



UNITED STATES VIRGIN ISLANDS

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

FY2026

BUDGET PRESENTATION

Evolving to Serve: "Meeting Needs, Inspiring Change, Sustaining Hope"

Testimony By:

COMMISSIONER AVERIL E. GEORGE

Presented To:

36TH LEGISLATURE
COMMITTEE ON BUDGET,
APPROPRIATIONS AND FINANCE



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INTRODUCTION

Good Morning Honorable Chairman - Senator Novelle E. Francis, Jr., Vice Chair, members of the Committee on Budget, Appropriations, and Finance, other distinguished Senators present, my Department of Human Services leadership team, staff, and support volunteers, and the listening and viewing public.

I am Averil George, Commissioner of the Virgin Islands Department of Human Services. In the well with me today are **Assistant Commissioner Carla Benjamin** and **Assistant Commissioner Taetia Phillips Dorsett**, **Chief Financial Officer Lydia Magras Purcell**, **Chief Legal Counsel Frederick Norford**, **Deputy Commissioner of Operations for St. Thomas and St. John Sean Georges**, and **Deputy Commissioner of Operations for St. Croix Hugh Nicholas**. Also accompanying us are **Akilah O'Brien, DHS Disaster Recovery Specialist; Ericson Browne, Assistant Director of Human Resources**; along with other members of our dedicated team.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to present the **FY2026 budget for the U. S. Virgin Islands Department of Human Services**.

OUR MISSION & WHO WE SERVE

Established under Title 3 of the Virgin Islands Code, DHS serves as the designated State Agency for all publicly funded social services outside of health and housing, with a mandate to protect and support the vulnerable.

For nearly a decade or more, we have often said that the department serves about one-third of the Territory's population. That was true at one time. But times have changed. Needs have grown, our programs have expanded, and today, the math tells a more powerful story. With our population hovering now at approximately **87,000** people, according to the U.S. 2020 Census, and DHS reaching around **40,000** individuals annually across all our programs and services, we're in fact serving closer to **46%** of all Virgin Islanders. That's nearly half of our entire community who turn to us for support in some form — whether through Medicaid, SNAP, Meals on Wheels, Child Care subsidies, Social work, Head Start, or residential care.

This figure underscores both the scale and the importance of our work. DHS oversees more than **84** programs, administered through **15** divisions, each tailored to meet critical needs. From providing protective services and feeding children and seniors, to providing health insurance, safeguarding vulnerable adults, or preparing mass care and shelter operations during hurricanes — DHS is there—steadily, and often without fanfare—woven into the everyday life of our islands, supporting those who need us most

FY2026 BUDGET OVERVIEW

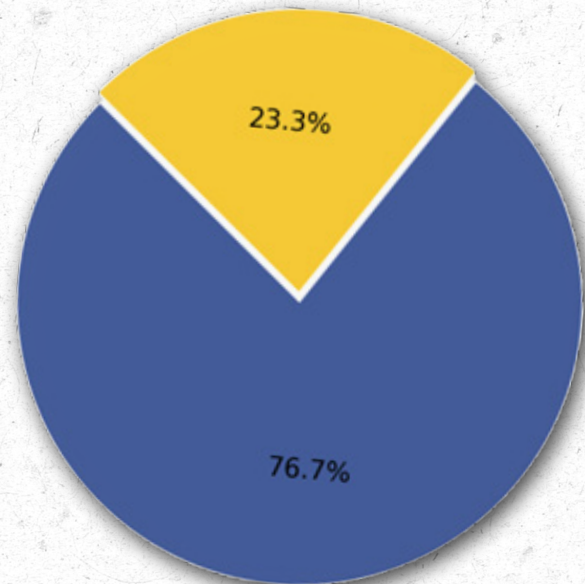
For Fiscal Year 2026, the Department of Human Services is working with a proposed combined budget of approximately **\$297.2 million**—restoring us to pre-pandemic funding levels, but with less flexibility and greater constraints. Of this total, **\$228.1 million** is projected from federal sources, while \$69.16 million will come from the General Fund, representing a decrease of **\$1.8 million (2.6%)** compared to FY2025.

With service needs and operational costs remaining high across the Territory, this year's budget will make for a difficult push as we work to keep pace with the growing demands of our community.

The General Fund now covers less than a quarter of total DHS operations, but those local dollars are increasingly stretched to pay for payroll, fringe, utilities, and critical support services.

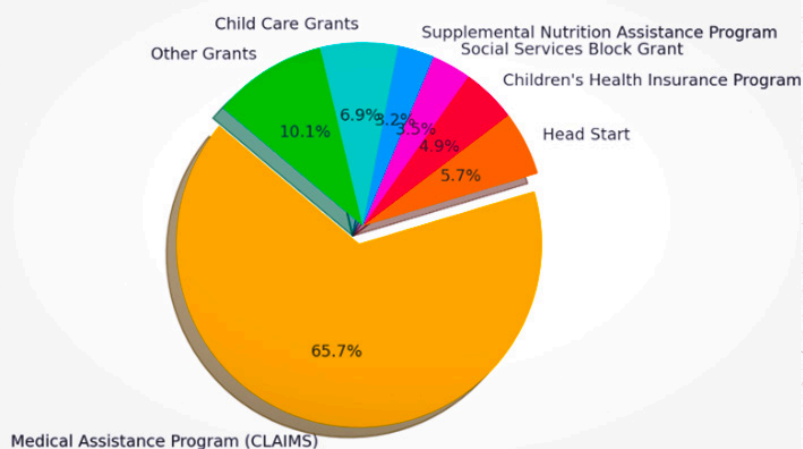
With every line item under pressure, careful planning will be needed to avoid gaps or slowdowns in service.

General Fund



Federal Funds

FY2026 Federal Grant Funding Sources - VIDHS



General Fund Budget Changes for FY2026:

- **Personnel:** \$19,556,499 (down 0.8%) – Modest decrease reflects strategic hiring and staff management without reducing core service delivery.
- **Fringe Benefits:** \$9,587,578 (down 1.6%) – Fringe tracks with personnel changes due to retirements, filled vacancies, and tighter benefits administration.
- **Supplies:** \$952,111 (down 23%) – Major reduction achieved through consolidating office operations and tighter procurement controls in addition to a shift of expenditures previously allocated under supplies and now shifted to capital per request from the Dept of Finance (DOF).
- **Other Services:** \$35,694,006 (down 3.3%) – Reduction comes from renegotiated contracts and streamlined vendor and professional services.
- **Capital:** \$192,812 (up 105%) – Allows for the support of urgent investments in equipment, technology, and critical facility upgrades.
- **Utilities:** \$2,625,000 (up 14%) – Reflects higher costs tied to expanded leased properties, ensuring continued operations during renovations and relocations.

General Fund Budget FY2026

Category	FY2025	FY2026	Change	% Change
Personnel	\$19,719,997	\$19,556,499	-\$163,498	-0.84%
Fringe	\$9,746,966	\$9,587,578	-\$159,388	-1.64%
Supplies	\$1,234,547	\$952,111	-\$282,436	-22.88%
Other Services	\$36,923,782	\$35,694,006	-\$1,229,776	-3.33%
Capital	\$94,000	\$192,812	+\$98,812	+105.12%
Utilities	\$2,300,000	\$2,625,000	+\$325,000	+14.13%
Misc	\$955,000	\$545,000	-\$410,000	-42.93%
TOTAL	\$70,974,292	\$69,153,006	-\$1,821,286	-2.6%

