



GOVERNMENT HOUSE  
UNITED STATES VIRGIN ISLANDS

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## **Governor Bryan Asks Residents to Gather Safely and Responsibly for the Holidays**

U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS — During Monday’s weekly press briefing, Government House Communications Director Richard Motta Jr. asked residents to gather safely and responsibly for the holidays and to limit gatherings to 10 or fewer people if possible.

Director Motta reminded the public that one week into the Territory’s latest step forward on the path to a “new normal” to continue taking the necessary precautions and to adhere to the guidelines issued by the Virgin Islands Department of Health.

“These guidelines are in place to keep us all safe. This is particularly important as we approach the holiday season and as we grapple with increased travel to and from the United States while many of those mainland states are experiencing alarming surges in COVID positivity,” he said. “If you must gather for the holidays, do so responsibly and within the guidelines issued by the Department of Health. Limit your family gatherings to persons within your immediate household or to no more than 10 persons.”

During the briefing, Territorial Epidemiologist Esther Ellis listed a number of precautions and guidelines residents can take when entertaining during the holidays:

- Host gatherings outdoors if possible. If not, make sure the room or space is well-ventilated
- Arrange tables and chairs to allow for social distancing

- Have guests wash their hands before serving or eating food
- Consider one person to serve all food so multiple people are not handling serving utensils
- Limit the number of people going into and out of the kitchen or grill area
- Use single-use condiments or identify one person to serve sharable items, such as salad dressings, food containers and condiments to avoid multiple contact with items

A complete list of guidelines regarding the COVID-19 pandemic can be found at [www.covid19usvi.com](http://www.covid19usvi.com).

### **Medicare Advantage Plan**

Division of Personnel Director Dayna Clendinen also presented information about the Medicare Advantage Plan, to which all government retirees will be transitioned beginning January 1.

Retirees should receive a new United Healthcare Advantage card the first week in December.

Benefits to retirees under the new plan include:

- \$0 co-pay for all doctor visits
- \$0 deductible
- \$500 allowance for vision and hearing aid exams
- Free virtual consultations with nurses 24 hours a day, seven days a week
- Free access to fitness centers or gyms
- Gift reward cards for house calls, such as virtual preventative checkups

Under the new plan, Medicare Part D prescription coverage remains unchanged.

Director Clendinen also addressed a mass-mailing of a coupon book and a 2021 premium about the AARP Medicare Supplement Plan, and she clarified that unless a person has an individual health care plan with AARP, the letter and coupon book can be disregarded.

As United HealthCare transitions to the GVI Medicare Advantage Plan, beneficiaries may receive a termination notice; however, that does not mean those beneficiaries have lost coverage, Director Clendinen said.

For more information about the GVI Group Medicare Advantage Plan, call the Personnel Division at 340-774-8588 or 340-718-8588 or contact United HealthCare at 866-827-9022 or visit [uhcvirtualretiree.com/gvi](http://uhcvirtualretiree.com/gvi).

### **Unemployment**

- As of November 15, the Virgin Islands Department of Labor has received 16,952 applications for unemployment benefits and has processed 15,801 of those applications.
- To date, the Virgin Islands Department of Labor (VIDOL) has issued 45,883 unemployment insurance checks totaling more than \$36,000,420.
- The department also has issued an additional 28,096 Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation checks totaling \$43,407,300.
- VIDOL has issued 4,299 Pandemic Unemployment Assistance checks to self-employed Virgin Islanders totaling \$7,198,932 and \$2,413,449 in Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation.
- In total, the Bryan-Roach Administration has issued 79,691 checks totaling \$89,020,101.

### **Stimulus**

- The Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) and the Department of Finance began issuing the latest batch of CARES Act stimulus payments on November 10: 2,923 checks totaling \$4 million.
- To date, the BIR and the Department of Finance have processed \$82,602,604 in CARES payments to 50,636.
- The Bureau of Internal Revenue has extended the deadline to file a 2018 income tax return or form 1040 to receive a stimulus check to November 21. The Bureau will continue to make payments until December 31, 2020.

### **Laptops**

To date, the Virgin Islands Department of Education has distributed:

- 997 in the St. Croix District
- 670 in the St. Thomas/St. John District.

### **COVID-19 cases**

- Currently tracking 40 active cases
- 26,110 individuals tested to date (more than 25% of the population)
- 24,635 of those tests were negative
- 1,434 tests came back positive
- 1,370 people have recovered
- 23 fatalities to date
- No COVID-19 patients are hospitalized at Juan F. Luis Hospital on St. Croix.
- One COVID-19 patient is hospitalized at Schneider Regional Medical Center on St. Thomas.

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