



Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

Ministry of Social Development and Family Services



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

Wednesday, 15 June 2022

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Priority: **HIGH**

#### **Financial abuse more predominant says Minister Cox at Elder Abuse Webinar**

Financial abuse is one of the more predominant types of elder abuse reported locally said Minister of Social Development and Family Services Senator the Honourable Donna Cox during the Ministry's *Estate Planning & Financial Literacy to Combat Financial Abuse of Older Persons* Webinar held virtually today, June 15, 2022. This webinar was held in commemoration of World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD) commemorated globally on June 15 annually.

During the keynote address, Minister Cox stated that data emerging from the Ministry's Division of Ageing Unit, and the Ministry of National Security (MNS) indicates that elder financial abuse is a fundamental problem

According to Minister Cox "In Fiscal Year 2022, the Ministry's Division of Ageing recorded a total of seventy-seven (77) cases of abuse reported for the first quarter of this year, of which sixteen (16) were cases of financial abuse i.e. twenty-one per cent (21%) of all cases reported. In Fiscal Year 2021, 27% of elder abuse cases reported were related to claims of financial abuse, while in Fiscal Year 2020, about 18% of reported cases also involved alleged incidents of financial abuse. It is clear that financial abuse is a prevailing problem."

Minister Cox further noted that her Ministry remains committed to highlighting and working towards the prevention of elder abuse in all its forms further noting that the anonymous reports can be made to Ministry's Older Persons Information Centre (OPIC) by calling the toll-free - 800-OPIC or email at [opic@social.gov.tt](mailto:opic@social.gov.tt) available for persons to report incidents of elder abuse, mistreatment and neglect. She further encouraged persons to partner with the Ministry in the battle against elder abuse in Trinidad and Tobago.

Permanent Secretary Sheila Seecharan in delivering the feature presentation told attendees it has been recognized that estate planning and financial literacy are critical to maintaining financial stability. She further noted that the Ministry will continue to engage in activities like these, which would allow for further research and opportunities to engage stakeholders and also highlight support mechanisms necessary to ensure that our older persons are treated with the care, respect and the honour that they so richly deserve.

The seminar focused on the Benefits of Estate Planning for Older Persons, Financial Abuse of Older Persons in Trinidad & Tobago, What happens if you die without a Will, and Safeguarding the Senior Citizens Grant: Tips for Older Persons & their Nominee.

During the presentation on the Benefits of Estate Planning for Older Persons, presenter Mr. Garth Thomas of the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago indicated that not having an official plan, not updating a plan over time at major lifetime events, not making arrangements were they to become incapacitated and improper ownership of assets are common Estate Planning mistakes to avoid.

Presenting on Financial Abuse of Older Persons in Trinidad & Tobago, Director of the Division of Ageing Dr Hyacinth Blake noted that missing belongings or property, unusual or unexplained banking activity and unpaid bills, eviction or foreclosure notices, or notices to discontinue utilities are some forms of elder abuse. These she stated can be prevented if a trustworthy person is selected to act as an agent in all estate-planning matters and sensitive documents, cheque books, bank account statements and other information are secured.

Noting that abuse is often committed by a loved one where trust is taken for granted, Director of the Social Welfare Division Mr Troy Pollonais in his presentation on Safeguarding the Senior Citizens Grant: Tips for Older Persons & their Nominee stated that it is the right of the client to select a Nominee of his or her choice who may not be a relative.

Given its responsibility for the provision of services and protection of vulnerable groups, the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services was pleased to host such an event and invites the wider audience to benefit from the valuable insights and interactive discussions from the recording of the webinar which is available on the Ministry's Facebook page.



*Minister Cox delivers the keynote address at the Services' Estate Planning & Financial Literacy to Combat Financial Abuse of Older Persons webinar held earlier today.*



*Moderator Ms. Nicole Larsen engages with Mr. Garth Thomas as he presents on the Benefits of Estate Planning for Older Persons*



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## World Elder Abuse Awareness Day 2022

"Estate Planning & Financial Literacy to Combat Financial Abuse of Older Persons"



*Dr. Hyacinth Blake, Director of the Division of Ageing presents on Financial Abuse of Older Persons in Trinidad & Tobago*

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**For more information:**

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