

**Response to the Recommendations of the Joint Select Committee on Human Rights, Equality and Diversity on the Support Programmes and Services for Children whose Parents or Guardian was the Perpetrator or Victim of a Violent Offence.**

**Background:**

On Wednesday February 24, 2016, the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services was requested to be represented at the enquiry of the Joint Select Committee on Human Rights, Equality and Diversity on the Support Programmes and Services for Children whose Parent or Guardian was the Perpetrator or Victim of a Violent Offence. The Permanent Secretary, Mrs. Jacinta Bailey Sobers; Acting Deputy Permanent Secretary, Mr. Haimdath Ramoutar; and Family Services Case Worker, Ms. Sharon Winchester attended the enquiry.

The objectives of the enquiry were as follows:

- Objective 1: to understand the impact on children whose parent/guardian was the victim or perpetrator of a violent offence;
- Objective 2: to examine the adequacy of programmes and services to support children whose parent/guardian was the victim/perpetrator of a violent offence and;
- Objective 3: to identify and evaluate the current relationship among stakeholders of children support services.

The Ministry of Social Development and Family Services submits its comments on the recommendations with respect to the challenges faced by persons with disabilities, as follows:

**Recommendations under Objective 1**

The Ministry supports the recommendations under 4.8 and 4.9. The Ministry proposes to conduct the necessary research during the 2017 fiscal year.

The Ministry supports Recommendation 4.10. Such training would be critical in building capacity that would ensure that services of the highest quality are available.

## **Recommendations under Objective 2**

The Ministry supports Recommendation 4.31. The Ministry has completed a Directory of Social Services, which is currently being reviewed. The intention is to make this document available online and in paper medium. However, it should be noted that, information on key stakeholders that offer Services to Children is already on the Ministry's website and on Social Media.

The Ministry supports, in principle, Recommendation 4.32. The establishment of a Behavioural Intervention Centre would serve to enhance the services available to the client groups. However, the Ministry has not yet been privy to the model for the Centre i.e. its Business Plan, the Staffing and Organizational Structure and the proposed Standards of Operational Procedures.

The Ministry supports Recommendation 4.33. There would need to be collaboration among the M&E, Research, Policy and service delivery units/divisions of the relevant ministries on this matter.

With respect to Recommendations 4.34 and 4.35, the Gender and Child Division (OPM) and Children's Authority should take the lead in effecting these recommendations.

The Ministry supports 4.36. However, clear protocols and the understanding of where, or at what intervals a specific Agency comes late into the intervention process, should be established to allow for any significant monitoring of the system.

Recommendation 4.37, and the issue to which it is related is specific to the Ministry of Education (M.O.E). However, the Ministry of Social Development, through the National Family Services Division and other divisions and units within its purview, would be available to provide services, once requests are made for its services M.O.E.

With respect to Recommendation 4.38, it should be noted that, in September 2016, the MSDFS advertised for the recruitment of Family Services Social Workers. It is expected that the recruitment process will be completed by the end of the first quarter of Fiscal 2017.

Recommendation 4.39 falls under the purview of the M.O.E. However, the MSDFS supports the idea of increasing the ratio of social workers to student population in schools with a high incidence of behavioural issues/disruption.

Recommendation 4.40 is specific to the M.O.E.

Under 4.41 and 4.42 are specific to the VWSU.

### **Recommendations under Objective 3**

The Ministry strongly supports Recommendation 4.49, given its importance in ensuring that at-risk children do not “get lost in the system”. It is important to note that an effective Children Registry must be driven by a robust I.T. Social Case Management Software, this point cannot be over-emphasised.

Relatedly, the MSDFS is aware that Gender and Child Affairs (O.P.M) proposes to establish in Fiscal 2017, to establish a National Children’s Registry and a Government Content Management System (GCMS), the GCMS will facilitate data sharing and process automations across Ministries to increase efficiency and reduce errors and retrieval/processing time.

With respect to Recommendation 4.50, it should be noted that the MSDFS has not yet had sight of the draft proposal entitled, " **Trinidad and Tobago National Child Abuse Protocol: A Guide for Key Stakeholders (The Police, Health, and Care Professionals, Educators)**", despite the fact that the deadline of August 2016 has passed. The MSDFS would, however endeavour to obtain a copy of the document and contribute accordingly.

The MSDFS is in support of recommendation 4.51 and suggested quarterly meeting among key stakeholders to review and update processes. Additionally the word “duplicity” should be replaced by the word “duplication”.

**MINISTRY OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND FAMILY SERVICES**