons who have had a confirmed case of COVID-19 in the 90 days prior to exposure do not need to quarantine unless symptoms develop, and they should watch for symptoms for 10 days and wear a well-fitted mask during the period.

Home testing

Positive test results from a home COVID-19 test should be confirmed, and confirmation is absolutely necessary if medical therapeutic treatment with an oral antiviral or monoclonal antibodies are to be prescribed.

Confirmation testing can be arranged by calling the COVID-19 hotline at 340-712-6299 on St. Croix or 340-776-1519 on St. Thomas. The hotline is open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday-Friday, and testing appointments can be made online at http://www.Covid19USVI.com/testing.

Free Vaccinations

The Community Vaccination Center (CVC) at Schneider Hospital on St. Thomas will be open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Monday-Friday and on Wednesdays on St. John at the V.I. Port Authority gravel lot.

Free vaccinations at the CVC at the Charles Harwood Complex on St. Croix are available by appointment, which can be made by calling 340-777-8227 or by going to http://www.covid19usvi.com/vaccines. Walk-ins also are available.

COVID-19 cases as of May 16

- 14.92% seven-day positivity rate
- Currently tracking 901 active cases (362 STX; 518 STT; 21 STJ)
- 54.41% vaccination rate in USVI (43.98% on STX; 46.52% on STT; 73.36% on STJ)
- There are 5 COVID-19 patients hospitalized, with one on a ventilator, at Luis Hospital on St. Croix.
- There are 11 COVID-19 patients hospitalized, with one on a ventilator, at Schneider Regional Medical Center on St. Thomas.

More COVID-19 information

The hours for the Department of Health hotlines will change beginning March 2 to 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Mondays-Fridays. Anyone who thinks they may have contracted COVID-19 can call the Epidemiology hotline at 340-712-6299 (STX) or 340-776-1519 (STT-STJ). For more information, visit covid19usvi.com.

For information about the COVID-19 vaccines or to schedule an appointment to get vaccinated, call the VITEMA hotline Mondays-Fridays from 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. at 340-777-VACS (8227).

Governor Bryan Congressional testimony
Governor Albert Bryan Jr. is scheduled to testify virtually before the U.S. House of Representative's Committee on Natural Resources at 10 am Wednesday, and he will brief the committee on the state of the territory, the Territory's priorities for 2022, and the President's Fiscal Year 2023 Budget Request.

The hearing will be livestreamed on the Committee's You Tube Page at http://www.youtube.com/user/NaturalResourcesDems.

The Bryan-Roach Administration is investing in the Territory's people, infrastructure and future through transparency, stabilizing the economy, restoring trust in the government and ensuring that recovery projects are completed as quickly as possible. Visit transparency.vi.gov

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