



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

Monday, December 16, 2024

### **SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT MINISTRY LAUNCHES G.U.I.D.E PARENTING PROGRAMME FOR PARENTS OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES**

**Port of Spain-** The Ministry of Social Development and Family Services (MSDFS) officially launched its G.U.I.D.E Programme which targets parents of children with disabilities, today, Monday December 16, 2024 at the Hyatt Regency, Port of Spain.

The G.U.I.D.E Programme, which embodies the principles of Growth, Understanding, Inclusion, Development, and Empowerment for families of children with disabilities, is another significant step towards creating a society that removes the invisibility surrounding disability. Minister of Social Development and Family Services, Senator the Honourable, Donna Cox noted that the Government has long recognized that it is discrimination and not disability that disallows segments of our population from enjoying the quality of life that they too deserve.

Addressing the gathering of parents, caregivers and disability advocates, Minister Cox stated that the Government has taken decisive steps including the launch of the disability parking permits and the amendments to the necessary regulations, so as to ensure that persons are encouraged to do right by persons with disabilities. She said that the Government remains deeply committed to creating an inclusive society where every person regardless of ability, is valued, supported and empowered to thrive.

According to Minister Cox, parenting is one of the most rewarding and challenging journeys, but for parents of children with disabilities, the journey takes on additional layers of complexity, which often reveal an extraordinary capacity for resilience and strength.

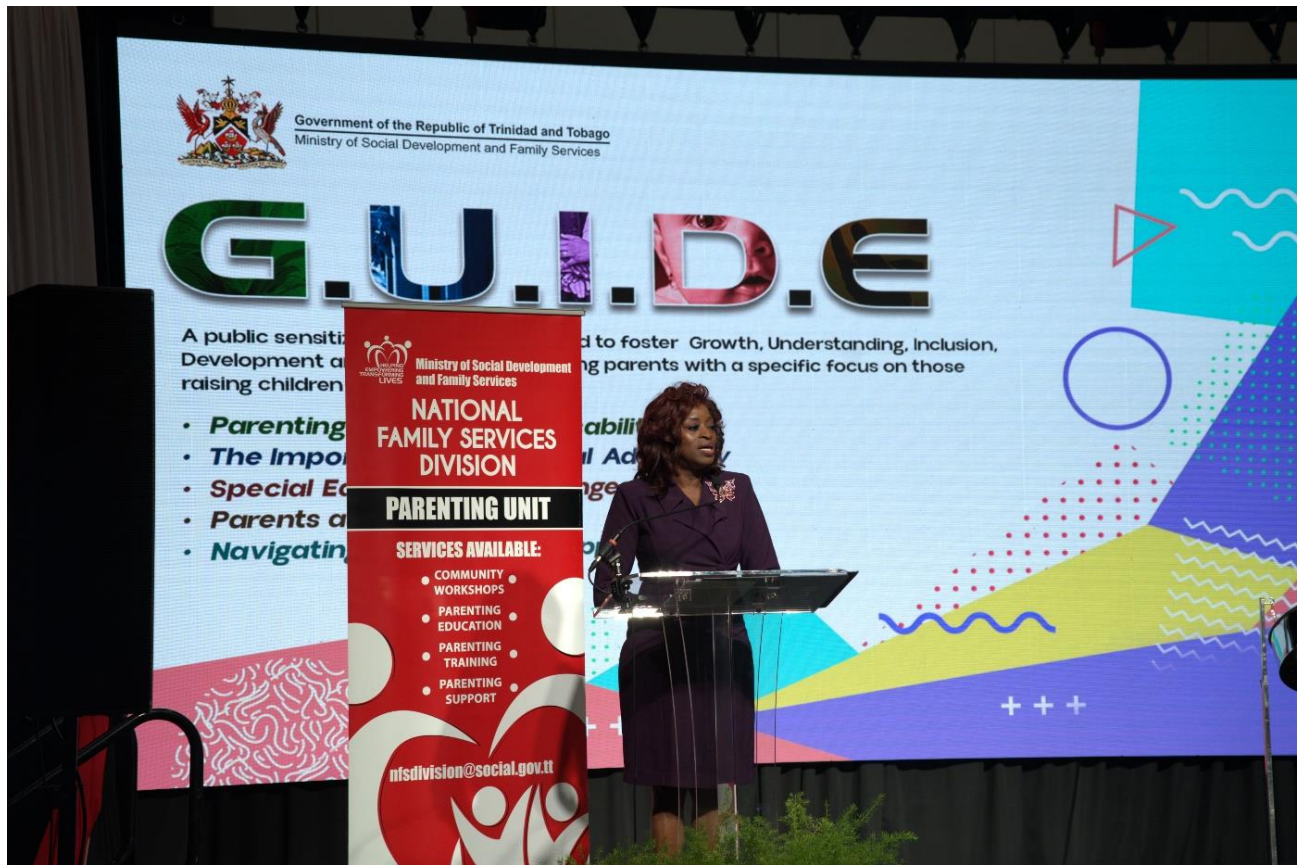
The launch signaled the shared commitment among stakeholders to providing guidance, resources, and community for those who are so dedicated to nurturing the future of children with disabilities.

The program, which is being conducted under the National Family Services Division (NFSD), has been carefully designed to offer practical tools, emotional support, and a space to connect persons with shared experiences. It also aims to provide participants with insights from leading professionals in the fields of child development and disability advocacy, as well as the invaluable perspectives of other parents who have walked similar paths.

Minister Cox urged stakeholders to collaborate with the Ministry, so as to build accessible infrastructure, design inclusive curricula, and create opportunities for persons with disabilities.

The Ministry, she noted does not have all the answers, but stands ready to assist where possible in our efforts to create a more just and inclusive society, as we work towards helping, empowering and transforming the lives of all citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

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**Caption:** Minister of Social Development and Family Services, Senator the Honourable Donna Cox delivers the feature address during the launch of G.U.I.D.E.



**Caption:** Minister Cox with (l-r) Mr. Ryan Ramcharan, Permanent Secretary, ag (MSDFS); Mr. Sudhir Ramessar, Disability Advocate; and Mrs. Vera Deonanan- Balkaran, Deputy Permanent Secretary, ag (MSDFS).



**Caption:** Panel of Presenters (l-r) Ms. Michelle Boiselle – Morris, Moderator; Ms Mary Bastien, Director, National Family Services Division; Ms. Ornella Sutton, Prog. Development Specialist, National Family Services Division; Mrs. Laura Escayg, Disability Activist; Ms. Gail Spann, Head of Department, Eshe’s Learning Centre; Ms. Tessa Pascall, Disability Affairs Specialist, Disability Affairs Unit, (MSDFS).



**Caption:** Pannist Dane Gulston and his son Daniel provide entertainment at the launch

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