GOVERNMENT HOUSE
UNITED STATES VIRGIN ISLANDS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 4, 2022
Press Contact
Richard Motta
340-474-2399
www.vi.gov
richard.mottajr@go.vi.gov



Health Department Offering Second COVID-19 Vaccine Boosters To Residents 50 and Older, Those with Underlying Medical Conditions

Slight uptick in positive cases a concern and a reminder to continue COVID-safe techniques; Health Department monitoring outbreak at Bertha C. Boschulte Middle School on St. Thomas

U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS — During Monday's weekly briefing, Health Commissioner Justa Encarnacion said that second booster shots of the COVID-19 vaccine are available to residents age 50 and older and those who have underlying medical conditions, provided it has been at least four months since they received a first booster vaccination.

"You're encouraged to get a second booster if you meet the criteria to assure that you have the best protection against the severe effects of COVID-19," Commissioner Encarnacion said.

Bertha C. Boschulte Outbreak
There currently is an outbreak of COVID-19 at the Bertha C. Boschulte Middle School on St. Thomas, and the school was closed last week once the outbreak was identified, according to Commissioner Encarnacion.

All faculty and staff were tested on Friday, April 1, and the approximately 500 students were being tested Monday, April 4. School nurses from eight schools were assisting with the mass testing.

Everyone testing positive has been instructed to isolate, and contact-tracing is being done for all who tested positive, and close contacts are being asked to quarantine to prevent further spread of the virus within the community, Commissioner Encarnacion said.

"This event is active, and thus we do not have numbers to share with you right now," Commissioner Encarnacion said at Monday's briefing. "As soon as the information is available, we will share it."

Eugene "Doc" Petersen
During Monday's briefing, Government House Communications Director Richard Motta Jr. expressed his personal condolences on the passing of USVI Culture-Bearer Eugene "Doc" Petersen, and praised him for "supporting and encouraging young people and his selfless nature when it came to imparting his wisdom and advice."

Director Motta also shared the statement Governor Albert Bryan Jr. issued upon learning of Doc's death this weekend:

"Yolanda and I join a grief-stricken Virgin Islands community today in expressing our shock and sadness on the passing of Dr. Eugene 'Doc' Petersen.

"Doc was many things, but above all, he was a true friend and ambassador for our rich Virgin Islands culture. Like many, I was blessed to have his friendship and receive his wise counsel on politics, horse racing, and other policy issues related to the arts and our Virgin Islands culture.

"He was always positive and enthusiastic about the progress of our community and unselfishly gave his time and wisdom to that progress. He was truly one of a kind and will be sorely missed. I ask that all Virgin Islanders join Yolanda and I in extending condolences to his loved ones during this most difficult time."

HUD Secretary Marcia Fudge's visit
Governor Bryan welcomed Housing and Urban Development Secretary Marcia Fudge to the U.S. Virgin Islands this past Friday when she visited the territory following on the heels of Governor Bryan's meeting with her in Washington, D.C., in February.

Secretary Fudge toured the Donoe affordable housing project underway on St. Thomas and the Celestino White Sr. Senior Citizens Residence in Sugar Estate, then hosted an in-person and virtual meeting with representatives from the Territory's nonprofits and offered HUD's assistance with their housing programs and initiatives.

Governor Bryan, who is currently out of the territory appeared virtually to open the meeting and welcome Secretary Fudge to the USVI, thanking her for her efforts at the highest level of the federal government on behalf of the Territory. Secretary Fudge opened the meeting with the nonprofits by saying that her next visit to the Territory will be to St. Croix and telling them that the president is very concerned about the Virgin Islands, as is she.

The Secretary spoke of a sense of urgency to spending the federal funding available to the U.S. Virgin Islands to accomplish the housing projects and recovery initiatives throughout the Territory, and she offered any necessary assistance to the Government of the Virgin Islands and the local nonprofit community at the highest levels of HUD.

DHS Reopening of Senior Centers Territory Wide

V.I. Department of Human Services Commissioner Kimberley Causey Gomez announced Monday that the Division of Senior Citizen Affairs' Socio-Recreation Program safely reopened the Senior Centers on all three islands. All three senior centers were temporarily closed for the health and safety of our seniors during the

COVID-19 Pandemic. Due to the restrictions being lifted in the Territory, all locations have begun providing socio-recreation activities to our elderly Virgin Islanders.

STRIVE Center, located at the DHS Knud Hansen Complex in St. Thomas, reopened on March 22, with a total number of 33 participants; Adrian Center on St. John, reopened on March 29, with a total of 28; and at the Christiansted Lagoon Pavilion, which is a temporary site, the St. Croix Richmond Center reopened on April 1, with a total of 75 territorial participants.

Inside the Cabinet/Press Box
This week, Government House's regular livestream programs "Inside the Cabinet" and "The Press Box" feature information important to everyone in the community.

"Inside the Cabinet," which is live on the Government House Facebook page every Wednesday at 6 p.m. and repeated on TV2 on Sundays at 7 p.m., will be hosted by Office of Gun Violence Prevention Director Antonio Emanuel, who will talk about the work he is doing with the National Network of Safe Communities in developing community strategies to address gun violence and his Office's newly seated Advisory Board.

Also this week, "The Press Box," which airs on the Government House Facebook page at 5:30 p.m. every other Thursday, features updates on recovery projects throughout the Territory from Office of Disaster Recovery Executive Director Adrienne Williams-Octalien; Public Works Commissioner Derek Gabriel; Education's Chief Operations Officer Dionne Wells-Hedrington; and Sports, Parks and Recreation Commissioner Calvert White.

Viewers also are invited to send questions in advance to GovernmentHouse@go.vi.gov or they can ask questions live during the broadcast through the Facebook comments on the livestream.

COVID-19 cases as of March 28
- 2.41% seven-day positivity rate
- Currently tracking 51 active cases (25 STX; 18 STT; 8 STJ)
- 349,812 tests have been administered
- 15,673 people have tested positive
- 68,292 first doses of vaccine have been administered
- 56,438 second doses of vaccine have been administered
- 111 fatalities.
- There are no COVID-19 patients hospitalized at Luis Hospital on St. Croix or at Schneider Regional Medical Center on St. Thomas.

Free Vaccinations
Free vaccinations are available in both districts at the Community Vaccination Centers at the Charles Harwood Complex on St. Croix and at Schneider Hospital on St. Thomas:
- St. Croix (ages 5 and older) – 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday-Friday.
- St. Thomas (ages 12 and older) – 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday-Friday.
- Pediatric vaccinations for children ages 5 to 11 on St. Thomas are available by appointment from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesdays and Fridays at the Maternal Child Health Center at Schneider Hospital. Call 340-777-8227 to make an appointment. Please bring IDs for the child and parent or guardian, as well as a copy of the child's birth certificate.

Pop-Up Vaccinations
As of March 31, 2022, the pop-up vaccination program will be discontinued on St. Croix and St. Thomas.

This includes the locations at The Market (formerly Plaza Extra West) and the Farmers Market at the Agriculture Fairgrounds on St. Croix and the Cost-U-Less parking lot on St. Thomas.

On St. John, vaccinations will remain available for all age groups from 1 to 4 p.m. on Wednesdays at the V.I. Port Authority gravel parking lot.

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.

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.

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

###