



POLICY IMPLEMENTATION MECHANISMS

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.

Establishment of Service Centres:

It is therefore recommended that the National Family Services Division Service Centres be established. Service Centres will be 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 and
- Supporting the parent(s) in accessing the appropriate service.

Establishment of a Multi-Sectoral Steering Committee

The implementation of the National Parenting Policy will be driven and monitored by a multi-sectoral 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.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

A monitoring and evaluation approach that is sensitive to behaviour change, such as a developmental evaluation approach (Patten, 2002) would be required to assess the social impacts of National Parenting Policy implementation. The Parenting Centres will be ideally positioned to support this approach, given their ability to gather local data related to demand for and access to parent support service, among other critical data.



Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

Ministry of Social Development and Family Services

DRAFT National Parenting Policy (GREEN PAPER)



Brief Summary

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Log on to www.social.gov.tt to view the Policy



BACKGROUND

The Draft Policy on Parenting

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 document identified, areas of concern regarding parenting practices in Trinidad and Tobago, which included:

- Insufficient and ineffective communication within some families;
- Poor and at times abusive methods of discipline;
- Poor socialization skills in some instances;
- The negative influence of the media / cable television; and
- Changes in community and societal values.



Context

The role of parenting is central to child development and family well being. The influence of parents on their children’s development cannot be overstated and makes the support of positive parenting a legitimate concern of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. Parenting is essential for child development and good parenting has been demonstrated to provide a solid foundation for the cognitive, social and emotional development of children.

A variety of family forms are found in Trinidad and Tobago and exist as nuclear, single parent, extended, blended or step, cohabiting, grandparent-led, foster and group home, adoptive parent, sibling families and co-custody families. 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 (which are not homogeneous) include single parents, teenage parents, grandparents as parents, parents with disabilities and parents of children with disabilities. These groups all face potential 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 Vision 2030 National Development Strategy 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 all of which Trinidad and Tobago is a signatory.

Legislative Considerations

Trinidad and Tobago already has legislation that seeks to support parents both as duty bearers and rights holders in their parenting roles. However, the delicate balance that exists between the rights of parents and the rights of the child can give rise to multiple tensions, particularly regarding parental rights and responsibilities and the power of the State to intervene in family life. The supportive approach articulated in the National Parenting Policy would serve to alleviate some of these tensions through the coordination of current parental support interventions and the introduction of additional interventions as necessary.

The Government, through the outcomes of the previous consultations, is mindful that the nation’s parents want access to high quality information, advice and support. The Government is also mindful that the levels of information, advice and support will vary between families and so will the modes of delivery of support services. The National Parenting Policy will therefore identify the avenues through which these support services will be delivered and expanded.

Policy Objectives

The objectives of the National Parenting Policy are to:

- ensure the development of effective multi-sectorial 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; and
- promote inclusive healthy family functioning that contributes to the building of strong communities in Trinidad and Tobago.

Policy Provisions

The Government seeks to uphold the rights of parents and children, through the provision of an extensive range of services and programmes including:

1. Provision of child care;
2. Attending to child health and development needs;
3. Financial support for low-income families;
4. Education;
5. Housing needs, including repairs for lower income families;
6. Building positive intra-family relationships;
7. Skills training;
8. Safe non-judgmental spaces to voice concerns.