Question: How can parents build positive intra-family relationships?
Answer: The role that parents and caregivers play in raising the next generation is central to everything that we want to achieve for our families, our communities and our country. Parents and caregivers are the primary agents of parentally mediated transmission of culture to the young. This process is pervasive in our society. It is through parents that the young acquire social and cultural values and identities, obligations and roles, and social and cultural norms and expectations.

Question: How are parents defined in the National Parenting Policy?
Answer: A report of the Cabinet Appointed Committee to Examine the Status of the Family in Trinidad and Tobago (August, 2004) concluded that “poor intra-family relationships, particularly among the younger generation, are the root cause of many of the current social ills in the nation. It is the role of the family to raise the next generation and to build a healthy environment for positive child development.” The Committee also concluded that “the function of the family is ... the foundation of the society (and) contributes to its growth, development and in the National Development Strategy Vision 2030, wherein it is stated that the function of relationship decline. The gendered perceptions of counselling often inhibit fathers from attending relationship counselling, despite evident relationship fractures. As such, the promotion and expansion of access to father-friendly counselling service will provide avenues in which potential relationship breakdowns can be addressed at the early stages.

• Partnerships to be forged between Government and University of the West Indies Family Development and Children’s Research Centre in the development of parental support initiatives.

• Flexible working hours: Some organisations already operate flexible working hours, though this may not be articulated in company policy. However, the introduction of flexible working hours has numerous potential benefits for parents and their families, as well as for the employers themselves. Parents are able to attend to child care needs such as the school run, a child clinic session or parent teacher consultations without having to be absent from work for the whole day, whilst the company is able to retain valued talent and offer a more favourable work-life balance to current and potential employees.

• Father support groups: With the increasing involvement of fathers in their child’s lives, it is important to recognize that fathers may experience unique needs with regard to their parenting roles. The expansion of culturally sensitive father support groups will serve to provide safe non-judgmental spaces in which fathers can express their concerns regarding their parenting roles and through this, sharing experience access the relevant support services.

• National parenting programme expansion: The initial pilot of the National Parenting Programme to develop parent self-efficacy will be expanded, offering the opportunity for all parents to attend the programme and establish parental support groups within their communities. Positive behavioural management approaches will be demonstrated through this programme as part of a multi-agency approach to reduce harsh parenting practices.

• Training in relationship counselling for healthcare staff who work with parents’ pre and post birth: Healthcare staff work closely with parents, particularly mothers, just prior to and just after the birth of a baby. All relevant healthcare staff will receive relationship counselling training to equip them to support mothers-to-be and new mothers and fathers in the development and maintenance of healthy relationships.

Question: What are the Policy Implementation Mechanisms mentioned in the Policy
Answer: The delivery of current parenting support services occurs through multiple agencies ranging from Government Ministries through to civil society organizations and the private sector. The proposed expansion of parenting support initiatives will continue through a range of agencies and organisations. Parenting services, as a result of their eclectic nature are accessed in a variety of ways.

Some parenting support, including medical and educational services, is accessed as a result of child development needs and these services are often accessed directly, and this will continue. Other parenting services are accessed through referral, for example birth registration through TTConnect. However, for certain parenting support services, such as relationship counselling, parents will need to be informed about the existence and location of the services.

Other Initiatives/ Mechanisms Include:

1. National Family Services Division Service Centres Service.
   • Centres will be established in every district to facilitate increasing awareness of the availability of parent support services and access to such services. If a parenting support service cannot be accessed directly at a Service Centre, an established referral system will allow parents’ access to the service most appropriate to their identified needs. To promote national awareness of parenting support services and the function of the Service Centres, a Social Services Directory will be published and updated on an annual basis. Copies of the directory will be made available to the general public through Social Sector Ministries, TTConnect and the Service Centres.
   • Some parenting support services will be accessed directly through the Centres. However, the majority of parenting support services will be accessed through an onward referral process. Accordingly, the Service Centre will provide parents with seamless service access through offering the following:
     • Advice on the appropriate services required for specific parents support needs
     • Advice on where the service can be accessed
     • Advice on when the service can be accessed
     • Advice on how the parent can access the service
     • Supporting the parent(s) in accessing the appropriate service

