



THE UNITED STATES VIRGIN ISLANDS

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
GOVERNMENT HOUSE

Charlotte Amalie, V.I. 00802
340-774-0001

MENTAL HEALTH MONTH

BY THE GOVERNOR OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS OF THE UNITED

A PROCLAMATION

Mental Health is essential to everyone's overall health and well-being. Mental illnesses are real and prevalent in our Nation and Territory, and half of us will have a mental health diagnosis at some point in our lives or the lives of our families.

Many people throughout the world experience times of difficulty and stress in their lives and should feel comfortable in seeking help and support to manage these times. Engaging in prevention, early identification and early intervention are effective ways to reduce the burden of mental illnesses as they are to reduce the burden of other chronic conditions.

There is a strong body of research that identifies behavioral health risks and supports specific tools that many people can use to protect their health and well-being. Jails and prisons have often become the default places of custodial care for even nonviolent people with serious mental illnesses.

Each business, school, government agency, faith-based organization, healthcare provider, organization and resident has a responsibility to promote mental health wellness and support prevention efforts for all.

Statistically, one in four American adults and children are affected by a mental illness regardless of race, creed, age or economic status. Every year, more than fifty million Americans suffer from a mental disorder such as anxiety, depression, bipolar disorder or schizophrenia. Far too often, symptoms are ignored due to a lack of information, discrimination, or out of fear of addressing the issue. It is for this reason that since 1949 during the month of May, mental health professionals across the Nation and throughout the United States Virgin Islands join to raise awareness on the importance of recognizing symptoms, receiving a proper diagnosis from a qualified health care practitioner or doctor, securing needed treatment towards recovery and taking steps to maintain good mental health.

While mental illness is the most prevalent health problem in America today, including more prevalent than cancer, lung disease and heart disease combined, proper diagnosis and treatment enable most individuals to successfully recover and go on to lead fulfilling and productive lives. Mental health is essential to everyone's overall health and well-being. A majority of the people who overcome the fear, discrimination and misunderstanding of mental disorders, and who seek professional help find relief following treatment and most mental illnesses are successfully treated. Early recognition and treatment of these problems vastly increase the likelihood of restored health.

In the United States Virgin Islands, there is a serious need to provide adequate and equitable health care coverage for individuals suffering from mental illness. With treatment plans available at qualified medical healthcare establishments throughout the Territory, it is important for family and friends to play a key role in assisting loved ones who may be experiencing symptoms and in recognizing the early warning signs of mental disorders. Addressing the complex mental health needs of children, youth, and families today is fundamental to the future of the Virgin Islands. The need for comprehensive, coordinated mental health services for children, youth, and families places upon our community a critical responsibility. In particular, the Early Childhood Advisory Committee, through its unique approach, is effectively bringing the focus of caring for the social, emotional, and mental health needs of children and families in our community.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Kenneth E. Mapp, Governor of the Virgin Islands of the United States, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Revised Organic Act of 1954, as amended, do hereby proclaim the month of May 2017 as *Mental Health Month* in the United States Virgin Islands. Additionally, I proclaim Thursday, May 4, 2017 as *Children's Mental Health Day* within the Territory. I commend all those who assist in providing services to the mentally challenged in the public, private, and non-profit sectors and encourage all Virgin Islanders, including all government agencies, businesses and civic organizations to openly discuss mental health issues and to participate in activities scheduled for the month of May 2017. I also urge our community to learn more about mental illness, to overcome the stigma and fear attached to mental disorders and to confidently seek the required support and treatment.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Seal of the Government of the Virgin Islands of the United States to be affixed at Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas, Virgin Islands, this 3rd day of May, 2017.




Kenneth E. Mapp
Governor

Attest:


Osbert E. Potter
Lieutenant Governor