Public Hearing Summary
Friday November 03, 2017 at 10:35 a.m.

Topic:
Inquiry into the impact on the Mental Health and Family Life of Remandees at the Remand Prisons.

Committee Members:
The following Committee Members were present for the meeting:

- Dr. Nyan Gadsby-Dolly, MP – Chairman
- Mrs. Glenda Jennings-Smith, MP – Vice-Chairman
- Mr. Kazim Hosein – Member
- Dr. Dhanayshar Mahabir – Member
- Mr. Dennis Moses – Member
- Mrs. Vidia Gayadeen Gopeesingh

Witnesses who appeared:

Ministry of Health

- Mr. Richard Madray
- Dr. Roshan Parasram
- Dr. Hazel Othello
- Professor Gerard Hutchinson

Association of Psychiatrists of Trinidad and Tobago

- Dr. Dominic Obiajulu Nwokolo

Trinidad and Tobago Prison Service (TTPrS)

- Mr. Vel Lewis
- Mr. William Alexander
- Mr. Sherwin Bruce
- Mr. John Lopez
- Mr. Sheridan Joseph
Vision on Mission

- Mr. Wayne Chance  Executive Director
- Mr. Gordon Husbands  Director

Key Issues Discussed were:

Mental Health

1. There were no statistics or studies done in Trinidad and Tobago to prove whether the prison system and the environment is a breeding ground for mental health illnesses. However, studies were done internationally which show that overcrowding is a catalyst for mental health illnesses;

2. There is no mental health screening for remandees upon entering the Remand Prison;

3. The disparity in the initial medical assessment of the remand prisoners which favours screening for physical illnesses over mental illnesses;

4. The challenges faced by Prison Infirmary Officers when seeking compliance from remandees to conduct screening tests;

5. The procedures currently in place in the Remand Prison to detect and diagnose or treat with a remandee who is mentally ill;

6. The need for a standard procedure to assess the mental health of the remandees and to develop a medical profile on each remandee;

7. The need to improve the level of the mechanisms at the prisons specifically in the areas of case management and information sharing on the remandees;

8. The creation of a module with the input of the certified Psychiatrists Association of Trinidad and Tobago, which can be taught to all Prison Officers to allow for a higher detection rate of the mental health illnesses of the remandees;

9. The training of the Infirmary Officers to include the COSTAAT module and training by Psychiatrists from the St. Ann’s Hospital;

10. The lack of resources and time which may inhibit a psychiatrist to conduct a complete diagnoses of exclusion on the remandees to accurately diagnose the mental health illness of the remandees;
11. The need for the Prison Rules to be amended to allow for the remandees to attend the programmes available at the prison facilities;

12. The $54 million upgrade for the Remand Prison which would include the design plans for a purpose-built remand prison which can allow for increased space for the remandees and more developmental programmes and services;

13. The recommendation that a policy be developed to mandate the attendance of remandees in programmes provided by the prison service;

14. The need to increase the current number of 84 Prison Infirmary Officers;

15. The need for stakeholder input and collaboration to deal with the challenges faced by the prisons;

16. The impact of the uncertain release on remandees which impacts on mental health;

17. The backlog in the mental health evaluation for persons sent by the Court to the St. Ann’s Hospital for assessment; and

18. The need for robust pre-release programmes for the remandees which include the services which are given to convicted prisoners who have been released;

**Family Life**

19. The need for a data on the factors that contribute to the effects of remandees/prisoners on family life;

20. The mental health effects on the child of a remandee can have a negative impact;

21. The lack of adequate bonding of the family unit of the remandee; and

22. The need for increased programmes which allow the family to visit the remand prison.
View the Hearing:
The hearing can be viewed on our YouTube page via the following link:
https://youtu.be/-GNMozmQkGM

Contact Information:
You may contact the Committee’s Secretary at jschumanrights@ttparliament.org or 624-7275 Ext. 2288/2627.

Committees Unit
November 07, 2017