FY2026 Federal Fund Listing

Grant Title	Grantor Agency	Amount Expected	Amount Rolled Over
Child Care and Development Block Grant - Discretionary	US Dept. of Health and Human Services	\$ 5,101,928.00	\$ -
Child Care and Development Block Grant	US Dept. of Health and Human Services	\$ -	\$ 7,590,926.00
Child Care and Development Block Grant - Mandatory	US Dept. of Health and Human Services	\$ 1,518,873.00	\$ -
Children's Health Insurance Program	US Dept. of Health and Human Services	\$ 8,397,647.00	\$ -
Children's Health Insurance Program	US Dept. of Health and Human Services	\$ -	\$ 1,744,238.00
Family Violence Prevention & Svc/DV Shelters & Support Svcs	US Dept. of Health and Human Services	\$ 171,828.00	\$ -
Personal Responsibility Education Program	US Dept. of Health and Human Services	\$ 261,755.00	\$ -
Personal Responsibility Education Program	US Dept. of Health and Human Services	\$ -	\$ 196,195.00
Criminal Victims	US Dept. of Justice	\$ 89,000.00	\$ -
Head Start - Construction	US Dept. of Health and Human Services	\$ -	\$ 5,235,406.00
Head Start	US Dept. of Health and Human Services	\$ 11,792,909.00	\$ -
John Chafee Foster Care Prgm for Successful Transition	US Dept. of Health and Human Services	\$ 511,555.00	\$ -
John Chafee Foster Care Program - E&T Voucher	US Dept. of Health and Human Services	\$ 4,731.00	\$ -
MaryLee Allen Promoting Safe & Stable Families Program (FPSS)	US Dept. of Health and Human Services	\$ 70,462.00	\$ -
MaryLee Allen Promoting Safe and Stable Families Program (FPCV)	US Dept. of Health and Human Services	\$ 6,737.00	\$ -
MaryLee Allen Promoting Safe and Stable Families Program (Kinship)	US Dept. of Health and Human Services	\$ 244,506.00	\$ -
Medical Assistance Program (ADMIN)	US Dept. of Health and Human Services	\$ 1,959,637.00	\$ -
Medical Assistance Program (CLAIMS)	US Dept. of Health and Human Services	\$ 136,262,559	\$ -
Medical Assistance Program (E&E)	US Dept. of Health and Human Services	\$ 4,171,970.00	\$ -
Medical Assistance Program (MMIS)	US Dept. of Health and Human Services	\$ 14,324,769.00	\$ -
Medicare Prescription Drug Coverage	US Dept. of Health and Human Services	\$ 2,001,954.00	\$ -
Rehabilitation Services Vocational Rehabilitation	US Department of Education	\$ 1,939,693.00	\$ -
VR - Independent Living	US Dept. of Health and Human Services	\$ 31,359.00	\$ -
Senior Community Service Employment Program	US Dept. of Labor	\$ 959,602.00	\$ -
Social Services Block Grant	US Dept. of Health and Human Services	\$ 7,189,337.00	\$ -
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program	US Dept. of Agriculture	\$ 6,687,910.00	\$ -
SNAP Employment & Training	US Dept. of Agriculture	\$ 50,551.00	\$ -
Temporary Assistance for Needy Families	US Dept. of Health and Human Services	\$ 3,554,006.00	\$ -
Temporary Assistance for Needy Families	US Dept. of Health and Human Services	\$ -	\$ 5,970,207.00
Total		\$207,305,278	\$20,736,972
Grand total		\$228,042,250	

This table details the major federal funding streams and rollover balances that will **sustain DHS operations** in the coming year. Each line represents a **critical resource** that, if lost or disrupted, would put core services and vulnerable families at risk.

For FY2026, the Federal fund balance of **\$228.1 million** reflects a growing dependence on outside funding to sustain the core programs that thousands of Virgin Islanders rely on—**Medicaid, SNAP, Child Care, disaster recovery, and more**. These federal investments are not simply additive—they are now the foundation of our ability to serve nearly half of the population.

Non-appropriated funds: Total \$2,541,360.

The Department anticipates receiving approximately **\$2,152,460** from the **VI Lottery for the Pharmaceutical Assistance Program** for Fiscal year 2026. Total collections for Fiscal Year 2025 totaled **\$2,210,065.38**. Additionally, the Department is projected a total of **\$282,000** in **collections** from the Homes for the Aged, with **\$210,000** for the Herbert Grigg Home for the Aged and **\$72,000** for Queen Louise Home for the Aged. Lastly, the Department expects to collect approximately **\$6,900** in **licensing fees** for Child Care centers.

Miscellaneous General Fund Appropriations

For Fiscal Year 2026, the Department's budget includes **\$545,000** in Miscellaneous General Fund appropriations. These targeted investments reflect the government's commitment to addressing urgent local needs specifically:

- **Energy Crisis Assistance Program (ECAP) - \$500,000**
- **Centennial Living Treasures - \$45,000**

Miscellaneous General Fund Subgrantee Appropriations:

DHS administers a diverse portfolio of sub-grantee awards, funded through the Miscellaneous section of the General Fund supporting a wide range of community-based organizations that deliver essential services such as food security, transitional housing, domestic violence prevention, after-school programs, and health outreach. These targeted appropriations are crucial for meeting urgent needs not addressed through other funding streams and for sustaining safety net programs across the Territory. A detailed listing of all FY2025 Miscellaneous General Fund appropriations for Crisis Intervention—including sub-grantees, program areas, and award amounts—is provided in the Appendix.

Crisis Intervention Subgrantee Appropriations (FY2025)

Vendor	Appropriation
Catholic Charities – FEP	\$129,000
Women's Coalition of St. Croix	\$100,000
Lutheran Social Services of the Virgin Islands	\$80,000
ILERI Inc.	\$20,000
VI Resource Center for the Disabled	\$20,000
My Brother's Workshop – STT	\$100,000
My Brother's Workshop – STX	\$100,000
Access to Racial & Cultural Health Institute	\$20,000
The Village VI Partners In Recovery	\$90,000
The Village VI Partners In Recovery	\$100,000

The Department of Human Services provides targeted support to **non-profit and community organizations** dedicated to **crisis intervention and emergency response**. These appropriations, encumbered through the **Miscellaneous General Fund**, enable local partners to deliver vital assistance to individuals and families in acute distress.

**Federal Legislation Outlook – H.R. 1 Implications – One Big Beautiful Bill Act**

While the Department's FY2026 budget request is not directly altered by the **recently enacted H.R. 1 (The One Big Beautiful Bill Act)**, this sweeping legislation introduces a range of new Medicaid, SNAP, and child care provisions that will undeniably shape the Department's long-term planning and compliance landscape.

Key Provisions Impacting the Virgin Islands:**Medicaid Compliance and Eligibility:**

H.R. 1 maintains most existing Medicaid rules for the USVI but enacts a series of new federal requirements with staggered effective dates.

- Reductions in retroactive coverage, limiting backdated Medicaid eligibility to one month for expansion of populations and two months for non-expansion of populations. **(January 2027)**.
- Amended definitions of “qualified aliens” and updated rules for Medicaid and CHIP eligibility (October 2026), while continuing to recognize territorial status and carve-outs for COFA migrants.
- Loss of FMAP for specified gender dysphoria services, **with immediate effect**.
- Requirements for participation in federal pharmacy data surveys **if the USVI Medicaid Drug Rebate Program is active**.
- Implementation of a federal system to identify duplicate Medicaid enrollment across states and territories **(by October 2029)**.
- Prohibitions on Medicaid funding for certain abortion providers for a 10-year period. **(effective immediately)**
- Stricter provider enrollment checks, including quarterly death master file reviews for both enrollees and providers **(effective January 2028)**.
- Tighter eligibility verification, including a prohibition on federal matching funds (FMAP) for individuals whose citizenship or immigration status is unverified **(October 2026)**.
- Updated asset limits for long-term care services, setting a maximum home equity cap at \$1 million **(January 2028)**.

Exclusions from State-Only Provisions:

The Territory remains **excluded** from several “state” provisions, including:

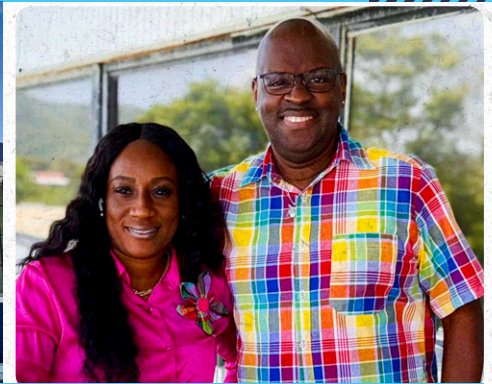
- **Work requirements** for Medicaid expansion for adults.
- **New provider tax phase-downs** and certain provider tax reforms.
- **Caps** on state-directed payments tied to Medicare rates.
- **Enhanced** FMAP incentives for new Medicaid expansion.
- Good faith **waiver removals** for PERM payment error audits.

SNAP/TANF:

- The bill introduces new federal work requirements for **able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWDs)**, revises utility and shelter deduction formulas, and anticipates increased local administrative cost shares **beginning in FY2028**. These changes require monitoring for future budget and operational impacts.

