GOVERNMENT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

PRESS RELEASE

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Breastfeeding Training Launched to Support Baby Friendly Hospital

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The Virgin Islands has officially launched a five day comprehensive Breastfeeding and Lactation Counsellor Training Programme as it moves toward achieving a Baby-Friendly Hospital certification at the Dr. D. Orlando Smith Hospital.

This training marks the first step in certifying the Dr. D. Orlando Smith Hospital as a Baby-Friendly Hospital, in line with global standards set by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

Acting Chief Medical Officer Dr. Ronald Georges said the Baby-Friendly designation is an important milestone for the Territory and a clear commitment to improving maternal and child health outcomes. He said exclusive breastfeeding during the first six months of life has been shown to reduce the risk of chronic diseases in adulthood while improving growth, educational achievement, and lifelong health.

Dr. Georges said, "By training frontline healthcare workers and adopting baby-friendly standards, the BVI will strengthen support for mothers and families across both public and private services."

The Acting Chief Medical Officer added, "The importance of exclusive breastfeeding in the first six months of life cannot be understated. This project is about starting the process of empowering mothers, supporting families, and building a healthier BVI for generations to come."

According to Dr. Georges, the Ministry of Health and Social Development will also use this opportunity to reinvigorate maternal and child health programmes and establish national breastfeeding standards to ensure continuity and quality of care.

The Breastfeeding and Lactation Counsellor Training Programme is jointly funded by Unite BVI and the Rotary Club of Central Tortola and delivered in partnership with the Ministry of Health and Social Development and the BVI Health Services Authority (BVIHSA). Representatives from Unite BVI and the Rotary Club of Central Tortola expressed pride in supporting the initiative, highlighting its alignment with community health priorities and the long-term well-being of families in the Territory.

The five-day training was launched by an opening ceremony on September 1 and brought together a wide range of healthcare professionals, including nurses, midwives, nutritionists, and antenatal care providers, who will be equipped with the skills and knowledge to provide effective breastfeeding counseling and support.

The Ministry of Health and Social Development is committed to improving the health of the people of the Virgin Islands.

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