



Sustained Psycho-Social Support Needed-Children's Advocate

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Kudos to....

“The RJR Communications Group and Love 101 for airing the OCA's Public Service Announcements during Child Month.”

“All the students who sat the Grade Six Achievement Test (GSAT)...Congrats on a job well done”

Children's Advocate, Mrs. Mary Clarke calls for sustained psychosocial intervention programmes to help the children to heal following the joint police –military incursion in West Kingston.

Mrs. Clarke, who toured the area and spoke with some of the children, pointed out that based on her interactions, the activities of the operation will undoubtedly have a lasting effect on many of the children including those from other communities outside of the immediate area.

To this end, she explained that sustained counseling as well as effective social interventions will be necessary for the children to recover from what they have seen, heard and experience.

However, counseling for the children, Mrs. Clarke noted must be done in the context of the family, as parents also need guidance and effective therapy.

The Children's Advocate also warned that as children return to school, teachers and guidance counsellors must pay special attention to any changes in their behaviours and mannerisms as children manifest trauma in different ways.

Continuing, she explained that educators and caregivers must be given the necessary guidance to be able to identify the child who, with



Children's Advocate comforts a young resident of Tivoli Gardens during a tour of the community on June 2

minimal counseling, can get past the trauma, as opposed to the child who will need long, intense and extensive counseling for rehabilitation.

The OCA is among a multi-sectoral group set up by the Department of Social Work at the UWI to conduct direct and indirect social intervention programmes in the community.

The OCA is also supporting the plans and initiatives of the MOE to work through the schools to help with normalizing the children's lives.

An investigation Officer from the agency was also posted in the community to take complaints from and on the behalf of children whose rights were violated during the operations.

Commuters Benefitted From Pre Labour Day Exhibition

Commuters who used the Half Way Tree Transport Centre on May 19th were given the opportunity to interact with representatives from various Government ministries and agencies during the pre Labour Day Exhibition hosted by the National Labour Day Committee.

The exhibition, which also formed part of the Workers Week celebrations was organized around the theme '**Our children... Show them We Care**'.

The Office of the Children's Advocate was one of several agencies that participated. Other agencies included the National Centre for Youth Development, Ananda Alert System, Jamaica National Foundation, the Child Development Agency, the Possibility Programme, Ministry of Labour and Social Security and the National Transformation Team.



Public Education Manager, Georgia Garvey speaks with students during the pre Labour Day Exhibition

SUCCESS of Child Care Facilities Largely Dependent on Management on the Ground

As part of its responsibility to review services provided by relevant authorities for children to ensure that they are adequate and effective, a team from the OCA including the Children's Advocate continued their unannounced visits to children's homes and places of safety. The team visited five children's homes in the parish of Manchester recently.

The homes visited were Mount Olivet Boy's Home, New Vision Children's Home, Hanbury Children's Home, New Hope Children's Home and Windsor Lodge Children's Home in the parish of Manchester.

According to Mrs. Clarke, the visits were aimed at reviewing the management of the homes and assessing the level of compliance with the Child Care and Protection Act,

2004. This included, interviews with the manager and staff, inspection of the facility as well as speaking with the children.

Where discrepancies are found, the matter is referred to the relevant Ministries and Agencies for immediate intervention.

Commenting on the visits, Mrs. Clarke explained that based on observation she is convinced that the appearance, quality of service offered and the wellbeing of the children are largely dependent on the management at the institution, the level of support from the relevant authorities and the community.

The team will be conducting additional visits to other child care institutions during the next quarter.

Project to Strengthen Private/Social Sector Collaboration and Coordination Underway

Plans are in high gear for the commencement of a series of consultations with key stakeholders in the private and social sector as part of the Private /Social Sector Collaboration Project being undertaken by the OCA.

The project which is being funded by UNICEF, will seek to bring together various NGOs, CBOs, Foundations, Service Clubs and other charitable organizations in the parish of St. James, Portland and Kingston in the initial phase to explore different ways to foster greater collaboration.

When the pilot is completed, the information gleaned will be used to develop and establish a national mechanism to facilitate networking, partnership building and information sharing among private and social sector stakeholders in order to achieve better results for children at the parish and national levels.

Study to Determine Profile of Children in Conflict with the Law to be Commissioned

In light of the increasing number of children coming in contact with the law, the OCA will be undertaking a study aimed at developing a profile of Children in Conflict with the Law as part of its research activities for 2010.

According to Mr. Dwayne Cargill, Research Officer at the OCA, the study is being conducted in an effort to provide a better understanding of the reasons why children come in contact with the law. This, he said, will enable the OCA to make informed recommendations for appropriate prevention and intervention strategies in this area.

The study is expected to last for three months will seek to capture data on the demographic and socio economic background of the children and their families, mental health indicators, educational attainment, types of offences committed and how the juvenile justice system respond to children who come in contact with the law.