CHILD CARE:

- H.R. 1 creates employer-based **child care tax credits to incentivize private partnerships with local daycare providers**. The actual impact for the USVI will **depend on the adoption of federal tax policies** and the engagement of local businesses.



Labor Relations and Collective Bargaining:

OUR WORKFORCE: THE ENGINE OF SERVICE DELIVERY

None of our programs could function without the dedicated men and women of this Department who carry out their duties with compassion and professionalism. As of **June 30, 2025**, the Department of Human Services employs **654 active staff members** who power the delivery of services across all three islands.

Employee Classification Breakdown:

- St. Croix District: 348 employees
- St. Thomas/St. John District: 306 employees

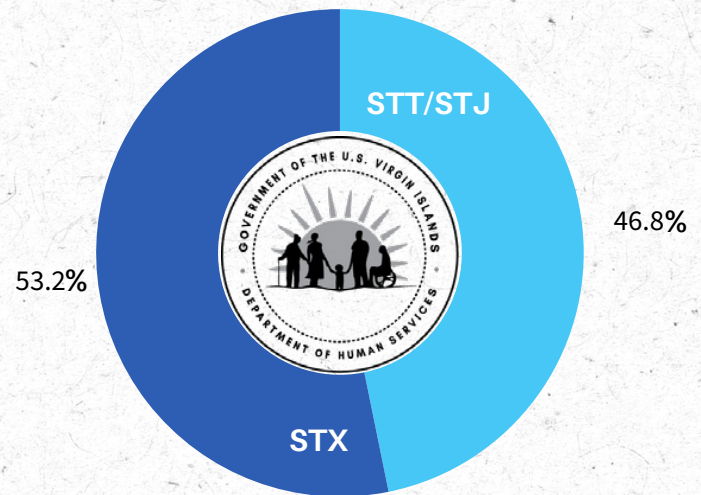
Recruitment and Workforce Movement

In Fiscal Year 2025, the Department welcomed 46 new employees through various personnel actions, including **14 new hires, 11 rehires, 12 promotions, 6 transfers** between departments, and **3 transfers** within DHS.

During the same period, **34 employees** separated from service due to:

- **19 Retirements**
- **13 Resignations**
- **3 Deaths**

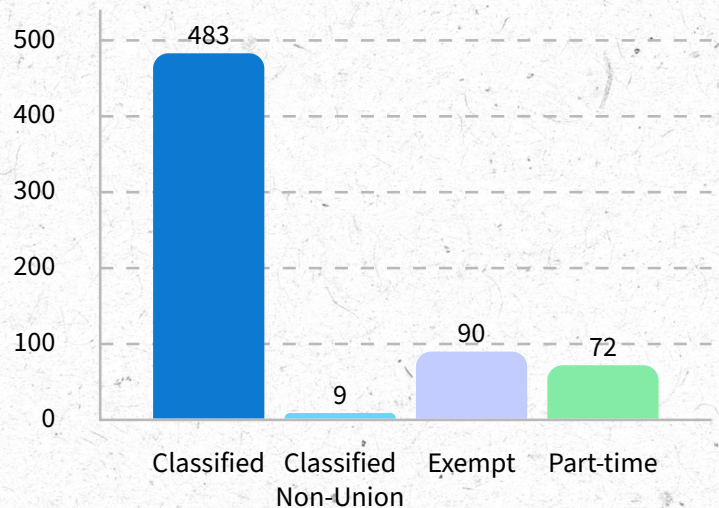
DHS continues to stabilize and expand its workforce through targeted **hiring strategies, job fair participation, and succession planning**—particularly for staff nearing or exceeding 30 years of government service.



VIDHS Employees

St. Thomas/St. John St. Croix

Classification	Count
Classified	483
Classified Non-union	9
Exempt	90
Part-time	72





Labor Relations and Collective Bargaining:

The Department operates under six distinct collective bargaining agreements, several of which are currently active or in negotiation.

- Virgin Islands Workers Union (**VIWU**)
- Seafarers International Union (**SIUM**)
- **SIU** Corrections Officers
- United Steelworkers Masters (**USWM**)
- United Steelworkers Supervisors (**USW Supervisors**)
- Law Enforcement Supervisors Union (**LESU**)

Salary adjustments tied to collective bargaining agreements are under review and pending approval by the Office of Management and Budget (**OMB**). These adjustments will affect both **General Fund and federally funded employees**. DHS is also in the process of actively addressing seven outstanding grievances—ranging from disciplinary disputes to workplace conditions and salary concerns.

Employees Earning Under \$35,000 Potentially Impacted by Bill No. 36-0053

The Department of Human Services could not be **prouder and greatly appreciates the committed and resilient women and men** who serve across our programs and facilities, delivering care and assistance to the most **vulnerable members of our community every single day**. DHS **will honor the proposed salary increases**, recognizing the urgent need to keep pace with today's economic realities and the rising cost of living in the Virgin Islands. However, we do foresee some funding challenges post implementation, especially as they impact both federally and locally funded positions.

There are currently **107 DHS employees** who would be impacted by the proposed increase in the minimum annual salary under **Bill No. 36-0053**, which raises the minimum annual salary from **\$27,040 to \$32,000**. These employees are primarily located within the following programs: Head Start, Senior Citizens Affairs, Maintenance and Transportation, and the Youth Rehabilitation Center.

These positions fall under the **Virgin Islands Workers Union (VIWU), Seafarers International Union of North America (SIUM), and Exempt classifications**. For federally funded positions, federal grant awards **will not increase in response to local statutory changes**. The available federal dollars will **fund fewer salaries**, and any shortfall must be met with local funds. This issue could become even more challenging if salary increases ripple into other classifications as a result of the adjustment for these employees. That being said, the Department is prepared to work with the **Legislature, OMB and the Bryan/Roach Administration**, to address the pay raises, but wants to be clear about the potential for funding gaps and operational strain, if local resources are not increased accordingly.

(Impacted job classifications include Bus Drivers, Bus Driver Aides, Community Nutrition Aides, Cooks, Custodial Workers, Food Service Workers, Executive Chauffeurs, Head Start Nutrition Assistants, Head Start Stock Clerks, Homemaker Aides, Housekeepers, Laundry Workers, Office Assistants, Receptionists, and Social Service Aides)

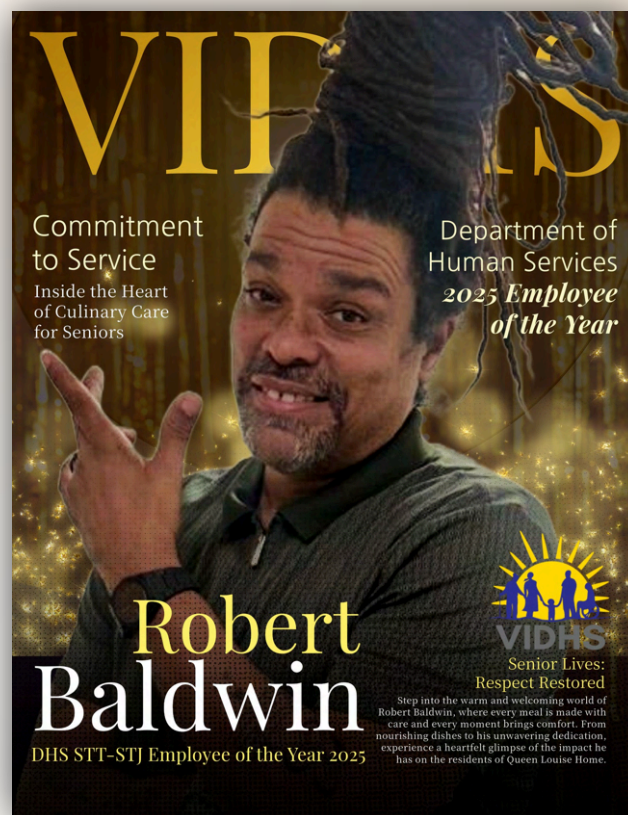
Employee Recognition & Workforce Excellence

The Department of Human Services deeply values the outstanding individuals who make our mission possible. In FY2025, DHS is honored to recognize **two exceptional employees** whose dedication and compassion set a standard for public service across the Territory:



St. Croix:

Ms. **Sherene Maynard**, an Administrative Assistant in the **Office of Intake and Emergency Services**, is a dedicated problem solver, and involved in nearly every departmental initiative, volunteering her time and energy even outside of her regular duties. She is also **Ms. DHS 2025 for St Croix**, a testament to her positive presence in and outside of the office.



