



## OCA receives majority of complaints for 2012 against CDA

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A total of 383 cases were reported to the OCA in 2012. 237 were recording in the OCA's Journal of Complaints, while 146 were referred by the Office of The Children's Registry (OCR). Reports made to the OCA are divided into two databases: 1. 'Journal of Complaints', which comprises of complaints made directly to the OCA by the public, and those which the OCR refers to the OCA.

Journal of Complaints (JC)	Children's Registry (CR)	Total
237	146	383

The data reveals that the most frequent cases dealt with at the OCA are complaints against the Child

Development Agency (CDA) and child care facilities, as well as requests for legal representation.

### Number of cases brought to the

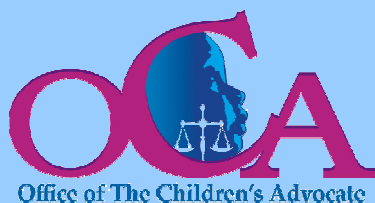
#### OCA by Type, 2012

Physical Abuse	12
Education Matter	10
Sexual Abuse	6
Health Issues	1
Financial Assistance	3
Legal Representation	87
Complaint Against CDA, Government Child Care Facility	99
Other	19

The OCA receives complaints for children who are predominantly between the ages of 14 to 17 years old.

#### Age Range of Child Victims

Age 0 - 4	12
Age 5 - 8	23
Age 9 - 13	49
Age 14 - 17	103
Age 18	1
Unknown	56



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## *OCA brings Christmas cheer to Anderson's Place of Safety*

### *(Pictorial Highlights)*





## *OCA brings Christmas cheer to Anderson's Place of Safety*

### *(Pictorial Highlights)*



## ***OCA saddened by alleged suicide of Ward of the State***

The Office of The Children's Advocate expressed concerned about reports of a female ward of the State who was being housed at the Horizon Adult Remand Centre in St. Andrew, committing suicide on November 21, 2012.

Children's Advocate, Diahann Gordon Harrison, noted that such a situation is of grave concern to the Office, as all children in State facilities must be secure from all forms of danger, whether such threats are from eexternal forces or committed upon the wards by themselves.

"It is truly a sad occurrence and we use this medium to publicly extend our condolences to her family and close friends. We are acutely aware as well of the effect that this incident must have on the other children in the facility and we will be intervening in this regard", Mrs. Gordon Harrison said.

Mrs. Gordon Harrison also noted that the incident has served to highlight the need for a separate remand facility for girls, which is appropriately and adequately staffed with resource personnel.

"The OCA recognises that resource constraints exist, but maintains that the authorities must continue to view this need as a priority. The psycho-social rehabilitation of our children who find themselves in conflict with the law must be adequately addressed by catering to their needs through multi-faceted approaches."

"The OCA has already made contact with the Department of Correctional Services (DCS), and we have advised that our Office will also be launching its own investigation into the matter, as under the Child Care and Protection Act (2004), we are duty bound to conduct our own probe," the Children's Advocate added.



## Universal Children's Day 2012

### OCA calls for collective responsibility in the fight against child abuse

Jamaica joined forces with international partners and organizations worldwide to commemorate Universal Children's Day on, November 20, 2012. The OCA reminded all Jamaicans that as a nation we must share in the collective responsibility of ensuring that all our children are loved, protected and adequately provided for.

Children's Advocate, Diahann Gordon Harrison, noted that despite various challenges Jamaica has made significant strides in the area of child development, as Jamaica is ranked among the leading countries in the Caribbean



Children's Advocate, Diahann Gordon Harrison

and Latin American region. "Our infant mortality rate stands at 19 per 1,000 live births; we have achieved universal access to primary education; there have also been tremendous improvements in the early childhood sector, among other positive developmental indicators which map the progress of our children."

Mrs. Gordon-Harrison noted however that despite the strides being made, the issue of child abuse and neglect continues to be a growing cause for concern. "If child abuse is not addressed in a multi-dimensional way, it stands the chance of possibly erasing our gains as a nation. For too long some amongst us have sat silently while these horrid acts against our children continue. Persons in every village, every community and by extension every person who has any relevant information, must break their silence and assist the authorities in bringing the perpetrators before the courts, as the mechanisms that currently exist cannot perform effectively if the cases that warrant investigation and prosecution are kept secret. Together, we also must strive to rescue those children who continue to be the subject of abuse or who are in vulnerable situations. "

"In the words of former President of South Africa, Nelson Mandela: *there can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children*", the Children's Advocate added.



## *Tips to keep your children safe over the holidays*



Along with the excitement of the upcoming holidays, comes increased stress and worry for some parents and guardians. To alleviate some of the stress caused by the holiday season, here are a few tips to help you keep your children safe.

**Know their whereabouts.** Always have information on where your children will be, who they will be hanging around, and any additional information you as a parent/guardian will need so you know your children are safe. Communication is also very important here, as you and your children should keep the lines of dialogue open at all times.

**Be careful of people who make your children uncomfortable.** If your child expresses displeasure or behaves uneasy around a particular person whether it be a close relative or family friend, do not discount your child's feelings. If being around this person makes your child uncomfortable do not allow your child to be left alone with this person.

**Toy safety is critical.** Before buying a toy or allowing your child to play with a gift that he/she received, ensure that you check the age appropriateness of the toy, as well as for any loose parts, as young children can choke on small parts contained in toys or games.

**Stay healthy and practice good hygiene.** Ensure that your children receive their necessary vaccination based on their age. During the holiday period because of the change in temperature children are sometimes prone to get sick. Check with your child's paediatrician or clinic to ensure that your child has received his/her vaccines. Also remember to encourage your children to wash their hands so they can help prevent the possibility of spreading germs and getting sick. Hands should be washed with soap and clean running water for at least 20 seconds.

**Merry Christmas and a Prosperous 2013 from the staff of the OCA!**

