



For Immediate Release

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USVI Department of Human Services & Department of Labor Launch Virtual Work Readiness Program for At-Risk Youth

U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS — The Virgin Islands Department of Human Services (DHS) and the Virgin Islands Department of Labor (VIDOL) announced the launch of a virtual work readiness program for at-risk youth referred by DHS's Division of Intervention and Prevention Services (DIPS).

The eight-week virtual training pilot program was developed by VIDOL's Youth Services Team for at-risk youth between the ages of 14-21 years who are clients of the Division of Intervention and Prevention Services' program. This foundational Virtual Work Readiness Program is the result of a partnership between DHS and VIDOL to help develop critical life skills that strengthen the futures of at-risk youth in the workforce, school, and beyond.

The work-readiness trainings will consist of on-demand and interactive videos, weekly Zoom engagement sessions with motivational guest speakers, and a 6-week public speaking and leadership training program facilitated by the St. Croix Toastmasters.

The workshops will utilize the Workforce Development Board-provided *Sistems* platform as well as USDOL's Soft Skills to Pay The Bills. The workshops will cover a variety of topics surrounding career exploration, networking, business communication and etiquette, budgeting, resume-writing, interviewing, and more. The program will not only help students enhance their skills for educational, technical, and personal success, but will also connect them to the network of caring community resources dedicated to their personal development.

Ten students – five (5) from St. Croix and five (5) from the St. Thomas/St. John district - will participate in the initial program launch from March 22nd – May 21st. Students who successfully complete the program will receive the opportunity of summer employment.

“Our goal in this launch of the program is to enable our participants to have a bright vision for their future as they interact with and get connected to community resources that exist for their success, stated Commissioner Causey-Gomez “Ultimately, the program will provide training that leads to placement in summer employment and prepares them for success in future education endeavors, the workplace and in life in general. We want to jointly empower them with a vision of themselves being supported, connected, assertive and confident to succeed at whatever they put their minds to. I am grateful for my staff and their commitment to wholistic planning program development for our clients. I am also grateful to the Department of Labor for their responsiveness and assistance in crafting this program, as well as providing oversight under the direction of Commissioner Gary Molloy,” the Commissioner continued.



VIDOL Commissioner, Gary Molloy affirmed his support of the program launch and said, The Training and Support Partnership that DHS and VIDOL have forged with the community will help the territory enormously to pivot into Workforce Strategies. The strategy is to connect individuals to services they need while helping them to focus on work readiness. As VIDOL continues to work with employers and youth providers in the Virgin Islands, we have learned that all first jobs are not created equal: different soft skills and abilities are necessary for success in different jobs based on the complexity of the tasks and the expectations associated with each job. To serve youth across a spectrum of experience levels, local program providers must create and source a wide variety of work experiences for youth, ranging from career exploration to classroom-like experiences to jobs that look more like traditional internships or the “gig” economy in the private sector. Therefore, navigating this new world of work requires the Departments to focus more on collaborating and directly engaging clients to assess, and then address the gaps met when we see the resources needed to address each client, as a whole individual, not solely their employment needs.”

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OTHER TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH ARE AVAILABLE AT VIDOL

Youth between the ages of 14 to 25 are invited to register for employment programs offered by the Youth and Apprenticeship Division there are approximately six hundred (600) available slots. Applications are available online and can be submitted electronically through the department’s website at www.vidol.gov (under the forms tab). They can also be picked up at any of the Department of Labor office locations on both islands. St. John residents may pick up registration forms at St. John Administrator’s Office. This summer, priority will be applied to individuals who submit complete applications accompanied with supporting documents, and: **a) have not previously received a work experience; b) are high School Juniors and Seniors; c) are ‘Out-of-School/Unemployed & Dislocated Youth.** If you have any questions regarding this information please email the territorial VIDOL contact (?)Kevin.Dixon@dol.vi.gov or contact our offices on St. Croix at (340) 773-1994 ext. 2144 or St. Thomas at (340) 776-3700 ext. 2030/2044. For general information, please visit the Department of Human Services website, www.dhs.gov.vi or Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/usvidhs>).

For more information on Covid19, the new strain of coronavirus, please visit the USVI Department of Health's website, www.doh.vi.gov/coronavirus or text COVID19USVI to 888777. #COVID19USVI

The COVID-19 Vaccination Appointment Hotline is now open from 8:30 am until 3:00 pm Monday thru Friday. Operators are available in both English and Spanish. For additional information, including an updated eligibility list as well as vaccine information, call (340)777-8227 or visit VITEMA.Vi.Gov.

The Department of Human Services (VIDHS) exists to provide social services to members in our community with diverse needs. In times of national uncertainty and hardship we act as a safety-net and exist to inspire hope and empower change through non-judgmental, quality delivery of needed services and resources. Please visit the Department of Human Services website, www.dhs.gov.vi for more information.

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