St. Thomas/St. John:

Mr. **Robert Baldwin**, Kitchen Manager at **Queen Louise Home for the Aged**, recognized for exemplary service and commitment to the well-being of senior residents. He brings **daily comfort, dignity, humor, and a sense of home** to our senior residents—demonstrating that true service is measured not just in meals prepared, but in lives uplifted.



Office of Child Care and Regulatory Services (OCCRS): Expanding Access and Quality for Working Families

Often referred to as **“Child Care”** or the **“Block Grant”** program, the **Office of Child Care and Regulatory Services**, licenses, regulates, monitors, and provides quality improvement support to all legitimate providers of child care services for **children up to age 12 in the Virgin Islands**, as well as **after school, summer camps and nontraditional child care services**.

These responsibilities include conducting regular inspections, addressing complaints, supporting provider compliance with health and safety standards, and helping to expand access to reliable child care.

The division is funded entirely through the federal **Office of Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF)**, which is projected at **\$9,101,245M** for **Fiscal Year 2026**.

This funding supports both **regulatory oversight and child care subsidies** that assist low-income families with the cost of care, allowing parents to work or attend education and training programs to enter the workforce. We’ve continued **subsidy levels at the 100th percentile of market rates**, meaning families face fewer out-of-pocket burdens:

Subsidies at the 100th percentile of local market rates, include:

- **\$600/month for infants**
- **\$675/month for toddlers**
- **\$725/month for preschoolers**
- **\$429/month for school-aged children**

Over 550 children in the territory are currently served by these childcare support grants.



Head Start: Building Strong Beginnings for Virgin Islands Children



FY2026 Funding and Costs

For Fiscal Year 2026, the Department's Head Start program is supported by a combined operational budget of **\$10,351,425**. The majority of funding is provided through federal sources. These federal dollars cover personnel (**\$5,873,857 million**), fringe benefits (\$3,235,239 million), supplies (\$435,137), other services (**\$600,775**), and capital outlay (**\$206,500**).

Local support from the General Fund makes up the remaining \$4,564,000, which is allocated for personnel (\$2,966,000), fringe (\$1,598,000).

Head Start	Federal Funds	General Fund (Local)
Personnel	\$5,873,857	\$2,966,000
Fringe	\$1,367,407	\$1,598,000
Supplies	\$ 435,137	\$0
Other Services	\$600,775	\$0
Capital Outlay	\$206,500	\$0
Total	\$10,351,425	\$4,564,000

No local funds are designated for supplies, other services, or capital outlay in FY2026.

This operational budget supports all program staffing, classroom activities, nutrition services, and family engagement efforts. **Head Start** remains one of the Department's most vital programs, providing no-cost early education, meals, health screenings, and family support to **children ages 3 to 5** across all three islands.

Head Start funded enrollment stands at **794**, impacted by demographic shifts and temporary facility closures during major renovations. Despite these reductions, the Department has made significant capital progress, with the federal **Office of Head Start Disaster Recovery-funded construction** and restoration of key Head Start sites across the territory. As many of you witnessed firsthand during the **Cruz Bay ribbon cutting ceremony in December 2024**, we are proud to report that the Cruz Bay Head Start facility is now fully completed and will open for the start of the **2025-2026** school year. With that milestone achieved, construction efforts continue across the territory on the remaining five major Head Start facilities.

While this work was introduced in last year's budget, the continued development of these sites remains a top capital priority, funded by over **\$42 million in Office of Head Start Disaster Recovery funding**.

Site	Island	Estimated Completion	% Completion (as of July 2025)	Estimated Cost
Cruz Bay Head Start	St. John	✓ Completed Dec 2024	100%	\$8,000,000
Concordia Head Start	St. Croix	October 2025	75%	\$7,000,000
Anna's Hope Head Start	St. Croix	October 2025	75%	\$7,000,000
Lindbergh Head Start	St. Thomas	October 2025	85%	\$3,000,000
Bolongo Head Start	St. Thomas	January 2026	64%	\$11,000,000
Minetta Mitchell Nutrition Center	St. Croix	October 2025	80%	\$4,200,000

Here is a **snapshot** of current progress:

Several of these projects will **break ground in the coming months**, marking an exciting new chapter for Head Start in the Virgin Islands. This period of construction and expansion positions us to boost enrollment and, in turn, help restore the federal funding levels necessary to fully support eligible children and families across all three islands.

Office of Intake and Emergency Services(OIES or Intake): Frontline Crisis Response and Stabilization

The Office of Intake and Emergency Services (**OIES**), known simply as Intake, serves as the Territory's first line of defense for children, vulnerable adults, and families in crisis. With statutory responsibility for responding to all reports of **suspected child maltreatment** as well as reported **dysregulation and at-risk behavior of children**, it is the gateway to the department's array of child welfare services - from **advocacy & referrals** to **Family Court intervention**.

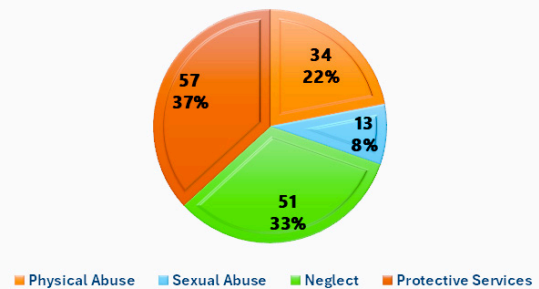
Intake also coordinates immediate support for families facing domestic emergencies, adults with disabilities, and seniors who have no one else to turn to. This is accomplished through a blend of federal **Family Preservation grants** (under the Social Services Block Grant) and locally funded **Emergency Welfare Services**, which together provide for **emergency needs, crisis stabilization, and even final arrangements for indigent residents through cremation services**.

Between October 1, 2024, and June 30, 2025, Intake received **139 reports**, resulting in **155 investigations**—a number that reflects both the volume and complexity of the situations encountered. These cases were categorized as follows:

- **57** Protective Services cases
- **51** Neglect cases,
- **34** Physical Abuse cases, and
- **13** Sexual Abuse cases.

INVESTIGATIONS FY2025 TO DATE

155



Whenever a child, family, or vulnerable adult is in imminent danger, Intake mobilizes resources—**financial, legal, and social**—to restore safety and stability. The team manages **one-time grants** to prevent homelessness, repatriation for non-residents in distress, and initiates court proceedings for children experiencing behavioral challenges or family breakdown

Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS): Ensuring Safety, Permanency and Well-being

DCFS is responsible for helping **families at risk** for separation due to child maltreatment, **build capacity**, to reduce that risk to zero if possible and for providing **foster care and adoption** services when separation is necessary. DCFS also **recruits, trains and licenses Resource Families (foster and adoptive homes)**, and coordinates safe **family reunification** and other permanency options for children in care.

As of June 30, 2024, there were **7 children in foster care on St. Thomas**, and **9 children in foster care plus 1 child under the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) on St. Croix**. The number of active resource families was **7** in St. Thomas and **2** in St. Croix.

DCFS operations and foster care services are supported by **Title IV-B and Social Services Block Grant (SSBG)**. These grants help pay for personnel, training, maintenance and support services for children in care and administrative costs such as promotional and public education initiatives.