The Child Care and Protection Act, 2004 empowers the Children's Advocate to review laws and services relating to child's rights and best interests. The Children's Advocate also has the power to make policy recommendations and give advice to parliament, Ministries and relevant authorities on issues impacting the rights and best interest of children.

In fulfilling this function, the OCA focuses on one critical area for research each year. Last year, the OCA undertook an extensive study of the Foster Care System in Jamaica in an attempt to promote fostering as a viable alternative to institutionalization.

OCA Commence Preparation for Litigation on Behalf of Armadale Victims

The OCA has retained the legal service of Mrs. Jacqueline Samuels Brown, QC to pursue civil proceedings on behalf of the girls who were affected by the fire at the Armadale Juvenile Correction Centre in 2009.

Seven of the 61 girls who were housed at the facility in St. Ann died as a result of injuries sustained in the fire.

According to Deputy Children's Advocate, Justice Henderson Downer, the investigation officer is currently collecting statements from the victims and their parents along with appropriate medical evidence so claims can be filed on their behalf in the Supreme Court.

To date information have been collected from approximately 40 girls and claims filed for three of them.

"The Legal Officers are in the process of preparing other claims for submission," he further noted, adding that the process of gathering the necessary information and preparing the claims is a long and difficult one as many of the girls have been reassigned to various institutions while others were given Licence and sent home.

Continuing, Justice Downer explained that after the claims have been filed, negotiation will commence with the Attorney General's Department to ascertain whether or not there can be a settlement.

"If negotiation is unsuccessful, that is, there is no agreement on the matter of compensation between the Children's Advocate representing the children and the Attorney General representing the Government, then there will have to be litigation in the supreme court," the Deputy Children's Advocate pointed out.

8 Tips To Help Children Cope in Traumatic Situation

Whether the event is man-made or a natural disaster, the result can be very upsetting for children, especially the younger ones.

However, with strong parental support many children are better able to cope in the aftermath of the event.

Parents and professionals can provide children with the emotional support they need during these difficult times by:

- Providing reassurance and physical comfort

- Providing a strong physical presence modeling and managing their own expression of feelings and coping.
- Establishing routines with flexibility
- Accepting children's regressed behaviors while encouraging and supporting a return to more age appropriate activity
- Helping them use familiar coping strategies
- Helping them share in maintaining their safety
- Encouraging them to tell their story in words, play or pictures to acknowledge and normalize their experience
- Discussing what to do or what has been done to prevent the event from recurring.



TALKING POINT: Cyber

So we are all well aware of what it means to be bullied and the old traditional form where someone who is deemed to be powerful, whether imagined or otherwise, constantly pick on the 'weak' guy oftentimes for no apparent reason.

He or she persistently call him names, take away his possessions and some how all most everyone else join in the torment.

Well, there is a new face to bullying and according to internet safety experts this is a growing problem among children especially teenagers .

Cyber bullying , according to **stopcyberbullying.org**, an

expert organization dedicated to internet safety, security and privacy, is a situation when a child, 'tween' or teen is repeatedly 'tormented, threatened, harassed, humiliated, embarrassed or otherwise targeted' by another child or teenager using text messaging, email, instant messaging or any other type of digital technology."

Cyber-bullying comes in many forms and can be as simple as continuing to send unwanted e-mail to someone; sending threats, sexual remarks and pejorative labels online or posting rumors or gossip on websites and social networking pages and instigate others to dislike and gang up on the target.

Unlike physical bullying, electronic bullies can remain virtually anonymous using temporary email accounts, pseudonyms in chat rooms, instant messaging programs and cell phone text messaging to mask their identity.

The fact is, many children are getting their reputations ruined as a

result of cyber bullies . Oftentimes the victims become isolated, withdrawn and may even stop going to school. In some cases, victims are so humiliated, isolated and constantly tormented, they take their own lives.

While there are not many reported cases of cyber bullying in Jamaica, with the proliferation of technology, this is worth considering as an emerging issue especially in light of reported incidences where cell phones were used to record sexual activities school children and emailed to other phones.

By now you maybe wondering what can be done especially since children are more computer savvy than many adults including their parents.

Well, one preventative measure is to talk to children about the issue including its consequences. You can also discuss rules surrounding the use of the internet and safety online including what they should and shouldn't post on their and other person's social networking page . You may also engage your school administration and Parent Teachers Association in the discussions . What is important is that we start the discussions before the issue gets out of our control.

NOTICE BOARD

- ✓ World Population Day July 11
- ✓ International Literacy Day Sept 8
- ✓ OCA/UNICEF Private-Social

Sector Collaboration Consultations:

- Montego Bay July 7th & Aug 11th
- Portland July 22nd & Aug 18th
- Kingston July 26th & Aug 23rd

NEXT Issue:

- OCA representatives presents on Foster Care an Alternative to Institutionalization at the ISPCAN Congress in Honolulu
- Update on Children In Court Programme