GOVERNMENT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

PRESS RELEASE

Tel: (284)468-2730
Official Government Website:
https://gov.vg

Virgin Islands Hosts Regional Nursing Leaders for High-Level CARICOM Meeting

Release Date: 1 April, 2026



The Ministry of Health and Social Development, successfully hosted the Fifty-Fourth Joint Meeting of the Executive and Education Committees and the Twenty-Third Meeting of the Practice Committee of the Regional Nursing Body (RNB) under the theme: ***"Bridging Divides, Driving Reform: Caribbean Nursing and Midwifery at the Forefront of Change."***

Minister for Health and Social Development, Honourable Vincent Wheatley, emphasised the critical role nurses play across the region. "Nurses remain the backbone of our health systems," the Minister stated. "Across the Caribbean, they are on the front lines, responding to emergencies, supporting families, promoting public health and ensuring that services reach even the most vulnerable communities."

Honourable Wheatley highlighted the Territory's unique healthcare context, noting that in Jost Van Dyke and Anegada, nurses often serve as the sole providers on a 24-hour basis, delivering both primary and emergency care. The Minister also commended the nursing workforce for its achievements, including a *93 percent HPV vaccination coverage* rate, which positions the Virgin Islands as a regional leader in immunisation.

Speaking on behalf of the CARICOM Secretariat, Mrs. Helen Royer, Director of Human Development, commended nurses and midwives for their resilience, particularly following Hurricane Melissa. She highlighted regional priorities including the assessment of the CXC-managed Regional Examination for Nurse Registration, development of the RNB Strategic Plan 2026–2035 and ongoing efforts to harmonise midwifery education and regulation with support from Pan American Health Organization.

Chair of the Regional Nursing Body and CNO Barbados, Mrs. Annastasia Jordan, described the meeting as both a privilege and a responsibility, emphasising the importance of unified leadership to strengthen governance, elevate the profession, and ensure inclusion in health policy decision-making.

"The meeting agenda represents a clear roadmap for action, focused on strengthening governance, advancing education, improving regulatory frameworks

and deepening partnerships to address workforce mobility, migration, and disaster preparedness," Mrs. Jordan said.

Discussions focused on strengthening nursing and midwifery across the region in the face of ongoing challenges such as workforce shortages, migration, disaster impacts, and the growing burden of non-communicable diseases. Of particular importance was:

- Defining and expanding the role of Advanced Practice Nurses in addressing non-communicable diseases and mental health
- Recommending strategies to expand Nursing and Midwifery educator capacity and strengthen workforce sustainability
- Recommending mechanisms to support ethical mobility of health professionals during emergencies

Chief Nursing Officer, Ms Jascinth Hannibal, explained "The meeting provided a valuable platform to discuss and advance a unified regional agenda for nursing and midwifery. Hosting it reflects a strong commitment to advancing the professions of nursing and midwifery and to ensuring our health systems remain responsive to the needs of our people."

The four-day meeting, held from March 23–26, brought together Chief Nursing and Midwifery Officers, regulators, educators, and regional partners from across CARICOM, including representatives from PAHO/WHO, the Caribbean Examinations Council, and the University of the West Indies.

The outcomes of the meeting are expected to guide the future direction of the Regional Nursing Body and strengthen nursing and midwifery across the Caribbean.

The meeting was supported through contributions from community partners including The National Bank of the Virgin Islands, Bouganvillea Clinic and CCT Mobile Telecommunications.

For Additional Information Contact:

Natasha Lettsome-Humphrey
Public Health Communications Specialist
Ministry of Health and Social Development
Telephone: 468-2286

Email: nlettsome@gov.vg