



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

April 18, 2024

Press Contact:  
Dynel Lang  
Office of Health Information Technology  
(340) 773-1404 X4862  
dynel.lang@go.vi.gov

### **Office of Health Information Technology (OHIT) Awarded \$1.3 Million in Federal Funding for Health IT and Digital Modernization in the USVI**

*Federal funding recognizes the critical need for digital health services in the Territory and the innovative, collaborative work by OHIT to improve care coordination and delivery for Territorial residents, many of whom have to travel out of the Territory for healthcare services.*

US Virgin Islands -- The USVI Office of Health Information Technology, established in 2021 by Governor Albert Bryan Jr. to coordinate modernization of health and wellness services in the USVI, has in three short years, significantly moved the needle on Health IT initiatives, as recognized by the awarding of these federal awards to further enable the development of a truly interoperable, technology driven health ecosystem.

Governor Bryan's vision for integrated, data-driven, coordinated health care has driven the development of the Office's Health IT Strategic plan which guides the Office of Health IT's efforts in three key areas: Educating and equipping provider and patients to use health IT tools to advance health and wellness; Coordination and implementation of interoperable health IT infrastructure to enhance the delivery and experience of care; Development of the local workforce through innovative partnerships and programming to provide technical training and skills to participate in the transformation of healthcare delivery in the USVI.

"These recent awards better position OHIT to support public and private provider goals and efforts to truly make person-centered, modernized and efficient care a reality in the Territory", said OHIT Director Michelle M. Francis. "We are hyper-focused right now on the USVI Health Information Exchange with key funding (awarded in February to Medicaid) and collaboration with CMS's Office of Medicaid within the Department of Human Services. The HIE and the Telehealth efforts we are supporting and promoting place the person first as they connect healthcare providers with a patient's medical data from a variety of sources and enable exchange and remote service provision of services to improve patient care and public health.



Care for Virgin Islanders is fragmented and requires extensive physical effort by the patient to chase down records, translate the care they have previously received and spend hours delivering scripts and referrals to other providers to ensure timely services”, she went on to state.

Local providers and residents have advocated for years that people should be able to focus on their health and trust that when they seek care, the technology is in place to connect all the dots of their care journey to ensure right medications, accurate diagnosis and the seamless, timely transmittal of information to all care providers.

Governor Bryan’s vision is for whole-person healthcare with more provider institutions and providers having certified, interoperable, and digital systems that provide more patient information and “one touch button” tools to seamlessly provide the right care at the right time in a variety of locations, thereby reducing delays in care and the burden of time and cost on the patient.

OHIT has been acting on the Governor’s vision over the last three year by:

- Launching two very successful and one-of-a-kind Digital Health Summits featuring world-class speakers and presenters from the public and private health IT sectors and Fortune 500 sponsors and vendors offering Best in Class solutions in the health IT space.
- Re-engaging a partnership with Howard University to launch a free workforce training initiative named *PHIT4VI (Public Health Informatics & Technology for the US Virgin Islands)* with enrollees from both hospitals, the Department of Health, UVI and private provider offices.
- Developing a Howard sponsored digital health research initiative focused on collaborative research in telehealth through HUCOP’s Telepharmacy and Population Health Center (HUTEPH), involving Schneider Regional Medical Center.
- Launching a free pilot of a Google beat making and coding opportunity for young Virgin Islanders.
- Partnerships with both Federally qualified Health Centers in St. Croix and St. Thomas to provide resources in cybersecurity, telehealth funding, health IT guidance and more.
- Re-activating the USVI Governor’s Health IT (Formerly Telehealth Workgroup) Workgroup to engage public and private providers on telehealth and broader health IT topics and services.
- Successfully applying and advocating for the funding to support a secure, sustainable, all-Territory wide digital health system.
- Launching the USVI’s first pilot program of the Health Information Exchange with CRISP Shared Services, a national technology, infrastructure and HIE services company.



“People should be able to focus on their health and trust that when they seek care, the technology is in place to seamlessly connect all points of their care journey to ensure the use of appropriate medications, accurate diagnosis and the seamless, timely transmittal of information to all care providers,” stated Governor Albert Bryan. “I am pleased with the progress that OHIT has made thus far to bring this to fruition. As these enterprise-wide transformations do not come cheaply, the awarding of these federal funds is critical and enhances OHIT’s and the Territory’s ability to continue to champion a Digital Health landscape we can all rely on and celebrate,” he emphasized.

Work is currently in progress between the Department of Human Services Medicaid Office, led by Director Gary Smith, and the Office of Health Information Technology to get the Health Information Exchange launched and transmitting data across sites, the Territory and the US.

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Governor Albert Bryan Jr. established the Office of Health Information Technology (OHIT) in 2021 to enhance health and wellness in the USVI through innovative and transformative health information technology resources. For more information about OHIT, visit [www.ohitusvi.com](http://www.ohitusvi.com) 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](http://transparency.vi.gov).