



Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

Ministry of Social Development and Family Services



MEDIA CONFERENCE SPEAKING NOTES Wednesday April 8, 2020

UPDATE ON IMPLEMENTATION OF COVID-19 SOCIAL SUPPORT MEASURES

The Ministry of Social Development and Family Services (MSDFS) is pleased to provide an update on the Implementation of the Social Support Measures which are available to vulnerable individuals and families in light of COVID-19. **Permit me to firstly express gratitude to the Executive and Staff of the Ministry, as an essential agency, for the yeoman service they are providing for the people of Trinidad and Tobago.**

More than 75,600 individuals and families benefitted from social protection measures implemented by the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services so far. When one considers that the average household size in Trinidad and Tobago is a little over three persons, this indicates that the Ministry touched the lives of over 226,000 persons in a short space of time. The total expenditure so far for measures associated with COVID 19 alone is in excess of \$46,000,000.

Food Support for Children on MOE School Feeding Programme

On Monday March 23, 2020 the first batch of Food Support Cards were issued to the Members of Parliament (MP) for distribution to families of children who are registered for the nation's School Feeding Programme under the remit of the Ministry of Education. In the initial phase, each MP was given 50 cards to distribute to families who are in dire need of food during the COVID-19 pandemic. On March 25th another batch was issued and effective April 2, 2020, Members of Parliament or their representatives received an additional batch of 100 cards each. To date, the majority of MPs have collected and distributed cards to their constituents, however, we wish to remind those who have not yet collected, to do so.

- **Expenditure for School Feeding: \$12,357,810.00**
- **Expenditure for Top up to Existing Food Support Clients -\$17,144,100.00**

The **original 50 cards** distributed to households in each constituency have already been topped up to the **amount of \$1,020.00**. The cards which are being distributed at present have also been topped up for the next three months in the sum of **\$1,530.00** each.

The Ministry of Social Development and Family Services continues to work with the Ministry of Education and all other stakeholders to address issues which arise with regard to the delivery of the cards and encourages full cooperation from the public for the successful implementation of this measure.

Food Support

- Additional payment to persons receiving food support for an initial period of three (3) months:
 - ✓ **25,101 persons benefitted.**
 - ✓ **The expenditure was \$11,198,250**

- Food Support to parents whose children/child are/is registered for receipt of meals under the School Feeding Programme.
 - ✓ **8,077 cards were distributed to MPs,**
 - ✓ **The expenditure was \$12,357,810**

A further 3,323 cards are expected to be delivered to MPs on Tuesday 14th April, 2020.

- **Income support** by way of a top up to current recipients of the Public Assistance for a period of three months.
 - ✓ **17,834 persons benefitted from this measure**
 - ✓ **The expenditure was \$11,438,100.00**

- Income Support by way of a top up to current recipients of the Disability Assistance Grant inclusive of children with a disability.
 - ✓ **24,627 persons (Including 1,535 children) benefitted. (TTPost collected these cheques on April 7th, 2020 and delivery to these persons has commenced.**
 - ✓ **The expenditure was \$11,082,150**

Income and Food Support for retrenched/terminated/reduced income

- ✓ The Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development have received approximately 4,000 applications and are in the process of validating them. They commenced sending the validated applications to the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services for final processing and payments for Food Support, Income Support and Rental Assistance as necessary.

Applications are processed as follows:

- A receipt will be emailed/given to confirm acknowledgement of an application;
- Application is screened and logged into MOLSED's database;

- **Information on forms is validated by MOLSED and then forwarded electronically to the MSDFS** to determine eligibility based on the means test established for this initiative;
- Once deemed eligible the application is categorized based on type of grant/s requested;
- Application is processed and forwarded for payment;
- Payment is processed either by cheque if applicant does not have a bank account or by direct deposit to the applicant's bank account;
- Cheque is dispatched to TTPost for delivery to recipients

The Ministry wishes to state that the process is ongoing and once verifications are completed, applications will be processed accordingly. **Payments will commence from Thursday April 9th.**

As an additional measure to ensure that persons who have no access to the internet to have access to the forms, over 5000 Application Forms (Forms A and Forms B for Employees and the self Employed respectively) have been printed and will be distributed at Police Stations from the afternoon of Thursday April 9, 2020. Persons are however urged to use the electronic option for downloading and submitting the forms to the email addresses provided.

Emergency Food Support: Hampers

- ✓ 100 food hampers are in place at all 14 Municipalities for distribution to families who are in dire need of food items during the **stay at home** period and who were affected by the additional measures being implemented until April 30, 2020. For persons who are unable to access the School Feeding Food Cards, we will make these hampers which are in value close to the Food card available.
- ✓ A special call centre service was introduced for this purpose. The numbers are highlighted on the Ministry's website and have been published in the newspapers today.

488-8920	488-9044	488-9187
488-8975	488-9245	488-9261
488-9316	488-9326	488-9304
488-9352	488-9357	488-9360
488-7398	488-9038	488-9287

Care Programme for Street Dwellers

- A special centre for care and support for homeless persons was established at Town Council Street (Under Centre for the Socially Displaced Persons). This was done in collaboration with the Port of Spain City Corporation and the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force. The St. Vincent De Paul will be providing management oversight of this added feature for homeless persons.

- Works are expected to be completed by Wednesday April 8, 2020 and following this potential residents will undergo a process of admission to the facility.
- In the first instance, this facility will provide beneficiaries with cots to sleep on, bathroom facilities, a dining/recreation facility and three meals daily. Cots will be laid on metal frames on the existing roadway for ease of maintenance. A female dormitory will be constructed separately from the male dormitory, enclosed using sheets of ply board, and secured. The male dormitory, and dining/recreation area will remain open and running water will be provided for washing hands, bathing and personal hygiene. A security fence is also to be erected to prevent illegal/unauthorized entry to the CSDP.

Call Centre

- Call Centre services continue to be operational taking calls for the various social support services daily from 8:00 am to 4:00 pm, Monday to Friday. Numbers for the Call Centre are: 800 – 1MSD(1673); 800 – OPIC and 623 – 2608; Ext 1120 - 1132

Counselling and Psychosocial Support

Counselling and psychosocial support are available for victims of domestic violence and any form of abuse which may be on the increase, given the ‘stay at home’ measures taken to flatten the curve against COVID-19. Individuals and families are encouraged to reach out and report any incidence of domestic violence, particularly during this time in order to receive immediate assistance and support.

The Ministry, is cognizant that gender-based violence has no boundaries, regardless of educational, economic or professional status. As the Ministry continues to promote healthy and functional families as the bedrock of our society, several efforts will be made, under the guidance of the National Family Services Division, to collaborate and partner with various stakeholders to provide, crisis intervention and referrals from the Victim and Support Unit of the TTPS, Lifeline or the Rape Crisis Society. The Children’s Authority of Trinidad and Tobago will ONLY address issues related to Children e.g child abuse. The Ministry will also work with appropriate agencies and civil society organisations to make necessary arrangements to direct victims and their families to places of shelter and safety.

Conclusion

The Ministry continues to honour its commitment to existing beneficiaries of the Ministry. We continue to make payments to 168,950 persons on time and in the correct amount on a monthly basis. The estimated monthly expenditure is \$436,000,000 to grant recipients.

In closing, the MSDFS and the Government of T&T is doing its best to ensure that you who are most vulnerable are getting what they require and I urge all to work together with the Ministry of Social Development and the Government to overcome this crisis together.

-End-

For more information:

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