



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

Wednesday, 10 November 2021

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Priority: **HIGH**

#### **Ministry hosts Virtual one-day Parenting Webinar to provide support to Grandparents**

Three (3) months after the official launch of the Grand Parenting Programme in August, the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services through its National Family Services Division hosted its maiden Virtual Parenting for Grandparents Webinar. The event was held earlier today, Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> November, 2021 at the Ministry's Head Office, 39-43 St. Vincent, Port of Spain. The webinar is a precursor to the Grand Parenting Workshops, which will continue during the month of November, 2021.

The Grandparents Webinar, which was open to all ages of grandparents, biological grandparents, step-grandparents, adopted grandparents, guardians, persons who have responsibility for grandchildren part-time or full-time and members of the general public, saw close to four hundred (400) persons participating virtually.

Delivering the feature address, Minister of Social Development and Family Services, Senator the Honourable Donna Cox stated that she was pleased that the Ministry has spearheaded, for the first time in Trinidad and Tobago, a parenting Seminar specific to issues faced by grandparents. She said that due to the COVID-19 and the changing dynamics in the roles and responsibilities of parenting today, it had become imperative that grandparents who are raising grandchildren be provided with the necessary tools.

According to Minister Cox, "The COVID-19 pandemic has created an increased burden on parents to find safe options for both childcare and supervision. Many grandparents have willingly shouldered this responsibility, taking on the task of supervising remote learning, providing care and protection, including emotional support for grandchildren. It is because of the changing dynamics in the roles and responsibilities of parenting today, it has become imperative that special training be provided to grandparents who are raising grandchildren.

The Minister also noted that the Ministry recognizes the tremendous value of grandparents, and the fundamental role they still play in the development of the family unit. It has therefore become necessary to design initiatives to support grandparents in these critical times. Minister Cox also told attendees that in addition to the Senior Citizens' Grant, grandparents who are legal guardians of their grandchildren can access other Grants in support of their grandchildren, once they meet the necessary criteria.

Among the topics presented included, "Juggling three (3) Generations: The Balancing Act", which was presented by Albert Spence, Parent Educator and Ken Ramdhan, Project Lead of Families in Action. They addressed the intergenerational gaps and managing tensions and communication, and told participants that grandparents can become estranged from their own grandchildren and better communication including face to face conversations and phone calls are necessary to close the generation gap and reduce tensions between grandparents and their grandchildren.

Also presenting was Kinda Jacob, Senior Legal Associate of the Children's Authority of Trinidad and Tobago who shared on "Exploring your rights as a grandparent: Legal and Financial issues to consider", Providing information on the child protection system and the legal obligations and responsibilities of grandparents, Ms Jacob advised grandparents that the protection, provision and participation of children falls under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children and that grandparents with children under their care as de facto parents have a duty and responsibility to ensure child safety as stated in the Children's Act.

Dr. Deborah McFee, Outreach and Research Officer, Institute for Gender and Development Studies of the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine during her presentation on Gender Socialization, Stereotypes and Parenting /Grandparent" addressed traditional notions of socialization of children, gender stereotypes and gender role biases in relation to parenting/grandparenting. Dr McFee stated that some agents of gender socialization have shifted in significance and that shift has increased the expectations of caregivers in the home.

The presentations were followed by an interactive question and answer segment during which participants were able to pose their questions to presenters and obtain real-time feedback. Among some of the questions posed were how could grandparents navigate virtual school supervision, bearing in mind, issues like cyber security and other distractions faced by grandchildren, as well as procedures to be followed for a grandparent to acquire custody and other legal implications following the death of a parent(s)

The Ministry of Social Development and Family Services takes pride in hosting such events in its continued efforts to support and maintain healthy, functional families. For more information on the parenting workshops which will continue during the month of November, persons may visit the Ministry's website at [www.social.gov.tt](http://www.social.gov.tt) or call the National Family Services Division at 623-2608 ext.'s 6704 or 6705.

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Grandparents in Focus - Minister of Social Development and Family Services, Senator the Honourable Donna Cox delivers the feature address at the Virtual one-day Parenting for Grandparents Webinar.



*Dr. Deborah McFee, Outreach and Research Officer, Institute for Gender and Development Studies of the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine presents on Gender Socialization, Stereotypes and Parenting /Grandparent.*



*Ms Shelley-Ann Hart, Programme Development Specialist of the National Family Services Division of the Ministry (L) and Ms. Kinda Jacob, Senior Legal Associate of the Children's Authority of Trinidad and Tobago provide feedback during the live question and answer segment.*





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Mr. Ken Ramdhan, Project Lead at Families in Action delivers his presentation on 'Juggling three Generations: The Balancing Act'



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Mr. Albert Spence, Parent Educator at Families in Action delivers his presentation on 'Juggling three Generations: The Balancing Act'