The General Fund covers some personnel costs, foster care maintenance payments, contractual payments for **Nana Baby Children's Home**, and other administrative and operational costs. Local funds also support **emergency placements, court-ordered services, and matching requirements for federal grants**

Foster Care Payroll

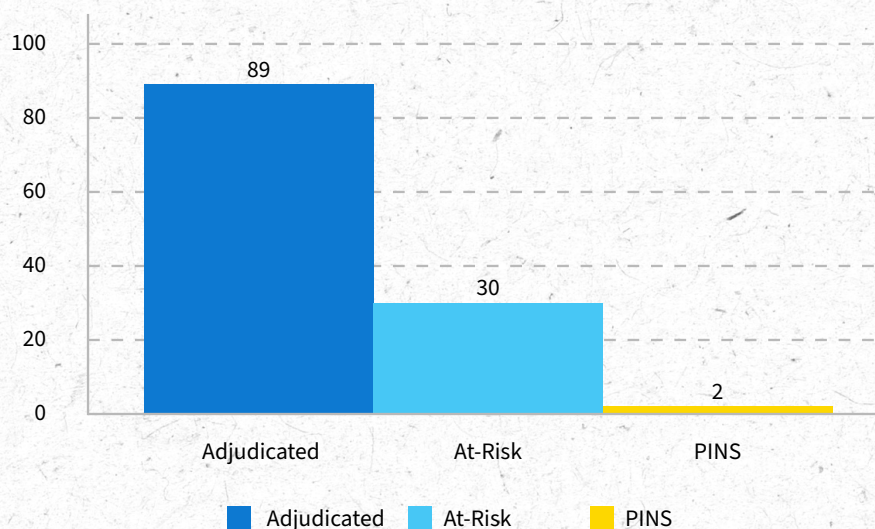
- St. Thomas: \$10,100.47 (13 resource parents)
- St. Croix: \$7,588.75 (12 resource parents)

DCFS continues to face significant challenges **recruiting and retaining resource families**, especially on **St. Croix**, where the need for additional foster homes is greatest. The division also works closely with **Nana Baby Children's Home** and similar partners to provide specialized placement and wraparound support.

Division of Intervention and Prevention Services (DIPS) - Creating Opportunities for Resilience, Rehabilitation and Restoration

The Division of Intervention and Prevention Services (DIPS) continues to address the complex needs of at-risk youth, PINS (Persons in Need of Supervision), and adjudicated youth in both the St. Thomas/St. John and St. Croix districts. DIPS and YRC operations are supported primarily by the General Fund, with a combined FY2026 appropriation of **\$1,885,109**. Supplemental support is provided through the Social Services Block Grant (SSBG), with an allocation of approximately **\$48,500**.

Between **October 2024 and June 2025**, DIPS served **121 youths—80 in St. Thomas/St. John and 41 in St. Croix**—through a combination of investigations, court recommendations, treatment planning, oversight of alternative sentencing programs, and pre- and post-release support. Intervention services range from supporting youth who stay with their families to serving those placed at the Youth Rehabilitation Center (YRC), which is a central part of the division's work.



Of the youth served, 89 were adjudicated (75% in St. Thomas/St. John, 25% in St. Croix), 30 were identified as at-risk, and 2 were classified as Persons in Need of Supervision (PINS).

A demographic and behavioral profile of these youth reveals the following trends:

The average age for adjudicated males was **15.5 years; females, 15.9**. For at-risk youth, **males averaged 14.1 and females 15.5**.

- **30%** had a history of alcohol or drug use
- **67%** came from single-parent households
- **96%** were living at home at the time of arrest or petition
- **23%** came from very low-income families
- **56%** were new to the Juvenile Justice System; **17%** were repeat offenders
- **3%** were school dropouts at the time of arrest or petition
- **13%** required special education services, while **2%** were diagnosed with a mental illness
- **39%** committed a violent offense; **26%** committed crimes against property

These statistics illustrate both the **scope and complexity** of the **challenges** facing DIPS, emphasizing the continued need for **targeted intervention, supportive programming, and ongoing collaboration with the courts and community partners** to redirect youth away from the justice system and toward rehabilitation and positive development.

Office of Residential & Interstate Compact Affairs - Safeguarding the Territory's Most Vulnerable Residents (ORICA)

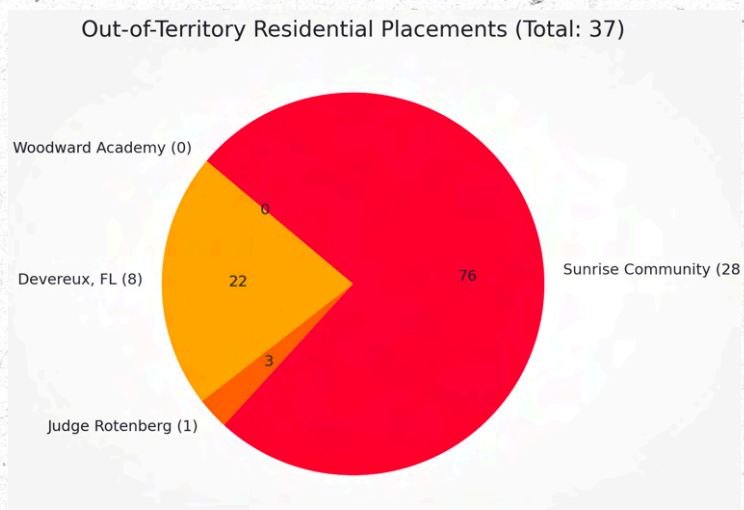
The Office of Residential & Interstate Compact Affairs (**ORICA**) oversees the department's largest locally funded service area, managing over **\$16 million** in general fund expenditures to ensure safe, specialized placements for some of the most vulnerable Virgin Islanders—including children, adolescents and adults with developmental disabilities. **Seventy-two clients** are currently in residential placement (**37 out-of-Territory; 35 locally**). There are also currently **10 ICPC cases**, and **3 ICJ cases** being managed. The daily cost for care ranges from **\$125.00 to \$1,011.17**. Clients currently in placement range in **age from 3 to 69 years old**

Long-term guardianship: DHS assumes permanent legal guardianship for residents whose conditions require lifetime care. They come into care and live in residential care for the duration of their lives. This substantial investment demonstrates the Territory's unwavering commitment to ensuring quality care and protection for those unable to live safely in the community.

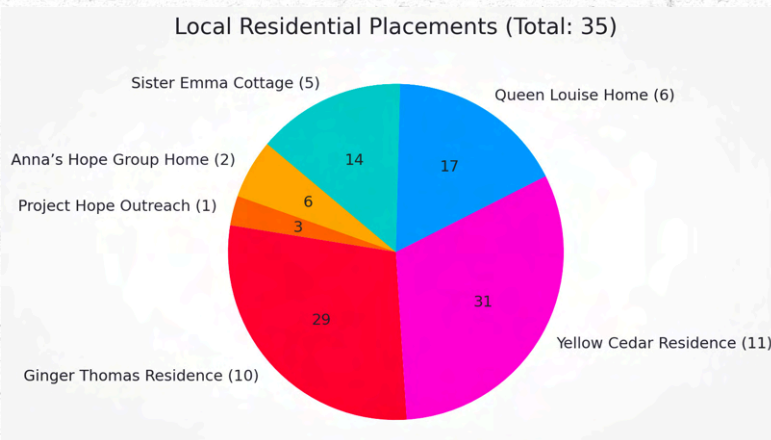
Residential Placement Data:

DHS currently manages a continuum of residential placements for clients who require care outside of a traditional home environment. Of the **72 individuals** served as of this reporting period, **37** are in out-of-territory placements and **35** are in local residential settings.

The **Out-of-Territory Residential Placements** chart shows that the largest share of clients are placed at Sunrise Community, Inc., which accounts for 28 individuals, including two senior citizens. Smaller numbers reside at **Devereux Advanced Behavioral Health in Florida** and the **Judge Rotenberg Center**, with **no current placements at Woodward Academy**.



The **Local Residential Placements** chart demonstrates the Department's investment in **in-territory care**. Placements are distributed across group homes and specialized residences—including **Anna's Hope**, **Project Hope Outreach**, the **LSS Ginger Thomas** and **Yellow Cedar Residences**, **Queen Louise Home for Children**, and **Sister Emma Cottage**.



The Department also continues to work towards introducing the proposed **New Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC)** for ratification by the V.I. Legislature, to replace the existing Compact which was originally drafted in the 1960s.

Division of Family Assistance: Comprehensive Support for Families, Seniors, and Vulnerable Adults

The Division of Family Assistance (DFA) administers a comprehensive suite of safety net programs for the Territory's low-income families, children, seniors, and vulnerable adults. These include the **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)**, **Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)**, **Aid to the Aged (AA)**, **Aid to the Blind (AB)**, **Aid to the Disabled (AD)**, **General Assistance**, and **critical Energy Assistance programs**, collectively forming the backbone of support for those most in need across the Virgin Islands.

FY2026 Funding and Costs:

General Fund: \$450,753 (Personnel), \$192,705 (Fringe) for program administration

Federal Funds: \$4,154,516 (Personnel), \$2,274,047 (Fringe) for administration; \$6,647,122 (Matching/State Admin grants for SNAP)

Direct TANF and SNAP benefits are 100% federally funded (over \$5 million monthly), while administrative costs are split between federal and local sources. The benefits and Jobs Program remain essential to food security and family stability for thousands of Virgin Islanders. Their administration is supported by a combination of federal and local funds, with direct benefits entirely federally funded.

