



MEDIA RELEASE

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Priority: **HIGH**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Ministry partners with TTAHI to commemorate Sign Languages Day

Friday September 25, 2020 --- On Wednesday September 23, 2020, staff and visiting clients of the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services were treated to an Open House presentation in commemoration of the United Nation's International Day of Sign Languages. The presentation was hosted by representatives of the Trinidad and Tobago Association for the Hearing Impaired (TTAHI, previously DRETCHI).and took place at the Ministry's Port of Spain Head Office. This was also part of a series of activities co-ordinated by the Ministry's Disability Affairs Unit under the global theme, *Sign Languages are for Everyone*.

The session included information on the deaf and hard of hearing, how to detect symptoms of deafness in children as well as practical exposure to greetings and basic introductions..

During her welcome remarks, Acting Director of the Disability Affairs Unit, Terrez Herrera, complimented participants for their interest in enhancing their knowledge and awareness of basic sign languages, in an effort to bridge the gaps in communication with the deaf and hard of hearing. She reminded the audience that such attempts are critical in the fight for social justice and equality for the most vulnerable and further encouraged attendees not to become deterred by the challenges that the Novel Coronavirus has and continues to pose. *In this regard*, she noted, *the revised National Policy on Persons with Disabilities has become even more critical amongst stakeholders in Trinidad and Tobago*, as the Ministry seeks to enhance the resilience of all households and communities during these challenging times. The Policy is the result of extensive national dialogue and contributions by various interest groups to establish a more inclusive society for all persons with disabilities.

Ms. Herrera's remarks were followed by a highly interactive multimedia presentation from the representatives of DRETCHI. Participants received invaluable insights about some of the daily challenges that are experienced by deaf persons in education, business, travel and leisure. One such concern continues to be the impact of COVID-19 on the community of persons with disabilities, particularly those who are deaf and solely rely on lip-reading to communicate. The wearing of masks, according to recent research, has widened the degree of marginalization and vulnerability that is experienced by these persons.

The Ministry of Social Development and Family Services intends to expand this activity to its various district offices, as part of its commitment to the nurturing of an inclusive environment for all persons and excellence in the delivery of social services.

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Figure 1: Maya Ramesar and Natasha John of the Trinidad and Tobago Association for the Hearing Impaired during their presentation to staff and clients of the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services.



Figure 2: Six year old Rahleigh Massy assists Terrez Herrera, Acting Director of the Ministry's Disability Affairs Unit with some basic spelling. Rahleigh is the child of a deaf adult (CODA).

For more information:

Corporate Communications and Education Unit
Ministry of Social Development and Family Services
(868) 623-2608; Ext 5405/5445/5432
Website: www.social.gov.tt
cceu@social.gov.tt