



Joint Select Committee on Human Rights, Equality and Diversity

Public Hearing Summary

Wednesday April 27, 2016 at 1:00 p.m.

Topic:

Inquiry into the support programs and services for children whose parent or guardian was a victim or perpetrator of a violent offence.

Committee Members:

The following Committee Members were present for the meeting:

- Dr. Nyan Gadsby-Dolly, MP – Chairman
- Ms. Sarah Budhu – Vice Chairman
- Mrs. Glenda Jennings-Smith, MP – Member
- Mr. Randall Mitchell, MP – Member
- Mrs. Vidia Gayadeen-Gopeesingh, MP – Member
- Ms. Jennifer Raffoul – Member
- Mr. Dennis Moses – Member
- Mr. Rodger Samuel - Member

Witnesses who appeared:

Ministry of Education

- Ms. Gillian Macintyre Permanent Secretary
- Mr. Harrilal Seecharan Chief Education Officer
- Dr. Kathy Bharratsingh Manager, Student Support Services Division
- Mrs. Cheryl Ann Grant Special Education Coordinator
- Mrs. Sharon Francis-Gaines Social Work Specialist
- Mrs. Darlene Smith-Joseph Guidance Officer II

Office of the Prime Minister

- Ms. Jacqueline Johnson Permanent Secretary (Ag.)
- Mr. Learrie Barry Manager, Policy Research and Planning
- Mrs. Vandana Siew Sankar Ali Assessment Manager (Ag.),
Children's Authority of Trinidad and Tobago
- Ms. Sharifa Ali-Abdullah Director, Children's Authority of Trinidad and Tobago

Ministry of Social Development and Family Services

- Ms. Jacinta Bailey-Sobers Permanent Secretary
- Mr. Haimdath Ramoutar Deputy Permanent Secretary
- Ms. Sharon Winchester Family Service Case Worker

Trinidad and Tobago Police Service

- Ms. Odette Lewis Superintendent, Child Protection Unit
- Mrs. Margaret Sampson-Brown Manager, Victim & Witness Support Unit
- Ms. Beverly Paul Inspector, Child Protection Unit

Key Issues Discussed:

The following are key issues discussed:

1. Challenges:
 - a. Insufficient number of social workers for at risk schools;
 - b. Lack of standardization of the remuneration for social workers amongst Ministries;
 - c. Insufficient resources for psycho-social services;
 - d. Insufficient staffing and physical resources;
2. Research and studies:
 - a. Absence of studies on children whose parent or guardian was a victim or perpetrator of a violent offence;
 - b. Average cost of research ranges from \$200,000 to \$250,000 in the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services and up to \$1 million at the Ministry of Education;
 - c. Children's Authority of Trinidad and Tobago was allocated \$200,000 to conduct research;
3. Presenting conditions for children whose parent or guardian was a victim or perpetrator of a violent offence include:
 - a. Vicarious trauma
 - b. Internalizing behaviours
 - c. Externalizing behaviours
 - d. Attachment difficulties
 - e. Instrumental and emotional 'parentification'
 - f. Triangulation into the intimate partner relational dysfunction
 - g. Substance use disorders
 - h. Gender role stereotypes are influenced
4. Initiatives:
 - a. A Children Registry is being established by the Children's Authority of Trinidad and Tobago to make and devise strategies for a child by tracking each child from birth;
 - b. A "Draft Trinidad and Tobago National Child Abuse Protocol: A Guide for Stakeholders" has been prepared by the Children's Authority of Trinidad and Tobago and will be finalized upon meeting with stakeholders;
 - c. "A.V.A." or Addressing Victims Anywhere has been promoted by the Victim and Witness Support Unit in communities such as Sangre Grande, Chaguanas and San Fernando;

- d. The nine (9) support groups (one (1) in each Division) for parents and children to share with persons in like situations as part of the short and medium term development of a child;
5. Statistics:
 - a. Due to limited resources, the Children's Authority of Trinidad and Tobago have focused resources on emergency cases and 500 emergency cases (out of the 5,300 cases) need placement;
 - b. The Children's Authority of Trinidad and Tobago records indicate that there are:
 - i. 34 children whose parent or guardian was a victim of a violent offence;
 - ii. 41 children whose parent or guardian was a perpetrator of a violent offence;
 - iii. 105 children whose parent or guardian was a victim and a perpetrator of a violent offence
 - c. The Ministry of Education's records indicate there are currently 283 students whose parent or guardian was a victim or perpetrator of a violent offence. The majority of these students are in the primary school system;
 - d. The Child Protection Unit has dealt with 2,123 reports from May 2015 to April 26, 2016;
 6. Current relationship and collaboration amongst stakeholders:
 - a. The absence of an official mechanism for collaboration;
 - b. The gap in collaboration amongst key stakeholders;
 7. Treatments:
 - a. The treatment for post-traumatic stress disorder for a child;
 - b. The behavioural assessment of a child is conducted by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services;
 - c. Follow-up structures for children once the parent has been re-introduced;
 8. Needs:
 - a. The need for proactive mechanisms to assess a child, since children may not present outward signs and symptoms;
 - b. The need for transition placements for children;
 - c. The need for long term support for children;

View the Hearing:

The hearing can be viewed on our YouTube page via the following link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yIltFBTksJjs>

Contact Information:

You may contact the Committee's Secretary at jschumanrights@tparliament.org or 624-7275 Ext. 2288/2627.

*Committees Unit
April 27, 2016*