



MEDIA RELEASE

April 18, 2020

Priority: **HIGH**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Ministry of Social Development and Family Services working towards expediting payments of COVID Relief Grants

April 18, 2020 --- The emergency grants which have been implemented by the Government targeting thousands affected by the **Stay at Home Order** continues to be accessed by employees and the self-employed across several sectors in Trinidad and Tobago. Both the social support measures from the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services (*MSDFS*), as well as the Salary Relief Grant under the Ministry of Finance are palpable indicators of a general sense of care for those who are now experiencing various levels of financial and economic challenges.

While the *Ministry of Social Development and Family Services* continues to work assiduously towards the continued delivery of emergency support services for more than one hundred and seventy thousand individuals and households under its existing grants system, these unprecedented circumstances have called for a balance between physical distancing and the assurance that proper procedures are followed in accessing and disbursing these grants to those most in need. In this regard, there is an urgent appeal for the national community to be responsible, to work safely and smartly, while attempting to satisfy the criteria for the emergency relief grants being offered.

In highlighting the various measures being implemented by her executive and staff over the last few weeks, Minister Robinson-Regis emphasized the need to ensure accountability, transparency and equity in the distribution of the said grants and services from the MSDFS. As persons continue to access application forms for income support, rental assistance and the temporary food support across various Government portals, such as that of the MSDFS, the Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development as well as ttConnect, the option of online applications remains the preferred one, as designated email accounts for the submission have been established.

Where access to the internet and other support devices such as printers and scanners, is not available, the Ministry has ensured that hardcopies of the forms are available at designated Police Stations, as well as, *Social Welfare* District Offices, to discourage citizens from venturing too far from their homes. To date, sixty-three (63) Police Stations have and continue to be supplied with the requisite forms and brochures from the Ministry. All completed applications are to be e-mailed to the addresses provided on the application forms. Only in dire circumstances should the forms be dropped off at the relevant social welfare district offices. Citizens should note that the Ministry is working towards speedy verification and processing of applications, which will be paid either through cheques or direct deposit to the accounts of applicants.

Additionally, the Ministry wishes to confirm that the distribution of temporary food cards for households of students who are registered with the School Feeding Programme of the Ministry of Education, will continue until all of the needy cases are addressed. The Ministry will continue to collaborate and work closely with all of forty-one (41) Members of Parliament in this regard. As such, the Ministry encourages parents and guardians to await notification from their Member of Parliament, so as to avoid crowding at the constituency offices, as well as, its Social Welfare District Offices.

The *Ministry of Social Development and Family Services* assures citizens that its Executive and staff continue to work towards the immediate satisfaction of demands for national relief during this very sensitive and challenging time.

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