



Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

Ministry of Social Development and Family Services



MEDIA RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Priority: **HIGH**

Ministry of Social Development and Family Services tackles Public Misconceptions about Disabilities

Port-of-Spain --- Under the United Nations theme: “*Building Back Better - toward a disability-inclusive, accessible and sustainable post COVID-19 World*”, the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services has launched a nation-wide campaign in observance of *International Day of Persons with Disabilities 2020*, which is commemorated annually on December 3rd. According to the Minister of Social Development and Family Services, Senator the Honourable Donna Cox, the campaign is focused on ensuring that the community of persons with disabilities (PWDs) continues to be afforded inclusivity, accessibility and equity, so as to enable all persons and households to make meaningful contributions to the growth of our domestic economy and society, through the realization of their full potential.

The Minister during her message on the occasion, reaffirmed the Ministry’s commitment to engage and collaborate with various non-governmental organisations and advocates from the community, as their concerns are highlighted and addressed through inclusivity and the dismantling of barriers like stigmatization and in some instances, perceived misbehaviour in children. The Ministry continues to provide opportunities for education and sensitization in this regard, so that the fact that not that all disabilities are deemed physical even though there are many that are unseen. Among those unseen include psycho-social disabilities, learning disabilities and development disabilities that are considered mild, such as in the case of children who are on the higher end of the autism spectrum.

Accordingly, during the next few weeks, the Disability Affairs Unit of the Ministry will host a variety of promotional and sensitization sessions within the public and private sector with the aim of improving society’s collective behaviours and attitudes towards persons with disabilities. Engagements will include increased public awareness via media, free webinars for members of the public, sensitization sessions and outreaches at local district board offices. The Ministry will also launch a poster competition for the participation of members of the public. The Ministry intends to partner with some of the non-governmental organisations within the community of PWDs.

During this time the MSDFS takes the opportunity to remind persons of its National Policy for Persons with Disabilities which is accessible via its website: www.social.gov.tt, where issues like

education, health, transportation, communication and legislation, to name a few are discussed in order to provide a more inclusive and accessible society.

For further information about the campaign, interested persons and organisations can contact the Disability Unit at 623-2608 ext 1153 – 57. Additionally, persons can visit the Ministry’s website at <http://www.social.gov.tt> or send an email to disabilityaffairs@social.gov.tt

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For more information:

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Figure 1: Minister Cox with representatives of the Trinidad and Tobago Blind Welfare Association following a meeting in November this year.



Figure 2: Tessa Pascall of the Disability Affairs Unit during a sensitization session for staff and residents of the Piparo Empowerment Centre in December.