



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

Tuesday, 14 April 2020

Priority: **HIGH**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **SOCIAL SUPPORT GRANTS AVAILABLE TO ALL VULNERABLE CITIZENS**

**Port of Spain---** The Minister of Social Development and Family Services, The Honourable Camille Robinson Regis wishes to dispel media reports which give the notion that the Social Support Grants are difficult to access by those most in need of it. Following the measures taken by the Government to prevent the spread of the Coronavirus, the Ministry immediately responded with the payment of additional financial transfers to existing vulnerable clients in receipt of food support, public assistance and disability assistance and families with children of the School Feeding Programme in the sum of over 46 million dollars. The Ministry also instituted administrative arrangements with the Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development to provide financial assistance, food support and rental assistance grants for those who are retrenched, terminated or have experienced loss of income.

Within one week of its introduction, in excess of 4000 applications have been received from members of the public for processing and directives to commence payments were sent to the bank on Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> of April 2020. Although the procedure involved only electronic transfer of applications as the preferred mechanism to avoid social contact, access to forms were made available on the websites of ALL Government Ministries and agencies and also at local Government Municipal Corporations and a significant number of applications were placed at our social welfare districts offices, where assistance to complete the forms is available. It is at these said offices that forms are also being returned for processing.

In our most recent efforts to ensure that persons have access to the measures, we have ensured that application forms are now available from selected Police stations throughout the country and completed forms should be returned to the Social Welfare district offices closest to where persons reside. Persons may also obtain assistance from the Ministry's call centre and through the TTConnect Chat Box facility for completion of the form. In the coming week the call centre will be further upgraded to bring greater capacity and an online fillable form will be introduced to facilitate ease of access to the grants and resubmission of the form online.

It should be noted that while the procedures for application may seem stringent, this approach is in place to avoid instances of fraud and to ensure that payments are made to the correct bank accounts. Appropriate check and balances must also be in place as the Ministry has an obligation to account to taxpayers in a timely and transparent manner with regard to disbursement of funds. The Ministry wishes to assure that once the initial hiccups have been addressed, which would be experienced with the introduction of new measures for a significant portion of the population in such an unprecedented environment, these grants will be made available to all persons requiring it and no one will be left behind.

**-End-**

**For more information contact:**

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