DFA cash assistance programs reach hundreds of vulnerable residents each year. In FY2025, **Aid to the Aged (AA)** provided \$410,865 in support to **291** recipients; **Aid to the Blind (AB)** served 23 recipients with **\$30,600**; **Aid to the Disabled (AD)** delivered **\$683,252** to **485** recipients; and **General Assistance (GA/GD)** reached 98 individuals, issuing **\$122,046** in assistance.

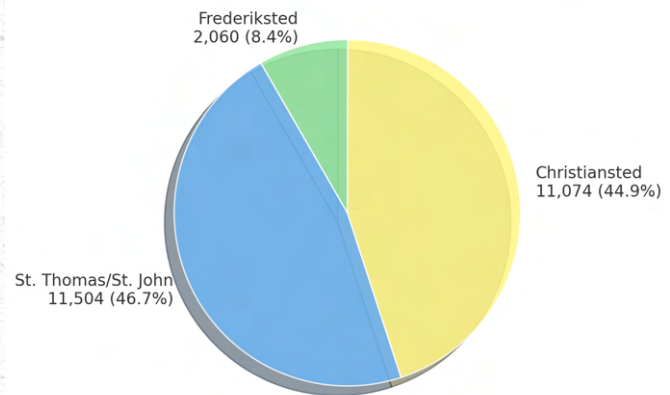
Our Energy Assistance programs (ECAP) issued **\$669,877** in electric payments to seniors and disabled clients, supporting a total of **4,307 cases** (3,980 for seniors and 327 for disabled individuals). Of this total, **\$306,996** was disbursed in the St. Thomas/St. John district and **\$362,881** in St. Croix.

SNAP and TANF both saw enrollment and benefit trends **stabilize** in FY2025 after the COVID-related surges. DFA continues to address challenges in staffing, certification backlogs, and timely benefit delivery. TANF's **new outcome-based compliance mandates** will require even more intensive engagement with clients to support transitions to employment and education. Despite these hurdles, the division continues to expand partnerships, upgrade service delivery, and for the first time in a very long time, **directly reach the St. John community** with **onsite eligibility support** at the **Cruz Bay Multipurpose Center**.

Program Reach & Benefits (Oct. 1, 2024 - June 30, 2025):

- SNAP: **24,638** recipients in **12,707** households; **\$49,654,388** in food benefits issued
- TANF: **138** recipients in **50** households; **\$114,603** in cash assistance issued

SNAP Recipients by District (Oct 2024-Jun 2025)



District Breakdown (SNAP):

- St. Thomas/St. John: **11,504** recipients; **\$22,147,019** issued
- Christiansted: **11,074** recipients; **\$22,774,251** issued
- Frederiksted: **2,060** recipients; **\$4,733,118** issued

Medicaid Assistance Program: The Backbone of Health Coverage in the Virgin Islands

Medicaid remains **the single most important health coverage program in the Virgin Islands**, protecting the wellbeing of more than 20,000 residents—including children, seniors, and persons with disabilities. For FY2026, this program continues to anchor our healthcare system, ensuring access to critical medical services, supporting hospitals and clinics, and helping to stabilize families who would otherwise be left uninsured.

For FY2026, the Medicaid **operational budget** includes **\$3,517,915** from the General Fund and **\$19,190,338** in federal funds, for a total of **\$22,708,253** supporting personnel, fringe, supplies, other services, and capital outlay.

The Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP) determines the share of Medicaid program costs paid by the federal government versus the local government. In the U.S. Virgin Islands, the FMAP is especially significant: for most Medicaid services, the federal government covers **83%** of costs, with the Territory responsible for **17%**. For the Adult Group, the federal share rises to **90%**. CHIP is matched at **85% federal, 15% local**.

This high federal match allows the Virgin Islands to serve thousands of residents who would otherwise go without coverage, but it also means that any local shortfall in meeting the required match could jeopardize federal funding and, by extension, critical healthcare services.

Federal Medical Assistance Percentages (FMAP) by Program:

Program	Federal Share	Local Share
Adult Group	90%	10%
Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP)	85%	15%
Medicaid (Fee-for-Service)	83%	17%

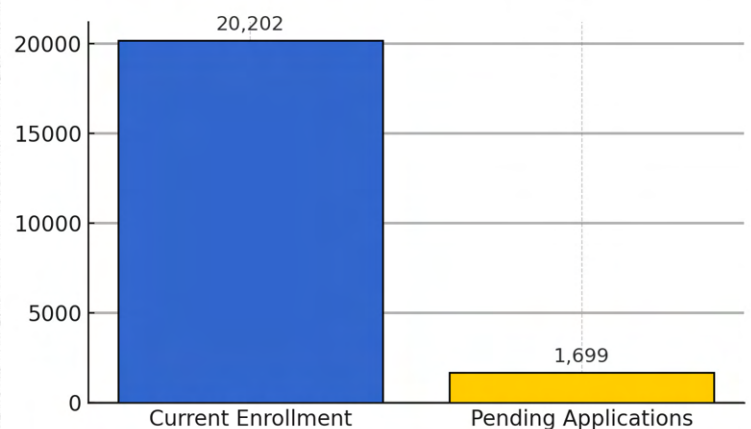
Budget Neutrality

Federal cost-sharing percentages are designed to keep the program "**budget neutral**"—meaning the federal government provides a capped share of funding, and the Territory is required to cover all remaining costs, including any increases in enrollment, service demand, or program expansion. This structure ensures that Medicaid remains within the Territory's fiscal capacity, but it also means any shortfall in the local match could jeopardize continued federal support.

MAP Enrollment & Eligibility (FY2026):

As of FY2026, Medicaid enrollment stands at **20,202 individuals**, a slight decrease from **20,302** at the start of the year. There are currently **1,699 pending applications** awaiting processing, underscoring the continued demand for services and the need for ongoing administrative capacity. The number of residents accessing immediate coverage through presumptive eligibility **has declined**, revealing an opportunity for the Department to strengthen outreach and streamline the enrollment process, particularly for those facing urgent medical needs.

MAP Enrollment & Application Status (FY2026)



MAP Provider Network & Service Delivery:

The Medicaid program maintains a robust network of **1,085 enrolled providers** across the Territory, including hospitals, clinics, specialists, federally qualified health centers (FQHCs), and personal care attendants (PCAs). In FY2025, the **Personal Care Attendant (PCA) Program** served 66 members, with **833** claims processed and a total of **\$710,447.97** paid out for services, reflecting both the scope of the provider network and the critical support delivered to beneficiaries through this program.

In FY2025, the Department of Human Services made significant Medicaid payments to key healthcare providers across the Territory, including **\$7.45 million** to **Schneider Regional Medical Center and Myrah Keating Smith Community Hospital**, **\$4.85 million** to **Juan F. Luis Hospital and its ESRD program**, **\$4.16 million** to **Frederiksted Health Care**, and **\$1.63 million** to **St. Thomas East End Medical Center**.



- Frederiksted Health Care: (4163324)
- Juan F. Luis Hospital & ESRD (4847116)
- Schneider Regional Medical Center & Myrah Keating Smith (7448709)
- St. Thomas East End Medical Center (1634221)



Medicaid remains a lifeline for the Virgin Islands, but our ability to maintain this program depends on continued investment, effective administration, and unwavering support from both local and federal partners. FY2026 will be a pivotal year as we navigate challenges and seize opportunities to strengthen healthcare for all our residents.

Senior Citizens Affairs: Ensuring Care, Dignity, and Nutrition for Our Elders

The Senior Citizens Affairs division is dedicated to **supporting the territory's older adults** through residential care, transitional support, and critical nutrition programs that help seniors maintain independence and quality of life.

For Fiscal Year 2026, the Department of Human Services has allocated more than **\$8.5 million in local General Fund support** and an estimated **\$6.2 million in federal grants** to sustain its core Senior Citizens Affairs programs—including Herbert Grigg and Queen Louise Homes for the Aged, and Meals on Wheels. Local funding covers the majority of personnel and fringe benefits for direct care staff, facility operations, utilities, maintenance, and specialized appropriations such as Centennial Living Treasures and Energy Crisis Assistance.

