



MEDIA RELEASE

Tuesday September 15, 2020

Priority: **HIGH**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MSDFS' Official Statement in response to allegations of child abuse at the Lady Hochoy Home

Tuesday September 15, 2020 --- In response to an article that was published on Sunday August 30, 2020 by Guardian Media Limited regarding allegations of child abuse at the Lady Hochoy Home in Cocorite, the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services confirms that its Executive and staff remain available to respond to any related queries by the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service or the Children's Authority of Trinidad and Tobago, in the interest of all residents.

Following the publication of the article, Minister of Social Development and Family Services, Senator the Honourable Donna Cox confirmed last Friday, that while the Home is managed by a Board of Directors and remains licensed and monitored by the Children's Authority of Trinidad and Tobago, it is also registered as a statutory board with the MSDFS, principally on the grounds that it is directly involved in the welfare of children with disabilities. As an agent in the fight against poverty, social injustice and inequality, the Association is in receipt of an annual subvention from the MSDFS, which is issued *on the merit that it continues to be in administrative, technical and physical compliance for the care, instruction and safety of all wards who are members of the community of persons with disabilities*. The most recent site visit by staff of the Ministry's NGO Unit revealed no operational issues were identified for follow-up by officials. However, should complaints such as those regarding child abuse be made against the home in general, the Ministry works in tandem with the protocol and policies of the Children's Authority.

As part of the Ministry's mandate to protect and enhance the rights and dignity of children and all other persons with disabilities, the MSDFS and the Children's Authority continue to collaborate towards the best interests of the children at the Home. One such example, as highlighted by Guardian Media Limited, involved the transfer of a ward of the state to the St. Ann's Psychiatric Hospital by Court Order in 2019, as a result of the Lady Hochoy Home not being able to administer the professional medical services that were needed by the child.

The Ministry also continues to conduct various workshops for the managers and staff of the residence with the aim of improving their interactions and insight about children with disabilities.

The Executive and staff of the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services will continue to monitor the situation and commits to working closely with all stakeholders in support of accountability, transparency and an enhanced quality of life for all persons.

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