



# Legislature of the Virgin Islands

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The Honorable  
**Alicia V. Barnes**  
Secretary  
33<sup>rd</sup> Legislature

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**  
**5/28/19**

**SENATOR ALICIA V. BARNES IN COLLABORATION WITH SENATORS BENTA, DEGAZON, AND FRANCIS PARTNER WITH AKOMA COUNSELING CONCEPTS TO BRING MATERNAL MENTAL HEALTH WORKSHOPS TO ST. CROIX**

ST. CROIX, U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS – As mental health awareness month comes to an end, Senator Alicia V. Barnes in collaboration with Senators Novelle E. Francis Jr., Allison DeGazon, and Oakland Benta, advises the public of upcoming maternal mental health workshops.

According to the World Health Organization, ten percent of pregnant women around the world and thirteen percent of post-partum mothers experience a range of mental health issues such as anxiety and depression. The percentage increases amongst communities of color, with thirty-eight percent suffering from illnesses such as obsessive compulsive and post-traumatic stress disorders.

Senators Barnes, Francis, DeGazon, and Benta have partnered with Shivonne Odom, LCPC, LPC, NCC, of Akoma Counseling Concepts to host a series of maternal mental health workshops to be launched in September.

The first workshop, scheduled for September 16, 2019, at the VI Cardiac Center, will focus on maternal mental health awareness and will include a voluntary maternal mental health screening. The workshop is open to all mothers, expectant mothers, students, and mental health professionals.

“The goal of these activities is to reduce rates of maternal mortality in the U.S. Virgin Islands,” Odom said.

The following workshops (to be announced) will provide continuing education training to both mental and medical health professionals on maternal mental health screenings.

Odom is a Licensed Professional Counselor, a certified school counselor, and a National Certified Counselor in Washington, DC and a Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor in the state of Maryland. She is also a board Approved Clinical Supervisor by the Maryland Board of professional counselors and therapists.

Odom recently launched a continuing education training program for medical health professionals at her alma mater, Howard University, in March 2019, and also held workshops at Bowie State University. Odom is also scheduled to present on minority mental health at the Post-Partum Support International Conference in Portland, Oregon this summer.

“We can’t treat what we don’t acknowledge. What we don’t acknowledge becomes silenced,” Odom said.

As these workshops are scheduled for September, we ask that you save the date, and stay tuned for further updates.

**Maternal Mental Health Workshop: Series 1**  
**Presenter: Shivonne Odom, LCPC, LPC, NCC**  
**Date: September 16, 2019**  
**Time: 11:00 am – 2:30 pm**  
**Location: VI Cardiac Center, Room #3**

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