GOVERNMENT HOUSE
UNITED STATES VIRGIN ISLANDS

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Governor Bryan Relaxes Most COVID-19 Protocols

Masks Still Are Required and Modified Travel Portal Requirements Remain in Effect

U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS — During Monday's weekly Government House briefing on St. Croix, Governor Albert Bryan Jr. relaxed most of the COVID-19 protocols that Virgin Islanders have learned to live with for last two years as the Government of the Virgin Islands (GVI) sought to keep the community healthy and thriving.

While the masking requirement and the Travel Portal remain in effect, the Governor has eased them somewhat, allowing all travelers with valid vaccination records to bypass the testing mandate beginning March 5 and masks no longer being required in open-air spaces in establishments beginning today.

In addition, Governor Bryan ordered the return to full in-person learning in the Territory's schools, and businesses can now revert back to following the terms of the Licensing and Operating permits while still in compliance with masking and social distancing rules.

The new modified masking protocols are:

- All passengers and drivers of mass or public transportation, including but not limited to Vitran buses, taxicabs, and automobiles for hire, shall be required to wear a mask or facial covering.
- Masks are required in outdoor areas of all airports and seaports in the Territory of the U.S. Virgin Islands.
- Masks are required in outdoor areas of all schools

The Governor thanked Virgin Islanders for bearing with and persevering through the necessary steps to mitigate spreading the virus, but he also cautioned that the COVID-19 pandemic is by no means over.

“I want to take a moment this afternoon to say thank you. Thank you to all of you who have hung in there and did what was required to protect our community over the last two years,” Governor Bryan said. “We’ve had some ups and downs during that time, and we’ve learned some lessons along the way. We’ve taken steps forward in our path to the new normal and even took steps back when it was necessary. Today, we take one giant step forward.”

“In no uncertain terms, this pandemic is not over. COVID-19 is still a threat, especially to our elderly and immunocompromised individuals and to those people who are just vulnerable to the disease genetically,” the Governor said. “However, we now have the information and resources to mitigate the severity of this virus and its threat to our public health. With that, I am announcing today changes to our existing COVID-19 protocols.”

New COVID Protocols
Effective February 28, 2022:

Events

- Events no longer need COVID DOH approval. However, DOH authorization is required for events that gather more than 999 persons. Any non-Covid permits required by any regulatory agency with jurisdiction over an event are still required.

Bars, Restaurants and Nightclubs

- Restaurants, Bars, including restaurants and bars with a nightclub or cabaret license, food trucks, houses of worship, indoor recreational facilities, gaming centers, and retail and wholesale stores may operate according to their respective business licenses and permits. However, they must still observe masking rules and social distancing.
- You are not required to wear your mask or facial covering when seated in a restaurant or bar.
- You are not required to wear a mask or facial covering when outdoor or in the outdoor section of an establishment. To be clear, the outdoor section of an establishment in this instance is any section of a structure or establishment not covered by a roof, or a section covered by a roof but enclosed by less than 3 walls.
- You are not required to wear a mask or facial covering in the kitchen of a restaurant if fully vaccinated
- You are not required to wear a mask or facial covering at a DOH-authorized all vaccinated event.

Gyms and Wellness Facilities

- Wellness centers, fitness centers, gyms, tennis courts, athletic fields, and golf courses may operate according to their respective business licenses and permits while also adhering to the additional sanitation requirements for equipment.

Barbershops, Hair and Nail Salons

- Barbershops, hair salons, nail salons, and massage therapists may operate according to their business licenses and permits while also adhering to the additional sanitation requirements for equipment.

Nursing Home Visitation

- Visitation to nursing homes is now allowed with a negative covid test taken within 72 hours or with proof of vaccination.

Eviction and Rent Freeze

- There is no longer a moratorium on evictions, except for individuals under the Emergency Rental Assistance Program who are in compliance with all other terms of their lease.

- There is no longer a freeze on the increase of rent.

Government Operation

- Effective March 1, we are suspending all COVID-related telework agreements. All government employees are to return to work in person during normal business hours.

Full in-person learning

- The changes to the protocols make way for students to transition to full in-person learning, which will begin on Monday, March 14, 2022.