On the federal side, **Title III Older Americans Act funds, and the Social Services Block Grant (SSBG)** provide critical support for operations, resident services, nutrition programs, and a select portion of administrative costs. In addition, both Herbert Grigg and Queen Louise are benefiting from more than **\$333 million** in FEMA Public Assistance for ongoing reconstruction and modernization.

Program/Facility	Local (General Fund)	Federal Funds
Herbert Grigg Home	Personnel, operations, supplies, utilities, etc.	Title III, SSBG, FEMA (capital)
Queen Louise Home	Personnel, operations, supplies, utilities, etc.	Title III, SSBG, FEMA (capital)
Boarders	Local case management, some local placement costs	Medicaid (off-island skilled placements)
Homemakers Program	Personnel, operations (within Elderly Social Services)	Social Services Block Grant (SSBG)
Meals on Wheels	Local personnel, senior centers, operations	Title III-C, SSBG
Centennial Living Treasures	\$45,000 program allocation (General Fund)	
Energy Crisis Assistance	\$500,000 program allocation (General Fund)	

Herbert Grigg Home for the Aged (St. Croix)

Herbert Grigg Home continues to provide 24-hour residential care for up to **26** residents, offering daily meals, personal care, nursing, and social support. The facility is preparing for a major FEMA-funded redevelopment to expand capacity, improve infrastructure, and ensure a storm-resilient, modern environment for elder care. The expansion is a crucial response to long-standing waitlists and growing demand for a CMS-certified long-term care nursing beds on St. Croix.

- **Number of Residents:** 22
- **Location:** STX
- **Facilities:** Herbert Grigg Home
- **Cost:** \$5,000 per month per resident (\$2,100,000 per annum)
- Most residents are not able to pay the full amount of cost of care.
- **Type of Residence:** (24 hrs.)

Queen Louise Home for the Aged (St. Thomas)

Queen Louise Home currently accommodates up to **16** residents maximum in a supportive environment. In FY2026, residents are being temporarily relocated to the **Palms Court Harborview Hotel** as the original facility undergoes a comprehensive rehabilitation and modernization—another FEMA-supported capital project. This transition ensures continuity of care and resident safety while positioning Queen Louise for a stronger future as a CMS-certified long-term care provider.

- **Number of Residents:** 14
- **Location:** STT
- **Facilities:** Queen Louise Home
- **Cost:** \$5,000 per month per resident (\$2,100,000 per annum)
- Most residents are not able to pay the full amount of cost of care. (see attached)
- **Type of Residence:** (24 hrs.)

Inter-Agency Boarder Support

The Department manages placements for elderly and disabled individuals who remain in hospital beds at **Juan Luis Hospital or Schneider Regional Medical Center** due to a lack of appropriate post-acute care placements. As of June 2025, there were 5 boarders at Juan Luis Hospital and **13** at Schneider Hospital. In addition, **six** DHS clients are placed at **Casa de Salud in Puerto Rico**, and **ten** Medicaid clients are currently at **Pines Nursing Home in Miami, Florida**—receiving essential skilled nursing care that cannot yet be provided locally. These arrangements underscore the critical need for expanded long-term care options within the Territory.

Nutrition Program (Meals on Wheels)

DHS's Nutrition Program, including **Meals on Wheels**, delivers daily meals to seniors at home and at senior centers, supporting health, independence, and social engagement. As of June 2025, the program served:

- St. Croix: **300** home-delivered meals and **38** congregate meals (Richmond Senior Center)
- St. Thomas: **381** home-delivered meals and **35** congregate meals (STRIVE Senior Center)
- St. John: **12** home-delivered meals and **64** congregate meals (Adrian Senior Center/Episcopal)

Meals are provided through partnerships with local vendors and community organizations, ensuring no senior goes hungry or isolated.

Adult Protective Services (APS)

APS investigates and intervenes in cases of elder and vulnerable adult abuse, neglect, or exploitation. As of June 2025, the active caseload includes **118** clients (ages 18–59) and **143** clients (ages 60+) on St. Croix, and **62** clients (ages 18–69) and **132** clients (ages 60+) on St. Thomas/St. John. For FY2026, APS operations are supported by approximately **\$350,000** in personnel costs and **\$176,600** in fringe (both within **Elderly Protective Services** lines) from the General Fund, along with federal funds from the Elder Justice Act and **Social Services Block Grant**.

The Adult Protective Services (APS) program currently oversees the placement of **six** residents in an off-island facility at **Casa de Salud in Puerto Rico**. APS is fiscally responsible only for these residents, with the cost of care set at **\$165 per person, per day—amounting to \$60,225** annually for each individual. This brings the total annual cost for all six residents to **\$361,350**.

Senior Centers

Senior centers promote socialization, recreation, and wellness for older adults throughout the territory, serving **60** seniors at the **Richmond Senior Center** on St. Croix, 48 at the **STRIVE Senior Center** on St. Thomas, and 18 at the **Adrian Senior Center** on St. John. These centers are thriving community hubs that offer far more than just daily meals—they provide safe spaces for social connection, exercise, health education, cultural programming, and lifelong learning.

FY2026 Funding and Costs:

- General Fund: \$235,934 (Personnel), \$146,845 (Fringe), \$20,900 (Other Services) under Senior Citizens Affairs (Socio-Recreation)
- Federal Funds: Title III, Social Services Block Grant, National Family Caregivers Support Program

Homemakers Program

The Homemakers Program helps seniors and adults with disabilities maintain their independence by providing in-home assistance with daily living tasks, such as **housekeeping, meal preparation, and personal care**. As of June 2025, the program served **58 clients on St. Croix (with 6 staff 2 SCSEP)**, **67 clients on St. Thomas (8 staff 2 SCSEP)**, and **7 clients on St. John (1 staff)**. Clients typically receive services **two to four times per week**, allowing them to safely remain in their homes and communities. The program is funded through a combination of General Fund appropriations (personnel, fringe, and operational costs) captured within the **Elderly Social Services** budget lines, along with federal **Social Services Block Grant (SSBG)** support.

Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP)

SCSEP provides part-time employment and job training opportunities for low-income seniors, with **22** enrollees on St. Croix and **35** on St. Thomas. In FY2026, funding for **SCSEP** includes **\$58,109** in personnel and **\$18,265** in fringe from the General Fund, as well as **\$792,946** in personnel and **\$127,677** in fringe from federal sources.

Prescription Assistance Program (PAP)

The Prescription Assistance Program helps low-income seniors afford essential medications, serving **166** clients on St. Croix and **118** on St. Thomas. **PAP** is primarily funded by **\$3,170,000** from the **Pharmacy Assist to Aged Fund**, with additional support from the General Fund covering **\$479,281** in personnel and **\$270,325** in fringe costs. Federal program support varies annually based on enrollment and available grants.

Office of Legal Counsel

The Office of Legal Counsel continues to provide essential support to the Department of Human Services (DHS) on all **legal, contractual, and compliance matters**. Throughout FY2025, the division played a central role in maintaining program integrity, strengthening interagency partnerships, and advancing initiatives to protect vulnerable residents.

Evidentiary Hearings and Program Integrity:

The legal division has managed multiple evidentiary hearings on allegations of **Medicaid and Medicare billing fraud** by medical practices. These cases have led to the **suspension of payments and the issuance of formal administrative decisions**, reinforcing DHS's commitment to upholding program integrity and fiscal responsibility.

Contract and Provider Agreement Oversight:

Legal Counsel reviews all provider contracts, lease agreements, and renewals to ensure legal sufficiency and compliance before submission to the Department of Property and Procurement (DPP). Notably, this year our **collaborative efforts** saw the successful execution of major lease agreements for new **DHS office spaces at Havensight and Tutu Park Mall**.

Interagency Collaboration and MOUs: The office has developed and reviewed several **Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs)**, including agreements with the Departments of Health and Education to allow use of **Queen Louise Home and Schulerbrandt Nursing Home as clinical training sites for certified nursing students**. Other MOUs cover health data sharing, **SNAP fraud prosecution**, and expanding disability and vocational rehabilitation provider networks.

Grant Application & Program Development:

The division actively supports grant writing and program development. Most recently, legal counsel worked on the **grant application** for the Criminal Victims Compensation Program, which, if awarded, will fund dedicated staff and enhance services for victims.

