

Justa E. Encarnacion, RN, BSN, MBA/HCM

Doctor of Humane Letters

Justa E. Encarnacion, affectionately known as “Tita,” is no stranger to the U.S. Virgin Islands nor to healthcare. A St. Croix native, Commissioner Encarnacion began her career in healthcare at the Charles Harwood Memorial Hospital as a volunteer in the Nursing Education Department at the mere age of 14-years-old. This experience set the stage for her career as a healthcare professional. She currently serves as Commissioner for the Virgin Islands Department of Health and Chief Public Health Officer.

During her time at Charles Harwood Memorial Hospital, her interest in pediatric nursing blossomed. She continued her career in Cleveland, Ohio at Rainbow Babies & Children’s Hospital. Her two beautiful and bright children, Bobby and Stephanie Thompson, were also born in Cleveland.

She received her Associate of Science in Nursing from the then College of the Virgin Islands. She completed her Bachelor of Science in Nursing at Barry University and received her Master of Business Administration in Health Care Management from the University of Phoenix. Commissioner Encarnacion is a pediatric nurse by trade.



Justa E. Encarnacion

She has over 30 years of experience in healthcare with 15 years of experience leading staff in inpatient and outpatient settings. Encarnacion has served in a number of capacities in both the private and public sectors, leading a number of projects. She was the first Health Services Supervisor and assisted with opening the first health center on the Albert A. Sheen Campus on St. Croix at the University of the Virgin Islands. As the Health Services Supervisor, she also hosted various campus-led youth symposiums focused on women’s health issues and served as part-time faculty. Other roles held include Assistant Chief Nursing Officer, Vice President of Out-Patient Services, Vice President of Strategic Planning and Chief Nursing Officer at the Governor Juan F. Luis Hospital and Medical Center (JFL). She also collaborated with other leaders on improving the quality indicators of the Dialysis and Inpatient units and assisted in successfully regaining full Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) certification in both areas of the JFL hospital. Commissioner Encarnacion also served as Clinical Advisor at Case Western Reserve University Francis Payne Bolton School of Nursing. She has developed policies, implemented process improvement initiatives, headed transitions, and conducted strategic planning.

On January 22, 2019, Encarnacion was appointed by Governor Albert Bryan Jr. as the Commissioner Nominee for the Virgin Islands Department of Health and sworn into the position on June 16, of the same year. This position required a shift in focus from in-patient care to public health service. Her experience with the in-patient arena, and work with outpatient agencies at the University of the Virgin Islands and medical group practices prepared her for the role as the lead Virgin Islands, Public Health Official. She comes with a strong regulatory background and is committed to improving health care in the Territory and as a result, implemented the Division of Regulatory Services in the Department. In March of 2020, Commissioner Encarnacion was also designated as the Incident Commander to lead the mission to protect the U.S. Virgin Islands public’s health during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Commissioner Encarnacion embraces and respects the responsibility of her appointment. She believes in community and collaboration and that community begins with public health. Commissioner Encarnacion holds team building as a means for success. She utilizes the nursing process as her basis for process improvement, as she is convinced that it can be matched with any process improvement methodologies in creating sustainable changes.