2. Multi-Sectoral Steering Committee
   The implementation of the National Parenting Policy will be driven and monitored by a multisectoral steering committee. This Committee will include representations from relevant Government Ministries, Civil Society Organisations, UNFPA, private sector and parents. Utilising the objectives of the National Parenting Policy, the Committee will identify indicators of progress of the implementation of the parenting policy, regularly monitor implementation and publish annual progress reports.
Question: What is the Rationale for the National Parenting Policy?
Answer: A report of the Cabinet Appointed Committee to Examine the Status of the Institution of the Family in Trinidad and Tobago (August, 2004) concluded that “poor parenting skills and practices” were having a negative effect on family life in Trinidad and Tobago. The National Parenting Policy provides a plan for adopting a needs-driven approach in the support of parenting roles that contribute to the positive development of children.

The Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago is mindful that there are particular groups of parents that can be considered vulnerable. These groups, include single parents, teenage parents, grandparents as parents with a disability and parents of children with disabilities, who all face a range of challenges in performing their parenting role.

Domestically, the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago has ensured that the rights and responsibilities of parents are clearly articulated in the Children Act 2012 and in the National Development Strategy Vision 2030, wherein it is stated that the family is “...the foundation of the society (and) contributes to its growth, development and stability...” The National Parenting Policy therefore represents another vital step in the social transformation process.

At a global level, recognition has been also given to the importance of the parental role. This recognition has been articulated through several international conventions and covenants including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, International Convention on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The National Parenting Policy represents another vital step in the social transformation process.

Question: What are the Objectives of the National Parenting Policy?
Answer: The objectives of the National Parenting Policy are to:
- Ensure the development of effective multi-sectoral provisions to support parental empowerment in the performance of their parenting duties, irrespective of family form, in order to promote the optimal holistic development of children at all stages of growth;
- Improve the linkage between current parent support services in Trinidad and Tobago through the reduction of any existing service provision gaps and minimization of programme overlap to ensure that parenting needs are adequately met;
- Provide parenting education to persons who are not yet parents to ensure that they are equipped with knowledge and skills necessary to make responsible and informed decisions that pertain to becoming parents and parenting;
- Foster greater appreciation and support for responsible and effective parenting in Trinidad and Tobago;
- Promote inclusive healthy family functioning that contributes to the building of strong communities in Trinidad and Tobago.

Question: What are the Policy Implementation Mechanisms mentioned in the Policy?
Answer: The Policy proposes:
- Changes in community and societal values.
- Positive behavioural management approaches will be demonstrated.
- Programme to develop parent self-efficacy will be expanded, offering the opportunity to access the relevant support services.
- Groups will serve to provide safe non-judgmental spaces in which fathers can express regard to their parenting roles. The expansion of culturally sensitive father support groups will serve to provide safe non-judgmental spaces in which fathers can express regard to their parenting roles.
- Flexible working hours: Some organisations already operate flexible working hours, from attending relationship counselling, despite evident relationship fractures. As health professionals, parents will need to be informed about the existence of such services. Other parenting services are accessed through referral, for example, for the children in their care. Too often counselling is introduced in the latter stages of care, with health services being offered and delivered to children with disabilities.
- Baby box initiative: A starter pack will be given to low or no income expectant mothers who have accessed medical care prior to their fourth month of pregnancy. The Means Test of the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services will be the measure utilized to determine eligibility.
- Father information pack: Fathers are now able to attend child birth in public hospitals, and the Government will also introduce a father’s information pack for all new fathers.
- Parental leave: As a result of rising female employment rates, the time for child care responsibilities has become more limited. Parental leave will serve to support working parents in the provision of paid leave for the purposes of child care or making arrangements for the child’s welfare.

Question: What initiatives are there for Child Care?
Answer: The Policy addresses the following areas:
- Teen mothers returning to education: This group of potentially vulnerable mothers, should be supported in their efforts to gain further qualifications. To this end, subsidized child care at training facilities during classes/lectures will be expanded.
- Father-friendly child care services: Traditionally, services for parents have generally operated under the gendered assumption that parents equate to mothers. However, the contemporary reality is shifting from this assumption. Accordingly, all Government registered child care providers will be trained in providing father friendly services.
- Unemployed parents returning to educational and vocational studies: Subsidized child care will be provided for these parents as an incentive to further their qualifications and self-development.
- Nursery regulations: These regulations will serve to provide assurance to parents that their children will be attending government-approved institutions providing a safe, healthy environment for positive child development.