

MINISTRY OF HEALTH
Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

July 8, 2022

JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

Recommendations of the Committee on the Second Report of the JSC on Human Rights, Equality & Diversity on the Human Rights of Socially Displaced Persons in Trinidad and Tobago with specific focus on their Treatment and Relocation from Port of Spain Public Spaces

- 1. Item 4.21 (page 28): The Committee acknowledges the role of the decentralised model of care in the treatment and relocation or removal of socially displaced persons in POS, as such, the Committee recommends that the MoH provide the Committee with the implementation plan and the status of the decentralised model of care.**

The implementation plan for the decentralization of mental health services is being finalised for approval from various stakeholders. Notably, several action items identified in the plan are currently being implemented as per approval of the Mental Health Policy 2019-2029 under the following key strategic areas of focus:

Governance and Leadership

- Develop a work plan for the Decentralization of Mental Health Services (100% Completed);
- Re-introduce the National Mental Health Committee (60% Completed); and
- Re-establishment and operationalization of the Mental Health Committees (20% completed).

Service Delivery

- Integration of mental health into primary health care (50% completed); and
- Provide comprehensive community mental health services - First Phase Eastern Regional Health Authority (ERHA) and then the Adult Wellness Centre (Ongoing).

Mental Health Promotion and Prevention

- Strengthen efforts to reduce risk factors and stigma; and to promote protective factors for mental health (Ongoing):
 - Develop a National Mental Health Communications Strategy for the Decentralization of Mental Health Services (100% completed).
- Reduce self-harm and suicide:
 - Develop a National Suicide Prevention Strategy (100% completed); and
 - Develop a Suicide Surveillance System (30% completed).

Human Resources and Training

- Promote training of first responders in mental health (Ongoing).

Information and Research Systems

- Facilitate the development and implementation of a safe, accurate and reliable mental health information system within the National Health Information System (30% completed).

- 2. Item 4.24 (page 29): The Committee recommends that MoH collaborate with the AGMLA, to review the Mental Health Act, in accordance with the National Mental Health Policy 2019-2029, and subsequently placed on the legislative agenda by the end of fiscal 2022.**

With the approval of the 2019 Mental Health Policy 2019-2029, the key reform aspects include:

- (i) the decentralization of mental health services from the St. Ann's Psychiatric Hospital;
- (ii) the re-organisation of mental health services towards a community-based mental health care system; and
- (iii) the establishment of an integrated system of health care and social support services in the community.

Accordingly, the Mental Health Act must be reviewed and/or updated to ensure that, in addition to providing for the involuntary admission of persons on the application of a Mental Health Officer, including street dwellers, who require in-patient care and treatment in a psychiatric ward or hospital [Section 15(1) of the Act refers], it will also now provide for community-based psychiatric care and social support for street dwellers who, though mentally ill, are not in need of

hospitalization and any other required updates to ensure complete alignment with the 2019 Policy (and with current needs).

In this regard, kindly note that the Ministry of Health will collaborate with the Office of the Attorney General and Ministry of Legal Affairs, with a view to having the Act reviewed and/or updated in accordance with the 2019 Policy and subsequently placed on the legislative agenda.

3. Item 4.25 (page 29): The Committee recommends that the MoH collaborate with the Municipal Corporations to provide mental health sensitization sessions and training to Municipal Police officers who engage daily, with socially displaced persons.

Sensitization sessions are conducted on an ongoing basis with collaboration between the Regional Health Authorities and the Mental Health Unit, Ministry of Health (MoH). For the period, 2016 to present, the following training sessions were conducted:

- i. In 2016, eighty-seven (87) Trinidad and Tobago Police Service (TTPS) Community Police Officers were trained in Psychological First Aid;
- ii. In September/October 2019, an orientation workshop was conducted for police officers on mental health courses as a pilot project. Pending the accreditation approval by the TTPS Training Academy, these courses will then be rolled out; and
- iii. In November & December 2021, two (2) sensitization sessions were conducted to train twenty-eight (28) Port of Spain City Police officers and four (4) officers from the Social Displacement Unit, Ministry of Social Development and Family Services. Thereafter, training has been ongoing for Municipal Police Officers from all Regional Corporations on a two-week rotational basis and as of July 7, 2022, a total of two hundred and fifty (250) officers have been trained.