



**MINISTRY OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND
FAMILY SERVICES
WEAD Webinar Series**

Thursday July 15th, 2020

WELCOME REMARKS

PERMANENT SECRETARY

MRS JACINTA BAILEY-SOBERS

SALUTATIONS

- Senator the Honourable Donna Cox, Ministry of Social Development and Family Services;
- Permanent Secretary at the MSDFS –Ms Sheila Seecharan;
- Deputy Permanent Secretaries, Mr. Vijay Gangapersad and Mrs. Esther Pilgrim-Soanes;
- Chief Technical Officer, Mr. Michael Reid;
- THA Representative Ms Aretha Clarke;
- Director, Division of Ageing , Dr. Hyacinth Blake;
- Other Heads of Divisions and Staff at the MSDFS;
- Feature Speaker, Ms Jackie Marshal-Cyrus of the United Kingdom, and other Webinar Speakers, Presenters, Panellists and Facilitators;

- Virtual participants;
- Members of the Media;
- Ladies and Gentlemen

Good Morning,

It is my privilege to welcome everyone to our Webinar Series this morning – those joining us across the diaspora and those right here at home.

It has been said that to care for those who once cared for us is one of life's biggest honours. The Ministry of Social Development and Family Services, through its Division of Ageing (DOA) continues to work assiduously towards the enhancement of the quality of life of older persons throughout Trinidad and Tobago, by providing an enabling environment for their continued development, health and well being.

This webinar series, is intended to foster greater awareness of the mistreatment and exploitation of older persons in the society and would be focused on the theme ***“Elder Abuse Detection & Prevention during the COVID19 Pandemic & Beyond”***.

We are well aware that our elderly are a particularly vulnerable group to the deleterious effects of COVID-19, and as such, now more than ever before, priority needs to be placed on encouraging further

research, engaging stakeholders for policy development and highlighting support mechanisms in an effort to promote a safe living environment and better quality of life for older persons.

While the MSDFS has been tasked as the lead agency in this endeavour, each of you gathered here virtually, and the national community at large has a critical role to play. Data provided by the DOA revealed that as of May 31, 2021, of the 174 reports of alleged elder abuse, 127 occurred in private residences as opposed to 29 at Homes for Older Persons. Of these cases, neglect was the leading type, followed by financial abuse, then physical abuse and finally, occurrences categorised as verbal/emotional and psychological abuse.

As the Ministry partners with the various stakeholders to develop, amend and implement the various policies necessary to enact transformation in the treatment of this sector of society, there are several important actions which can be done to prevent elder abuse, such as;

- Being aware of the different types of elder abuse and educating oneself and others about how to recognize and report such;

- Listening to older adults and their caregivers to understand their challenges and provide support;
- Empowering older persons to resist elder abuse;
- Checking -in often on older adults while maintaining COVID 19 protocols and obeying the national directives associated with the SOE;
- Supporting over-burdened caregivers by assisting them with running errands, and safely keeping in touch with elders while the caregivers are away;
- Assisting friends, family, or local relief care groups in sourcing assistance for the older persons;
- Encouraging and assisting persons who are experiencing various challenges to seek help if they are unable to cope.

As Trinidad and Tobago and the world as a whole, adapts to the new social realities imposed by COVID-19, it is essential that older adults continue to feel connected to loved ones, friends, and caregivers around them.

I am confident that this webinar series would contribute significantly to raising awareness of and highlighting the various issues surrounding elder abuse thus ensuring that our older persons are treated with the care, respect and honour that they so richly deserve.

Do have a productive session! May God bless you all.

Thank you