



May 2, 2023

**MEDIA RELEASE**

**CHILDREN'S AUTHORITY AND ROMAN CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE COLLABORATE ON CARE AND SAFEGUARDING OF CHILDREN**

The Children's Authority of Trinidad and Tobago and the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Port of Spain, in collaboration with the 14 independent children's Care Homes under the management of Catholic denominational boards and orders have embarked on a joint effort to promote greater support to vulnerable children at Children's Homes.

During a recent meeting between representatives of the Office of the Archdiocese, led by Archbishop Reverend Charles Jason Gordon and the Authority, led by acting Director, Mrs. Rhonda Gregoire-Roopchan, it was noted that there is a need for greater collaboration between the two organisations to facilitate safe spaces where children in care can become well adjusted, contributing members of society. The first goal, therefore, would be to reintegrate children with their families where it is safe, possible, appropriate and in the best interest of the child.

The Archbishop stated that "caring for vulnerable children is one of the very important, sacred duties of any civilization, and is consistent with the role of the Church in society."

Mrs. Gregoire-Roopchan noted that "care involves the whole person and goes beyond the physical housing of children. She also expressed that children thrive best in a family environment and this has to be central to the approach of residential and alternative care".

The Archbishop noted that the Church has been promoting care to children through several independent Catholic-run Homes for over 150 years; and he called on the State to do more to support the Homes in their effort to meet the growing needs of the children in their care. Those needs, he emphasised, go beyond housing and accommodation; they include education and training, recreational outlets, psychological and medical care, access to counselling, trained and competent institutional staff and a more sensible and sensitive approach to how children are transitioned.

Discussions also addressed the progress made by the independent Catholic Care Homes in achieving licensure. Eleven of 14 Catholic-run care homes have now achieved compliance and another 3 are nearing completion.

Also, on the agenda was alternative care and the need for persons and families to embrace Kinship Care or Foster Care for children who are unable to remain with their birth families. The Church sees this as a Christian duty of care. The Authority and the Office of the Archdiocese will continue their collaboration towards safeguarding children and building capacity within families to care for their children.

***Child protection is everybody's business***

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**For more information on child safety and protection please contact:**

The Children's Authority: 996

National Family Services Division, Ministry of Social Development and Family Services: 623-2608

The Student Support Services Division, Ministry of Education: 724-1010

The Domestic Violence Hotline: 800-SAVE

Trinidad and Tobago Association of Psychologists: 717-8827

Childline: 131

The Trinidad and Tobago Police Service: 999