



**MINISTRY OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND
FAMILY SERVICES**

**WEAD Webinar Series
Closing Day**

Friday July 30th, 2020

REMARKS

PERMANENT SECRETARY

Ms JACQUELINE JOHNSON

SALUTATIONS

- Senator the Honourable Donna Cox, Ministry of Social Development and Family Services;
- Permanent Secretary at the MSDFS –Ms Sheila Seecharan;
- Chief Technical Officer, Mr. Michael Reid;
- Director, Division of Ageing, Dr. Hyacinth Blake;
- Other Heads of Divisions and Staff at the MSDFS;
- Webinar Speakers, Presenters, Panellists and Facilitators;
- Virtual participants;
- Members of the Media;
- Ladies and Gentlemen

Good Morning,

It gives me great pleasure to bring you brief remarks and to say thank you for joining the Ministry on this webinar series, which focused on Elder Abuse in Trinidad and Tobago. We have heard the old adage *‘how a nation treats its elderly and children is a reflection of not only its matured beliefs in human rights, but also its love for humanity’*. As we collectively seek to support the change to positive behaviours surrounding the love and care of the elderly, it is this Ministry’s hope that you would have benefited immensely from these sessions. While positive individual behaviour change towards the elderly is necessary, the Ministry would have created the desired impact even if your awareness was stirred or your knowledge enhanced as a result of this webinar. I know it did for me. The discussions around the institutional care for the elderly forced me to start thinking through ways to champion the care of the elderly at home. I never asked myself how I did it for my mother; how I kept her happy, what did I do to ensure that she was comfortable, how did I engage her grandchildren and my other siblings to support her care at my home. You see, I was certain in my mind that I had a reciprocal obligation to care for my mother and to make her happy during the years that she needed support (confined to a wheel chair, as she was for over 25 years). And for me, that could only be done if she was forever around her immediately family at all times, NOT among strangers. I firmly believe that as family we need to ensure that our elderly are always with and comfortable with family.

The choice of institution, as best as they may be, may never arise. It is my view that the right to enjoy a family, at any age, is an inalienable right.

I must congratulate the Director and her team from the Division of Ageing, who were capably supported by other Divisions for a job well done in executing this Webinar Series. The presentations were indeed well crafted to encouraged active listening and discussions. I am therefore confident that the purpose of the webinar series has been accomplished.

I must express this Ministry's thanks and appreciation to the esteemed international regional and local presenters for your contribution to the success of this webinar. The material shared provides a valuable foundation for continued dialogue and it is hoped that this would contribute greatly towards the improvement of the treatment of the elderly beyond the COVID-19 pandemic. These session will also support the legislative and policy agenda, programme formulation and service delivery for the elderly at the Ministry.

Finally, on behalf of Senator, The Honourable Donna Cox and the Ministry's Executive, I would like to express my appreciation to all the online participants for taking time out of your busy schedules to attend and contribute towards this national dialogue on older persons and the phenomenon of elder abuse. Thank you for your active listening and

deep analysis of the issues surrounding elder abuse. I am certain that you had the opportunity to question many issues which may birth new ideas we need to hear. I encourage you to invite your colleagues and friends to visit our Facebook page to view the recordings of all the webinars, so that they can benefit from the valuable insights and recommendations as we move forward.

I look forward for more opportunities to engage in discussions and share information on ways to help, empower and transform the lives of the vulnerable among us.

I wish to take the opportunity to extend early Emancipation Greetings to all. May we have a safe weekend and holiday.

May God Bless you all!