"We have come a long way in the last two years, and today, because of our collective efforts, we are here now taking this step forward to normal," Governor Bryan said. "I know that moving forward we'll be okay, largely because you, all of you out there, the vast majority of you at least, are doing the responsible thing."

USVI Travel Portal

Beginning March 5, the U.S. Virgin Islands travel portal at usvitravelportal.com will begin accepting valid digital vaccination records for all fully vaccinated travelers, allowing them to waive the COVID test results requirement.

"By next week, any vaccination will do. We just need to give the airlines enough time so we don't have confusion," Governor Bryan said. "We started that process today; by next Monday you just need a vaccination card to get into the Virgin Islands."

Tribute to Addie Ottley

Governor Bryan also ordered that flags be flown at half-staff from through Friday in honor of radio legend, culture-bearer, former Senator and Lt. Governor and beloved friend to tens of thousands of Virgin Islanders Athniel "Addie" Ottley.

"He was an extraordinary human being, contributing here in the Virgin Islands as a Senator, a Lieutenant Governor and a long, long, long just as an average citizen on the radio, helping being that voice from the storms," Governor Bryan said, noting Addie was his cousin.

There will be a service on Tuesday, March 1, at the University of the Virgin Islands Orville E. Kean Campus on St. Thomas, and on Wednesday, March 2, he will lie in state at the Legislature on St. Thomas and his he will lie in state at Government House before being interred in the afternoon.

On Thursday, the Government of the Virgin Islands will name the road at the Pueblo in Sub Base on St. Thomas in his honor.

HIV Summit

The Division of Communicable Diseases will host the Territory's first "340 Getting to Zero" HIV Summit from 12:30 p.m. to 5 p.m. on March 10 and from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on March 11 at the University of the Virgin Islands Albert Sheen Campus on St. Croix.

The summit will bring together primary care providers, allied health care professionals, primary care health teams, community health organizations, community health workers and people of the Caribbean who have lived through the experience of HIV.

Register for the free summit at http://www.bit.ly/HIVSummit. For more information, send an email to Robert.Thompson@doh.vi.gov or pcdc@hip@pcdc.org.

Hours for COVID-19 Testing
The Department of Health is offering testing for people with COVID-like symptoms or who suspect they were exposed from 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. **by appointment.**
Testing on St. John is available from noon to 3 p.m. on Wednesdays at the V.I. Port Authority gravel lot.
Pre-register for an appointment at covid19.usvi.care/testing.

Pop-Up Testing for Students/School Staff
Pop-Up testing is available for V.I. Department of Education staff and students from 3 to 5 p.m. on the last Friday of every month:

- At Complex High School on St. Croix.
- At the old Cinema One parking lot on St. Thomas.

Pop-Up Vaccinations
St. Croix – Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Market (formerly Plaza Extra West) and 7 to 11 a.m. Saturdays at Agriculture Fairgrounds.
St. Thomas – Tuesdays and Thursdays from noon to 3 p.m. at Cost-U-Less.
St. John – Wednesdays from 1 to 4 p.m. at the V.I. Port Authority gravel parking lot.

Vaccinations for Children 5-11
Appointments can be scheduled by calling 340-777-8227 or online at covid19usvi.com/vaccines.
St. Thomas – 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesdays and Fridays at the Maternal Child Health Center.
St. Croix – 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Mondays through Fridays at the Community Vaccination Center.

Please make sure to have a parent or guardian accompany any minor wishing to get vaccinated and bring an ID and birth certificate for the minor and ID for the parent or guardian.

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).

Vaccination appointments also can be scheduled online at covid19usvi.com/vaccines. The Department of Health will bring the COVID-19 vaccine to children and adults who are homebound.

COVID-19 cases as of February 28

- 3.00% seven-day positivity rate
- Currently tracking 95 active cases (64 STX; 26 STT; 3 STJ).
- 334,219 tests administered.
- 15,398 individuals tested positive.
- 15,194 individuals have recovered.
- 109 fatalities.

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- There are 2 COVID-19 patients, with one on a ventilator, hospitalized at Luis Hospital on St. Croix.
- There is 1 COVID-19 patient, not on a ventilator, hospitalized at Schneider Regional Medical Center on St. Thomas.

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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