

Levels G - 7, Tower D The Port-of-Spain International Waterfront Centre 1A Wrightson Road, Port-of-Spain

Joint Select Committee on Human Rights, Equality and Diversity

Public Hearing Summary

Friday November 03, 2017 at 10:35 a.m.

Topic:

Inquiry into the impact on the Mental Health and Family Life of Remandees at the Remand Prisons.

Committee Members:

The following Committee Members were present for the meeting:

- Dr. Nyan Gadsby-Dolly, MP Chairman
- Mrs. Glenda Jennings-Smith, MP Vice- Chairman
- Mr. Kazim Hosein Member
- Dr. Dhanayshar Mahabir Member
- Mr. Dennis Moses- Member
- Mrs. Vidia Gayadeen Gopeesingh

Witnesses who appeared:

Ministry of Health

•	Mr. Richard Madray	Permanent Secretary
•	Dr. Roshan Parasram	Chief Medical Officer
•	Dr. Hazel Othello	Medical Chief of Staff, St. Ann's Psychiatric
		Hospital
٠	Professor Gerard Hutchinson	Head, Clinical Medical Services, UWI

Association of Psychiatrists of Trinidad and Tobago

• Dr. Dominic Obiajulu Nwokolo Registered Psychiatrist

Trinidad and Tobago Prison Service (TTPrS)

•	Mr. Vel Lewis	Permanent Secretary
•	Mr. William Alexander	Commissioner of Prisons (Ag.)
•	Mr. Sherwin Bruce	Assistant Commissioner of Prisons (Ag.)
•	Mr. John Lopez	Prisons Supervisor (Infirmary)
•	Mr. Sheridan Joseph	Ag. Prisons Supervisor (Ag.)

Vision on Mission

- Mr. Wayne Chance
- Mr. Gordon Husbands

Executive Director Director

Key Issues Discussed were:

Mental Health

- 1. There were no statistics or studies done in Trinidad and Tobago to prove whether the prison system and the environment is a breeding ground for mental health illnesses. However, studies were done internationally which show that overcrowding is a catalyst for mental health illnesses;
- 2. There is no mental health screening for remandees upon entering the Remand Prison;
- **3.** The disparity in the initial medical assessment of the remand prisoners which favours screening for physical illnesses over mental illnesses;
- **4.** The challenges faced by Prison Infirmary Officers when seeking compliance from remandees to conduct screening tests;
- **5.** The procedures currently in place in the Remand Prison to detect and diagnose or treat with a remandee who is mentally ill;
- **6.** The need for a standard procedure to assess the mental health of the remandees and to develop a medical profile on each remandee;
- 7. The need to improve the level of the mechanisms at the prisons specifically in the areas of case management and information sharing on the remandees;
- **8.** The creation of a module with the input of the certified Psychiatrists Association of Trinidad and Tobago, which can be taught to all Prison Officers to allow for a higher detection rate of the mental health illnesses of the remandees;
- **9.** The training of the Infirmary Officers to include the COSTAAT module and training by Psychiatrists from the St. Ann's Hospital;
- **10.** The lack of resources and time which may inhibit a psychiatrist to conduct a complete diagnoses of exclusion on the remandees to accurately diagnose the mental health illness of the remandees;

- **11.** The need for the Prison Rules to be amended to allow for the remandees to attend the programmes available at the prison facilities;
- **12.** The \$54 million upgrade for the Remand Prison which would include the design plans for a purpose-built remand prison which can allow for increased space for the remandees and more developmental programmes and services;
- **13.** The recommendation that a policy be developed to mandate the attendance of remandees in programmes provided by the prison service;
- 14. The need to increase the current number of 84 Prison Infirmary Officers;
- **15.** The need for stakeholder input and collaboration to deal with the challenges faced by the prisons;
- 16. The impact of the uncertain release on remandees which impacts on mental health;
- 17. The backlog in the mental health evaluation for persons sent by the Court to the St. Ann's Hospital for assessment; and
- **18.** The need for robust pre-release programmes for the remandees which include the services which are given to convicted prisoners who have been released;

Family Life

- **19.** The need for a data on the factors that contribute to the effects of remandees/ prisoners on family life;
- 20. The mental health effects on the child of a remandee can have a negative impact;
- 21. The lack of adequate bonding of the family unit of the remandee; and
- 22. The need for increased programmes which allow the family to visit the remand prison.

View the Hearing:

The hearing can be viewed on our YouTube page via the following link: <u>https://youtu.be/-GNMozmQkGM</u>

Contact Information:

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

Committees Unit November 07, 2017