



**Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago**

*Senator the Honourable Donna Cox*  
**Minister of Social Development and Family Services**

# **PARENTING FOR GRANDPARENTS WEBINAR**

Wednesday, November 10, 2021

10:30 a.m.

## **Salutations**

- Permanent Secretary, Ms Jacqueline Johnson and Acting Permanent Secretary, Mr. Ian Ramdahin Ministry of Social Development and Family Services;
- Deputy Director of the National Family Services Division, Ms Kathleen Sarkar;
- Other Heads of Divisions and Staff at the Ministry;
- Presenters, Panellists and Moderator for today's Grand-parenting Webinar;
- Participants of the Grand-parenting Webinar;
- Other online viewers;
- Members of the Media;
- Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning,

I am pleased to address you today at the start of the Ministry's Parenting for Grandparents' Webinar. This Webinar serves as an introduction to the Grand-parenting Workshops, which will continue this month.

Geoff Dench once said, *“Grandparents should play the same role in the family as an elder statesman can in the government of a country. They have the experience and knowledge that comes from surviving a great many years of life's battles and the wisdom, hopefully, to recognise how their grandchildren can benefit from this.”*

At the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services, and in particular, the Parenting Unit of the National Family Services Division, we have recognized the tremendous value of grandparents, and the fundamental role they still play, even more so today in the development of the family unit; and we deem it necessary to design initiatives to support grandparents in these critical times.

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in an increased burden on parents to find safe options for both childcare and supervision. Many grandparents have willingly shouldered this responsibility, taking on the task of supervising remote learning, providing care and protection, including emotional support for grandchildren.

It is also the grandparents who more often, instil and maintain the family's value system as part of the overall socialization of the children. For those grandparents, who have already completed the care and protection of their own children, and are now considered elderly, this has not been an easy task.

As the Ministry adopts a more responsive and multifaceted approach to social services delivery, priority has been placed on grandparents who are taking care of their grandchildren, particularly as societal norms and laws are continuously changing.

This client-focused initiative is guided by the draft National Parenting and Family Policies of Trinidad and Tobago and takes into account the specific needs, opinions and experiences of the client, in this case, being grandparents.

Grandparents who are entrusted with the responsibility for “parenting” can be viewed as a paid employee as they do indeed possess many of the requisite skills and competencies. However, because of the changing dynamics in the roles and responsibilities of parenting today, it has become imperative that special training be provided to grandparents who are raising grandchildren.

It is envisaged that today’s Webinar would initiate a national conversation, which would effectively support and equip grandparents with the necessary knowledge and skills to make responsible decisions regarding the safety and well-being of their grandchildren and other children under their care. A variety of topics will be explored during this Seminar including:

- ***Juggling three (3) Generations: The Balancing Act***, which would address the intergenerational gap and managing tensions and communication.
- ***“Exploring your rights as a grandparent: Legal and Financial issues to consider”***, which will highlight the legal and financial issues as it relates to custodial care of grandchildren.

As we work towards providing support for this selected group of our citizenry, the Ministry has also prioritized its advocacy for positive shifts in the values, attitudes and behaviours of not just grandparents but other relatives, friends and communities as well.

Additionally, it is our intention to continue collaborating with Non-Government Organizations, Community-Based Organizations, Faith-Based Organizations and other stakeholders to promote safe platforms for older persons to speak about and share their experiences, as well as identify areas for much needed assistance.

In addition to accessing the Senior Citizens Grant, I would like grandparents who are legal guardians of their grandchildren, to note that they can access other support for their grandchildren, once they meet the necessary criteria. Our Call Centre and Social Welfare offices are available to provide all the information they need to make wise choices.

This is a milestone event in the life of our Ministry because it takes us even closer to our vision of ‘helping, empowering and transforming lives’, coming on the heels of the recent launch of our grandparents programme.

We know that many of our grandparents are challenged in several ways as they raise their grandchildren and we are delighted to respond quickly and appropriately to their needs by establishing this programme within our Parenting Unit. So, we have kept our promise and this is a source of great joy and celebration within our Ministry.

We are happy to serve the hundreds of grandparents who signed up for the series and we look forward to engaging with each and every one of you and making a real difference in your lives, those of your families and ultimately, Trinidad and Tobago.

I wish to commend the Assistant Director and Staff of the National Family Services Division for spearheading this initiative and offer them my continued support.

*“Young people need something stable to hang on to – a culture connection, a sense of their own past, a hope for their own future. Most of all, they need what grandparents can give them.”* (Jay Kesler).

We endeavour to help you be the best grandparent you can be.

I thank you.

May God bless you.