



MINISTRY OF HEALTH Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

**MINISTRY OF HEALTH'S WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS TO
THE JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL SERVICES &
PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION**

**ON AN EXAMINATION OF EXISTING ARRANGEMENTS & POSSIBLE
OPTIONS FOR REGULATING GERIATRIC CARE FACILITIES/ OLD AGED
HOMES**

MINISTRY OF HEALTH

12/09/2017

JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL SERVICES & PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

On an Examination of Existing Arrangements and Possible Options for Regulating Geriatric Care Facilities/ Old Age Homes

OBJECTIVE 1: TO ACCESS THE SYSTEMS IN PLACE TO REGULATE AND MONITOR GERIATRIC CARE FACILITIES/ OLD AGE HOMES IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO.

A. With reference to monitoring and evaluation of both government funded and privately owned Geriatric Care Facilities/ Old Age Homes, the Committee recommends the following:

- **That both the MoH and the MoSDFS collaborate and assume a more proactive approach as it concerns the oversight and monitoring of all Old Age Homes in Trinidad;**

Discussions were held with both the MoH and the MoSDFS for a proactive approach in the oversight and monitoring of the Old Aged Homes. To this end, the standards established by the MoSDFS have been adopted as part of the overall Audit Tool used for the assessment of these homes. Furthermore, multidisciplinary audit teams have been developed and discussions are advanced to action the proclamation of the Home for the Aged Act.

- **Furthermore, that both Ministries seek assistance from and engage in discussions with the Regional Corporations to devise initiatives that can expand the role of Corporations in the oversight and monitoring of Geriatric Care Facilities/ Old Age Homes in Trinidad;**

The audit teams consist of members of various skill sets inclusive of the inspectors of the Division of Ageing, the public health inspector from both the County Medical Officers of Health (CMOH) and the Regional Corporations. Plans have been developed

to ensure greater collaboration in the registration, assessment and oversight of these homes on a community basis.

- **And that both Ministries engage and collaborate with the THA's Aging unit, regional corporations, and other stakeholders to assist in strengthening policies to maintain, monitor and evaluate homes throughout Trinidad and by extension Tobago.**

The MoSDFS collaborated with the Tobago House of Assembly's (THA) Division of Health and Social Services in the formulation of a regulatory framework for the implementation of the Homes for Older Persons legislation. Both the MoH and the MoSDFS have agreed that follow-up discussions will be held with the THA's Ageing unit, Regional Corporations and other stakeholders to advance the regulatory framework.

E. The Committee recommends the establishment of a working committee comprising officials from the MoH and the MoSDFS to monitor and track the 187 Geriatric Care Facilities/ Old Age Homes. In this regard, the development and implementation of a shared, dedicated database comprising essential information on each home should be considered.

Collaboration began in February 2017, where both Ministries met and agreed on a framework and terms of reference for inspections, the composition of the teams inclusive of both Ministries and the method of reporting of findings and abuse to the relevant authorities. Both Ministries have begun the process of establishing a single shared database as inspections and payment of requisite fees continues.

F. Regarding fees to be paid to the MoH, the Committee recommends the following:

- **The Ministry of Health must act urgently to identify the various operators of Geriatric Homes who have failed to pay their annual license renewal fee. This Committee does not consider the current fee structure to be exorbitant and therefore, there should be a zero- tolerance approach regarding defaulting Homes. We expect that all Homes who have defaulted on these payments to be given notice and arrangements made to collect outstanding fees within two months from the presentation of this report.**

The Ministry of Health having received a list of Old Aged Homes from the MoSDFS, has contacted all homes and payment and inspection of many of these homes have begun. For the homes who have failed to pay the requisite fees, adhoc inspections will be conducted to enforce the Act.

- **The revised fee structure should be advanced with the approval of the Ministry of Finance. The fee structure should reflect in some measure the costs the State has to incur to conduct inspections and monitor these facilities for compliance with the law. Furthermore, the Committee recognized that there is a need for a regulatory framework to ensure that fees are paid to the MoH in a timely manner.**

The revised fee structure was sent to the Ministry of Finance for consideration in the new fiscal year 2018.

OBJECTIVE 3: TO ASSESS THE EFFICIENCY OF EXISTING LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK RELATIVE TO GERIATRIC FACILITIES

A. Notwithstanding the intention to remove matters concerning Geriatric Homes from under the remit of the Private Hospitals Act, the MoH must collaborate closely with the MoSDFS in setting and regulating standards of care provided to the elderly facilities in which such care is provided.

To this end, the standards established by the MoSDFS have been adopted as part of the overall Audit Tool used for the assessment of the homes. Furthermore, an inspector from the Division of Ageing is included in the multidisciplinary Audit teams as part of the further collaboration in the assessment and audit of Homes for the Aged.

C. We recommend that the application fees payable for a license to establish a Geriatric Home be reassessed urgently. Pending the proclamation of the HOP Act, a reassessment of the fees set out in the Third Schedule of the Private Hospitals Act should be conducted.

The revised fee structure was sent to the Ministry of Finance for consideration in the new fiscal year 2018.

OBJECTIVE 4: TO DETERMINE WHETHER THERE IS A NEED FOR AN EXPANSION IN THE CAPACITY OF GERIATRIC CARE FACILITIES/ OLD AGE HOMES IN TRINIDAD

D. That staff employed at Geriatric Homes/Facilities be mandated/required to possess training in geriatric care, basic psychology and counselling and any other necessary form of training as recommended by MoH;

The legal departments of both the MoH and the MoSDFS will collaborate with officials of the Office of the Attorney General to ensure that the requirement of training in geriatric care, basic psychology and counselling are captured in the revised legislation.

E. That there be greater collaboration between the MoSDFS and the MoH, with regard to research and collection of data on the elderly population. In addition, a shared digital registry should be created to facilitate accurate collection and storage of data on the elderly population residing in homes.

Both the MoH and the MoSDFS began the process of establishing a single shared database which will include the data currently being captured by the MoH through the application forms and inspection reports regarding the number of elders residing in homes.

F. That the line Ministries collaborate with a view to acquiring the assistance of Gerontologists and Geriatricians to provide expert advice on:

- i. The type of training staff employed or intended to be employed at the different categories of Homes should possess;**
- ii. The formulation of specific interventions directed at the elderly;**
- iii. Whether existing policy documents that guide or are intended to guide geriatric care in this country are aligned with international “best practice”.**

The services of these specialist medical professionals can be sourced through joint venture collaborations between the line Ministries and local/foreign Universities. Foreign health care institutions willing to provide technical support (in-person or via distance-learning) can also be engaged.

G. Furthermore, the Ministry of Health should advise the Ministry of Public Administration and Communications on whether expertise in the area of Gerontology and Geriatric is a priority area for national human resource development. If considered a priority area, consideration should be given to the granting of scholarships.

The Ministry of Health submitted Geriatric Medicine as a high priority area to the Scholarship Division, Ministry of Public Administration and Communication for consideration in the 2014-2018 period.