

Health Care In Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands: A Six Month Check-Up After the Storms

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Filling the need for trusted information on national health issues.

Figure 1

Project Overview

- Six-month follow-up on post-storm recovery in Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands with a focus on health care system recovery
- Builds on work assessing recovery two months after the storms
- KFF team traveled to Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands March 2-5
- Conducted in-person interviews with over 30 stakeholders including residents, business owners, health care providers, and territory officials
- Additional phone interviews with federal officials and other organizations involved in recovery

Figure 2

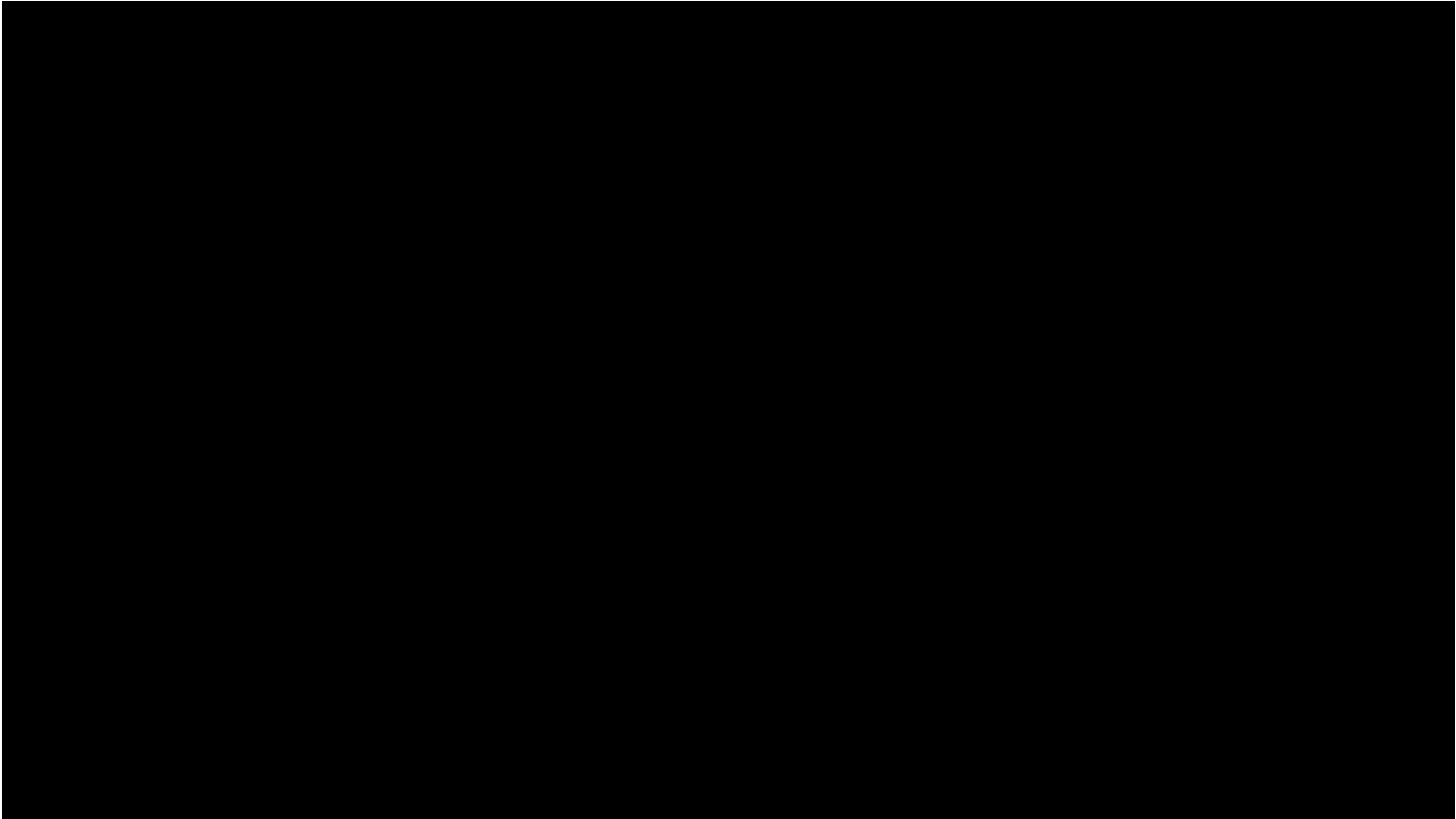


Figure 3

Progress has been made with recovery, but major challenges remain.

- Continued power and communication challenges
- Some economic recovery, but revenues and tourism still down
- Migration continues off the islands, particularly young professionals and health professionals
- Individuals' lives remain disrupted, with many still displaced from their homes, facing job losses or changes, and financial instability
- Physical and mental health needs have increased, including increased reports of depression, anxiety, and PTSD
- Views on support for recovery efforts are mixed
- Providers and staff continue to work and serve amid their own ongoing challenges and losses

Figure 2

Parts of the health care system have resumed operations, but gaps remain.

	Puerto Rico	USVI
Hospitals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hospitals have resumed operations Treated as critical priorities in recovery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hospital has major structural damage and is operating at limited capacity Lost a quarter of staff, including many nurses Waiting for FEMA assessment
Clinics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clinics operational, some still on generators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clinics have resumed operations
Access Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mountainous and offshore islands facing critical access challenges Many private providers remain closed Job losses driving losses of private coverage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High need patients must be transferred off island due to limited capacity on island Fragmentation of health care system complicates delivery of care Job losses driving losses of private coverage
Mental Health Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited access due to limited supply of mental health providers/services prior to the storm Ongoing stigma associated with receiving mental health care 	
Provider Supply	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Storm exacerbated existing challenges with supply of specialists as providers leave island Facing challenges retaining and attracting providers and nurses 	

Figure 3

Looking ahead

- Federal relief funding for Medicaid provides essential support, but major fiscal challenges remain
- Relief funding does not address underlying fiscal problems or disparity in federal match and cap on federal funds
- Puerto Rico faces added challenge of implementing major delivery system reform and achieving savings specified by the Fiscal Oversight Board
- U.S. Virgin Islands also engaged in broader delivery system reform efforts
- The next hurricane season is rapidly approaching leaving organizations and individuals limited time to prepare

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Thank you.