



**Summary of Proceedings
Public Hearing**

Joint Select Committee on Social Services and Public Administration

Held on Wednesday February 15, 2017

[10:15 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.]

Inquiry: An inquiry into the existing arrangements and possible options for regulating geriatric care facilities/old age homes in Trinidad and Tobago.

Objectives of the inquiry

The objectives of the inquiry are:

- 1. To assess the systems in place to regulate and monitor geriatric care facilities/ old age Homes in Trinidad and Tobago;**
- 2. To determine the prevalence of cases of abuse and negligence of the elderly at Geriatric Care Facilities/ Old Age homes;**
- 3. To assess the efficacy of existing legislative framework relative to Geriatric facilities;**
- 4. To determine whether there is a need for an expansion in the capacity of geriatric care facilities/ old age homes in Trinidad and Tobago.**

Venue: The J. Hamilton Maurice Room, Mezzanine Floor, Office of the Parliament, Tower D, the Port of Spain International Waterfront Centre, 1A Wrightson Road, Port of Spain.

Committee members

The following committee members were present:

1. Dr Dhanayshar Mahabir – Chairman

2. Mr. Esmond Forde, MP – Vice-Chairman
3. Brig. Gen. (Ret.) Ancil Antoine, MP
4. Mrs. Christine Newallo-Hosein, MP

Witnesses who appeared

The following officials of the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services and the Ministry of Health appeared before the Committee:

Ministry of Social Development and Family Services

- i. Mrs. Jacinta Bailey-Sobers – Permanent Secretary
- ii. Mr. Vijay Gangapersad – Chief Technical Officer (Ag.)
- iii. Dr Jennifer Rouse – Director, Division of Ageing
- iv. Dr Barry Ishmael – Legal Officer II

Ministry of Health

- i. Mr. Richard Madray- Permanent Secretary
- ii. Dr Roshan Parasram- Chief Medical Officer
- iii. Dr Abdul Hamid- General Manager, Primary Care, NCRHA
- iv. Mr. Beesham Seetaram- EPP, Programme Administrator

Key Issues Discussed

The following are the key subject areas/issues discussed during the hearing:

Ministry of Social Development and Family Services

- i. The Ministry has attempted to address the issue of inadequate staff at the Division of Aging and the implementation of regulations for old age homes. With regard to inadequate staff, the Ministry has conducted interviews to fill vacancies within the Division of Aging;
- ii. The need for safety and life preservation equipment to be maintained at Geriatric Facilities under the purview of the MoSDFS. For example, ensure that panic buttons

- and smoke detector alarms at these facilities are functioning. This point was made with particular reference to the Couva Home for the Aged;
- iii. The need for appropriate assessment of homes to be conducted by the Division of Aging, in order to address the various infrastructural and equipment deficiencies of the 10 homes in receipt of government subventions;
 - iv. Reports from Geriatric Homes must be submitted to the Ministry by each geriatric care facilities/ old age homes in receipt of government subvention so that their respective needs can be assessed;
 - v. When the Homes for Older Persons Act 2007 is implemented owners of geriatric care facilities/old age homes will be required to acquire Liability Insurance valued at a minimum of \$100,000.00;
 - vi. The need for MoSDFS to be actively involved in the activities of the MoH's Multi-Disciplinary Team, that is responsible of the monitoring and evaluation of the 177 privately owned old age homes in Trinidad;
 - vii. The need for staff employed at geriatric care facilities/old age homes to have access to the appropriate training in geriatric care.

Ministry of Health

- i. Lack of staff in the Ministry of Health, such as Public Health Inspectors and County Officers. These officers are required to monitor and evaluate of privately owned geriatric care facilities/old age homes;
- ii. Both MoH and MoSDFS have engaged in discussions in order to facilitate greater collaborations between the both Ministries with reference to monitoring and evaluation of geriatric care facilities/old age homes;
- iii. Fees to MoH not being paid by privately owned geriatric care facilities/old age homes. In 2016, 23 out of 177 privately own homes paid their annual fees to the MoH.
- iv. The Ministry of Health has never audited a Geriatric Home/Care Facility and has only audited major private hospitals. However, the Ministry is scheduled to conduct it first audit for the year 2017 in March;

- v. The need for appropriate categorization of privately owned homes. This recommendation was made with particular reference to the observations made by the Committee during a site visit to St Magdalene’s Haven on January 16th, 2017.
- vi. Unavailability of decanting centres/facilities for “long stay” elderly patients;
- vii. The Ministry must move beyond simply licencing geriatric care facilities/old age homes and become more actively engaged in the managing, evaluation and monitoring of privately owned homes;
- viii. The need for an increase in the fees for acquiring a license to operate a geriatric home;
- ix. The absence of Geriatricians (geriatric specialists) within the local health system; and
- x. There are currently no facilities available to accommodate “long-stay “patients under the age of 55 who are unable to access housing. As a consequence, these persons are placed in geriatric care facilities.

Recommendations proffered during the Public Hearing

The following recommendations emanated from the discussions:

- i. decanting facilities for elderly persons who are socially displaced should be established;
- ii. Improve the level of collaboration between the MoSDFS and MoH as it concerns the oversight and monitoring of all old age homes;
- iii. Implementation of Gerontology programmes;
- iv. The hiring/training of Geriatricians (geriatric specialists) within the health system;
- v. Enforcement of existing legislations;
- vi. training in geriatric care and basic psychology should be made a prerequisite for all staff employed in private and government funded Geriatric Care Facilities.
- vii. Frequent inspection and monitoring of both privately owned homes and homes in receipt of government subventions; and
- viii. Ensuring that homes comply/adhere to the policies implemented by MoSDFS and MoH.

*Joint Select Committee on Social Services and Public Administration
(Including Education, Health, Gender, Tourism, Public Administration, Labour, Culture,
Community Development and other Social Services)*

View the Hearing

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

<https://youtu.be/-imoSHVBCVY>

Contact the Committee's Secretary

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Committees Unit

February 21st, 2017