

The Ministry of Health's response to the recommendations of the 6th Report of the Joint Select Committee on Human Rights, Equality and Diversity on the Examination of the Impact on Mental Health and Family Life of Remandees at the Remand Prisons.

Objective 1: To Evaluate the Programmes and Services to Mitigate Against the Effect of Detention on Remandees at the Remand Prison.

Recommendations

4.12. The Committee recommends that a comprehensive assessment of the mental health clinic services be done by the TTPrS in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and an appropriate programme be implemented to address the mental health issues of remandees at the prison by 2019.

It is proposed that a multi-disciplinary team be developed to comprehensively assess the Mental Health clinic services for remandees. This team should include the following:

1. Forensic Psychiatrist;
2. Prison Medical Officer (Infirmary);
3. Mental Health Nurse;
4. Psychiatric Social Worker;
5. Primary Health Care (GP);
6. Prison Officer;
7. Association of Psychiatrists (Representative);
8. Trinidad and Tobago Psychology Association (Representative); and
9. Ex-offender/ remandee.

Further, it is proposed that World Health Organisation recommendation of the Quality of Rights' Toolkit in 2012 be implemented for the assessment. This is a standardized assessment tool to comprehensively review and improve the quality of mental health services and observance of human rights in facilities where people with mental health disabilities live, receive care/treatment or rehabilitation.

Following the assessment, a step-wise plan to up-scale mental health services for remandees will be implemented to allow for improvement of services.

4.13. The Committee recommends that the TTPrS recruit one psychologist and one psychiatrist by the end of the fiscal year 2018 to be permanently stationed at each prison facility to provide for the needs of the remandees in addition to the mental health professionals provided by St. Ann's Hospital.

It is proposed that a multi-disciplinary team be implemented and rotated at each prison facility to effectively assess, treat and rehabilitate all mental health cases. The World Health Organisation

2007 publication on 'Health in Prisons' recommends the following skilled staff to comprise this team:

1. Psychiatric Nurse;
2. Psychiatrist;
3. Psychologist and Counsellor;
4. Social Worker;
5. Occupational Therapist; and
6. Auxiliaries trained and able to perform multiple functions such as facilitate support groups, aggression and violence management.

4.14 Given the insufficient number of programmes and services for mental health illnesses, the Committee recommends the Ministry of National Security seek assistance from the Ministry of Health to expand the number of programmes available for mentally ill remandees.

The Ministry of Health continues to support the Ministry of National Security with the existing number of programmes available for mentally ill remandees. It is proposed that collaboration with the Trinidad and Tobago Association of Psychologists and other allied health professionals e.g. music therapists, drama therapists, art therapists, dance/movement therapists and occupational therapists be used to design evidence based group and individual interventions and psychotherapy models for remandees.

4.15. The Committee recommends that the TTPrS coordinate information-sharing on released remandees with VOM to facilitate follow-up treatment for released remandees with mental health illnesses.

The Ministry of Health is currently embarking on the development of an electronic information system for mental health services that can assist in provision of reports and information to effectively manage and follow-up on treatment within the bounds of ethical practice and patient confidentiality.

Objective 2: To Determine the Impact on Mental Health and Family Life of Remandees at the Remand Prisons

Recommendations

4.26. The Committee recommends that the Ministry of National Security allocate resources to the TTPrS for research to be conducted to determine:

- **The effects of prison facilities on the mental health of remandees/inmates;**
- **The impact of detention on family life of remandees at Remand Prison; and**
- **The effect of overcrowding and confinement on the mental health of remandees.**

The Ministry of Health will provide technical support for the above research endeavours where necessary.

4.27. The Committee recommends that the CSO together with the Ministry of Health initiate studies into the incidence and relapse rates of mental health illnesses in remand prisons by the end of fiscal year 2018.

Due to a lack of mandatory mental health screening at remand prisons, there is limited data to determine relapse rates of mental illness. A systematic inquiry on incidence would require standardised screening upon entrance of new remandees. The Ministry of Health will provide technical support to the CSO to initiate the studies with a supporting action plan.

4.28. The Committee recommends that the PMO conduct a physical health evaluation and a mental health evaluation with a well-trained psychiatrist, upon the entry of the newly committed to prison facilities.

An integrated assessment tool (**First-stage health assessment by NICE guidelines**) is being recommended that incorporates both physical and mental health components to be administered by staff upon entrance of the newly committed prisoner. Following this screening after a pre-determined period of time, a more comprehensive mental health tool should be administered by specialist staff involving the Psychiatrist, Psychologist and the Psychiatric Social Worker. Continuous evaluation will be instituted to mitigate some of the challenges faced with health screening in the prison.

4.29. The Committee recommends that the TTPrS and the Ministry of Health should review the recommendations proposed by Vision and Mission (VOM) in Appendix VI

The Ministry of Health has reviewed the recommendations by the Vision and Mission (VOM) and will be in collaboration with the Ministry of National Security to devise an appropriate action plan to effect the recommendations.

4.30. The Committee recommends that the Ministry of National Security collaborates with the Ministry of Health to provide a training module by fiscal year 2019 for “layman” prison officers to recognise common indicators of mental health illnesses in the prison population and refer the incidences to the relevant channels or departments.

The Ministry of Health can provide the Mental Health GAP Action Programme Community Health Worker (mhGAP-CHW) training modules which are specific to non-specialist health care providers and community workers. The modules aim to reduce the mental health treatment gap, and should enhance the capacity of the prison system to effectively assess and refer persons with mental health illnesses.