



MEDIA RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Priority: HIGH

Ministry's statement on Article related to Disabled Mother of three being kicked off of Welfare Grant

Port-of-Spain --- In response to the newspaper article entitled " **Disabled Mother of three kicked off of welfare**", the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services advises that Olanda Speedwell, the 36-year-old mother of three who lives at Leon Street, Laventille, is a client of the Ministry. This client's Disability Grant was discontinued in May 2022, when it was discovered and verified, that she was able to earn a living and may not in fact be permanently disabled and unable to earn a livelihood, in accordance with the law and policy. In an effort to ensure that all grants target the vulnerable persons in need, the Ministry has been diligently conducting reviews of all the grants it administers.

The Ministry's investigations have revealed that there are many clients receiving Disability Grants, who are gainfully employed and meeting their statutory payments of National Insurance and Income Tax as an employee. There are several others who are the owners of thriving small businesses and are receiving grants. The Ministry is well aware that clients do not return to its office to disclose improved changes in their economic conditions. The Ministry must therefore remain vigilant in its review of all its grants. Persons who are earning above the minimum are not eligible for the grant.

In an effort to assist and work with Ms Speedwell, she was asked to submit an updated Medical Report. It should be noted that this Grant is reviewed every six months. She recently submitted a Public Assistance Medical Report which is valid for one year. The report indicated that she is not permanently disabled, suggesting that she is capable of earning a living and may just require support for one more year. Her Public Assistance Grant was therefore reinstated and was paid for December.

Ms Speedwell continues to receive the Public Assistance Grant effective October, 2022 for all three children in her care, having submitted the school reports and other information for the children in September. Ms. Speedwell recently received approval for four pairs of glasses under the Ministry's general assistance grants effective December 22, 2022 for herself and all three children. The Ministry will continue to work with her to determine if she is eligible for other grants such as the SEED Grant; which is designed for persons like Ms. Speedwell, who wish to become entrepreneurs and create better livelihoods for themselves and their family.

As customary, the Ministry will continue to manage this case to fulfil its mandate of helping, empowering and transforming the lives of all vulnerable individuals and families, to ensure that no one is left behind.

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For more information:

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