Criminal Victims Compensation Program: The **CVC Commission** has approved approximately **19** applicants for FY2025. The total amount of payments approved for these individuals is approximately **\$68,000**. There are still **three cases** that have been heard by the Commission but are pending documents for approval. The legal division continues to address a backlog of **Victims Compensation cases**, driven by increased filings and incomplete documentation from applicants. To resolve these challenges, DHS is implementing strategies such as monthly Commission meetings and more proactive applicant follow-up. The department remains committed to reducing the backlog and improving program accessibility in the coming year, ensuring that **available funding** reaches eligible victims as efficiently as possible.

Management Information Systems (MIS)

The Management Information Systems (MIS) Unit oversees all DHS technology—managing network security, hardware and software, and IT support—to ensure secure, efficient operations in all our offices and facilities.

FY2025 was a defining year for MIS, with the team responding rapidly to a major cybersecurity incident and strengthening protections for sensitive data in partnership with the Bureau of Information Technology (BIT). Looking ahead to FY2026, a significant challenge will be managing the ongoing **relocation of multiple DHS offices**—moving, reinstalling, and configuring IT infrastructure across new sites or major transitions such as the relocation of **Knud Hansen staff to Havensight Mall and Tutu Park on St. Thomas, as well office relocations on St. Croix**. MIS has already completed IT installation and configuration at the St John Multipurpose Center to support staff and select agency programs at the site

MIS will continue to improve the security posture by providing cybersecurity education, investing in security appliances and monitoring its environment. The Division will soon make upgrades to our telephone systems in an effort to centralize communications territorially which will improve call handling capabilities, enhance security and recognize potential cost savings.

FY2026 Funding and Costs:

MIS activities are supported primarily through the General Fund's Administration category, which covers personnel, hardware, software licenses, and contracted services. For **FY2026**, our MIS operations are supported by approximately **\$379,000** from the General Fund, which covers personnel costs at **\$183,953**, fringe benefits at **\$71,275**, supplies and services—including hardware, software, security upgrades, and licensing—at **\$137,500**, and other services at **\$95,000**.

Operations & Facility Management

The Department of Human Services' Operations & Facility Management division is responsible for the daily functioning, maintenance, and security of all DHS buildings, vehicles, and physical assets territory wide. This **includes oversight of both leased and owned facilities, vehicle fleet management, major repairs, capital improvement projects, disaster recovery repairs, safety and ADA compliance**, as well as logistical support for core programs such as senior nutrition and residential care.

Funding Overview

Operations & Facility Management activities for Fiscal Year 2026 are supported through a combination of local and federal funding sources: The primary funding stream, supporting personnel (maintenance, custodial, supervisory), fringe benefits, routine and major facility repairs, lease payments, vehicle operations (fuel, insurance, maintenance), supplies, and compliance-related projects. Select federal grants **supplement** local funding for **capital improvements and disaster recovery**. **FEMA Public Assistance funds major disaster-related repairs** and reconstruction at key sites such as Herbert Grigg Home, Queen Louise Home, and the Knud Hansen Complex. The **CDBG-DR** program provides local match for capital and recovery projects, while Older Americans Act grants and **the Senior Citizens Center Fund help maintain and upgrade senior centers and program spaces**.

Disaster Recovery & Infrastructure Projects: FY2026 Status & Timelines

FY2026 stands as a turning point for **DHS Operations - disaster recovery and infrastructure modernization portfolio**, with several major "prudent replacement" (full rebuild) projects advancing through critical design, procurement, and pre-construction phases across all three islands. With more than **\$333 million in FEMA Public Assistance obligations**, these efforts represent some of the largest capital investments in the history of DHS and the Virgin Islands.

At the heart of this capital transformation are **three flagship projects**:

- Knud Hansen Complex rebuild — **\$128 million**
- Queen Louise Home for the Aged — **\$73 million**
- Herbert Grigg Home for the Aged — **\$131 million**

Project Highlights:

Queen Louise Home for the Aged:

Full replacement and modernization are underway, with a qualified contractor, leading planning and regulatory steps. The project is advancing as part of the broader Rebuild USVI initiative, with construction mobilization set for the next phase.

Knud Hansen Complex:

This full replacement project—DHS’s main St. Thomas hub—remains on track, with the project team progressing through design and compliance milestones. Design activities are moving forward in coordination with the Department of Health (DOH).

Herbert Grigg Home for the Aged:

The prudent replacement and redevelopment of this long-term care nursing facility is currently in the technical design phase. A qualified contractor is in place, and the project is preparing to move into design phases.

Palms Court Harborview Hotel Relocation:

DHS is preparing for the upcoming temporary relocation of Queen Louise Home residents to the Palms Court Harborview Hotel. This transition, funded by FEMA Public Assistance, is essential to ensure the safety, comfort, and continuity of care for residents while major repairs and construction are underway.

St. John Multipurpose Center—is also preparing for the upcoming remediation of Cruz Bay Multipurpose Center. FEMA has awarded \$2.5M to DHS, in the interim while the designs are being completed; plans are being put in place to move staff into temporary modular offices while remediation takes place.

Additional capital efforts include preparation of temporary leased facilities to maintain operations during construction (Knud Hansen, St. Thomas). DHS continues to work closely with the Office of Disaster Recovery, FEMA, Rebuild USVI Super PMO, and other key partners to align our projects with federal reimbursement guidelines, address architectural and procurement hurdles, and ensure that construction timelines are met. As our work progresses, we remain committed to providing safe, storm-resilient, and service-forward facilities for clients and staff.

Emergency Support Function #6 (ESF-6): Mass Care & Human Services

DHS serves as the lead agency for ESF-6 in the Virgin Islands, responsible for mass care, emergency sheltering, and the coordination of disaster feeding and assistance for vulnerable populations. This mandate requires DHS to mobilize staff, open shelters, manage the Senior Disaster Registry, and distribute emergency commodities across the territory—often on short notice and during the most critical times.

ESF-6 has played a pivotal role in strengthening the Territory’s capacity to prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters over the past year. From October 2024 to June 2025, DHS led a series of preparedness, training, and operational activities in close coordination with VITEMA, FEMA, the American Red Cross, and other partner agencies.

FY2025 Mass Care in Review Highlights:

Training & Preparedness:

- October 2024: E-PULSE refresher training provided.

Facility Readiness:

- January–February 2025: Shelter inspections conducted on St. John, St. Thomas, Water Island, and St. Croix, including Bertha C. Boschulte Middle School.

Regional & National Collaboration:

- April 2025: DHS participated in the National Hurricane Conference, strengthening best practices in mass care.

Major Exercises:

- June 2025: DHS took part in the Capstone Event with FEMA and VITEMA, testing GVI's core capabilities in individual assistance, disaster recovery, shelter operations, and distribution points.

Public Awareness & Technology:

- June 2025: DHS Commissioner launches public hurricane preparedness media campaign.

DHS on June 17-18, 2025, also coordinated a hybrid **PULSE training, with over 60 attendees** across multiple agencies. PULSE technology is critical for tracking shelter residents and evacuees during emergencies.

Conclusion

As we close, I want to extend our deepest **thanks and appreciation** to the exceptional women and men of the **Virgin Islands Department of Human Services**. It is our **employees—across every division and at every level**—who work tirelessly and often behind the scenes to ensure that our programs function and our most vulnerable residents are cared for.

Our **gratitude** also goes out to our **dedicated support staff, the many volunteers** who step up in moments of need, and our **agency and community partners** whose collaboration makes our work possible. We are especially grateful for the unwavering support of the **Bryan-Roach Administration** and the guidance of **36th Legislature of the Virgin Islands**. Above all, **we give thanks to God** for carrying us through another demanding year and granting us the strength and wisdom to serve.

The past year has been one of **extraordinary pressure and constant adaptation**. We have managed **budget reductions, shifting federal requirements, and operational obstacles** while **never losing sight of our purpose**: to provide a safety net for children, seniors, families, and individuals facing hardship. The programs and services discussed here today are not just numbers on a page—they are **lifelines for thousands across our Territory**. Our responsibility is **great**, and the **consequences** of falling short are even **greater**.

The Department of Human Services is, and always will be, at the heart of the Virgin Islands' social infrastructure. Every dollar appropriated, every policy decided, and every day's work contributes to the resilience and dignity of our community. **We stand ready to adapt, to advocate, and to deliver—whatever the future brings.**

Thank you for your continued support, your trust, and your partnership. We now welcome your questions and look forward to working together to protect and uplift the people of the Virgin Islands.

