GOVERNMENT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

PRESS RELEASE

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BVI Strengthens Child Health Systems Through Capacity Building

Release Date: 23 October, 2025



The Ministry of Health and Social Development has partnered with the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA) to strengthen national systems for growth monitoring, nutrition surveillance, and early intervention in child health.

To this end, an intensive week-long training was organised for public health nurses, nutritionists, and surveillance officers to standardize health assessments for infants and children. The training sought to ensure that healthcare practitioners across the Territory use consistent, accurate and timely methods to track child growth and nutrition, allowing for earlier detection and management of undernutrition and other health risks.

National Epidemiologist Ms. Harmony Brewley-Messiah emphasised that the training was a part of a broader effort to build local capacity and align data collection across the Territory.

Ms. Brewley-Messiah said that "Monitoring the growth of infants and children is the cornerstone of public health. We must have accurate, standardised data if we want to identify gaps early and guide policies that improve outcomes. Without data, we are essentially planning in the dark."

Participants practiced modern techniques for measuring height and weight, interpreting growth charts, and applying global standards while also discussing the need for locally relevant benchmarks that reflect the Caribbean's unique population makeup.

Public Health Nutritionist Ms. Patrice Maduro stated that the training highlighted the importance of a unified data system between public and private healthcare providers.
"Right now, much of our national health picture is drawn from the public system alone," she said, adding, "We need stronger reporting and collaboration with private facilities to understand our children's true nutritional status. That's how we create strong, evidence-based programs and policies."

Beyond skills training, the sessions revealed key gaps in data collection, reporting, and coordination that impact national health planning.

Ms. Brewley –Massiah further stated that the training represented more than professional development, and is part of the ministry's ongoing effort to create a healthier, more equitable Virgin Islands. "Public and private sectors must work together to ensure equity, accountability, and transparency for better outcomes across our community," she added.

The Ministry of Health and Social Development remains committed to protecting and promoting the health and social well-being of the people of the Virgin Islands through effective policies, sustainable programmes, and strategic partnerships that support a safe, healthy, and resilient society.

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