

As Father's Day approaches, dads-to-be are receiving Daddy Packs

By JOY BLACKBURN

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ST. THOMAS — Just in time for Father's Day, Virgin Islands Perinatal Inc. is distributing free Daddy Packs to its clients and their male partners who accompany them to prenatal clinic appointments.

The packs contain information designed to help build parenting skills in fathers, as well as an interactive CD-ROM called "Directions for Dads."

Tamesha Antoine, program manager of the nonprofit's "Healthy Babies ... Healthy Families Initiative," said she believes there is a definite need to get fathers involved even before babies are born.

"We realize that with their involvement, prenatal outcomes are better," Antoine said. "The moms have emotional, financial and social support they might not have without that involvement."

The Daddy Pack distribution is a joint effort between V.I. Perinatal Inc. and the National Fatherhood Initiative.

The printed statement announcing the distribution cites a 1996 National Household Education Survey conducted by the U.S. Department of Education that found that when fathers get involved, develop a positive relationship with their children, and provide child support, it has a positive effect on children's social, cognitive and academic

achievement and behavior.

The Daddy Pack was created by the National Fatherhood Initiative as a resource for both new and experienced fathers, the release said. The information in the packs is designed to help fathers communicate better with their children and their partners.

The information in the packs also covers child safety for newborns and toddlers and other resources to help with parenting, according to the release. The interactive CD-ROM helps dads work on parenting, communication and relationship skills.

"Virgin Islands Perinatal Inc. continues to work on creating a framework for integrating fathers into the Perinatal system of care as well as promoting father involvement in the Virgin Islands," Antoine said in the release.

Because the number of packs is limited, they will be distributed on a first-come, first-served basis to fathers-to-be accompanying their partners who are V.I. Perinatal Inc. clients to prenatal clinics at these locations: on St. Croix at the Frederiksted Health Center and the Health Department's Charles Harwood complex and on St. Thomas at the East End Medical Center and at Health's Community Health Clinic at Schneider Hospital.

For more information, call **715-9748** on St. Thomas or **713-8083** on St. Croix.

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