



MINISTER OF PUBLIC HEALTH, SOCIAL
DEVELOPMENT AND LABOR

Minister van Volksgezondheid, Sociaal Ontwikkeling en
Arbeid

18404

Philipsburg,

JAN 06 2021

To:
State Secretary Blokhuis
Ministry of Public Health, social Development and Sport
Netherlands

Subject: update and request for continued assistance for COVID-19 response

Honorable State Secretary Blokhuis, dear Paul,

With support from VWS, the past year St. Maarten received additional technical assistance in the medical field for the COVID-19 response. The Collective Prevention Services (CPS) of the ministry of VSA received medical support from AMI and the RIVM specifically.

On August 3rd 2020 I sent an official request¹ to strengthen CPS with an epidemiologist, an infectious disease doctor and public health nurses. The request for an epidemiologist and public health nurses was met until the end of the year². Verbally it has been discussed that before the end of the year St. Maarten would put effort into recruiting public health nurses locally with the goal to replace the current AMI nurses at CPS and that costs relating to signing on these nurses could be covered by VWS.

Since the beginning of October, CPS has worked with local healthcare organizations and the labor department to compile a list of candidates to support CPS in the COVID-19 response. Of the identified 15 support staff, 5 include nurses who can be available on a part-time basis. These 5 nurses supported CPS voluntarily without compensation during the first wave. It is the intention of CPS to fill an additional 5 positions with full-time nurses as the interview process is already underway. As previously discussed, CPS would like financial support for the local nursing capacity for the terms of six months minimum with the possibility for 1 year maximum. The remuneration proposed to cover the nursing support is requested to be up to 40 guilders per hour. This hourly rate has been proposed as these positions are full-time, however, based on a short duration.

¹ 'Request for financial assistance for the accommodation of the medical technical support in combatting COVID-19', signed by Minister Panneflek

² 'Request for financial assistance', reference number 1742388-209944-ZJCN

Minister of PHSDL / Minister van VSA

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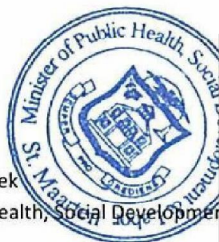
Furthermore, to provide the full range of activities to protect the public health on St. Maarten the following extra support for CPS is requested:

- Extend the contract of the AMI epidemiologist to support in COVID-19 response and the development and implementation of the national vaccination strategy.
- Guarantee to make funding available in the first half of 2021 to hire additional nurses up to 10 FTE (including the nurses who are already recruited mentioned above) with the possibility for extension up to one year, as more interviews are planned to recruit nurses locally.
- Explore the option for flexible deployment of the AMI personnel at SMMC to support CPS during a significant increase in new cases and testing.

Furthermore, with the news that the first vaccines will become available beginning of January 2021, St. Maarten would also like to request support for the implementation of the vaccine program for at least half a year, but with the possibility to extend until the end of the vaccination plan:

- An operations specialist with experience of the implementation of vaccination programs (1 FTE) to support CPS.
- A specialist with knowledge of registration systems and monitoring of vaccines and adverse effects (1 FTE) to support CPS.
- Request for a risk communications specialist may follow shortly, but this is first discussed with the Department of Communications.

Sincerely,



Richard J. J. Panneflek
Minister of Public Health, Social Development and Labor

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