



MINISTRY PARTNERS WITH UWI FOR FIRST SET OF SSEU TRAINING



Following the orientation sessions which were held in July, to help prepare staff for the roll out of the 2 Pilot projects for the new Social Support and Empowerment Unit (SSEU), the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services (MSDFS) partnered with the University of the West Indies (Social Work Unit, Department of Behavioural Sciences), to commence the first phase of virtual training sessions. This initiative is part of its capacity building efforts for staff attached to the Rio Claro and Tunapuna Social Welfare offices, the National Family Services Division and National Social Development Programme in the first instance.

Cognizant that a professional outlook was required to inaugurate staff in the new business model for social services delivery, the Ministry's collaboration with UWI centred around providing training and re-training, in some instances, in the areas of basic client counselling and case management.

Representing the Executive and giving opening remarks was Mr. Michael Reid who indicated that he was pleased that the proposed topics to be covered are based on a module which will dictate the way the Ministry does business in the future. The sessions are scheduled to take place from August 18th, every Wednesday and Thursday, until September 2, 2021. Approximately fifty-four (54) staff members from both the Tunapuna and Rio Claro Offices will be participating.

A total of five (5) sessions will be held with the targeted group of participants. Two (2) sessions have been completed thus far, with the presentations being well received by staff in attendance. Frontline staff, as well as other key Officers attached to the Social Welfare Division, who interact with the public, were exposed to skills in supportive interviewing with focus being on core competencies such as respect, self-awareness and empathy.

Facilitator and Lecturer, Dr. Karene Ann Nathaniel Decaires kicked off the training, and encouraged staff to practice introspection as she expressed the importance of understanding one's own biases, judgements and assumptions when dealing with clients of the Ministry. Other Facilitators are Dr. Cheryl Ann Boodram and Ms. Shazeeda Khan

Other topics covered included Principles of the Helping Relationship, Developing a Professional Identity, as well as an Introduction to the Helping Process and how the case worker's role ties in to each.

In summary, this collaboration with the UWI aligns with MSDFS' continued efforts to ensure the SSE is established as the blueprint for transformation and the building of a new society, characterized by innovation, resilience, sustainability equity and harmony.

As an evolving and high-performance organization, with a multifaceted approach to social services delivery, the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services is resolute in ensuring that the requisite skills and competencies continue to be built and developed among its cadre of staff.

Training with the UWI continues over the coming weeks with workshops modules related to Understanding People, the Ecological Model (interviewing techniques) and Emotional Intelligence. Phase 2 of the training is expected to commence in September and will focus on building the practical skills of the participating staff in areas of Communication, using ICT Systems, STEP UP, case management and case planning. With this knowledge, it is anticipated that in the long term, the MSDFS staff will be equipped with the necessary knowledge and tools to help, empower and transform the lives of clients by building their resilience and creating an environment for them to become more self-sufficient with a better quality of life.

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