REPORT
ON
WALKER’S PLACE OF SAFETY

Submitted: Thursday, February 15, 2018
INTRODUCTION

The Child Protection and Family Services Agency (formerly the Child Development Agency and the Office of the Children’s Registry) is the governmental organization responsible for children who are in need of care and protection or who are at risk of becoming in need of care and protection. To this end, the Agency offers a range of services geared toward protecting children from all forms of abuse, neglect and harm or the threat of harm. The programmes of the Agency are broadly categorized into primary, secondary and tertiary prevention programmes.

Our primary prevention programmes aim to heighten awareness of children’s rights, promote healthy family relationships and encourage positive parenting. Secondary prevention involves interventions to stem possible family breakdowns through the provision of counseling services, practical parenting skills building exercises and other family-focused initiatives offered in-house and/or by way of our multi-agency referral system. The Agency’s tertiary prevention responses focus on rescuing children who are victims of abuse, abandonment and neglect and on empowering them to overcome these unfortunate circumstances.

The role of the Child Protection and Family Services Agency (CPFSA) in tertiary prevention is multi-dimensional. The CPFSA operates the National Children’s Registry, where all suspected and known cases of child abuse, maltreatment and neglect are reported, assessed and referred to the Agency’s investigative arm. The outcome of these investigations determine whether a child is referred for secondary prevention or brought before the court for an order making the State a Fit Person in respect of the child.
In some instances, children who have been separated from their parent(s) are placed with relatives who can provide suitable living arrangements. In the majority of cases, the children are placed in residential child care facilities with a view to introducing them to stable family life in the short to medium term through the Agency’s Living in Family Environments (LIFE) Programme.

**Residential Child Care Facilities**

There are a total of 54 residential child care facilities in Jamaica, 45 of which are privately operated. Of the 45 private facilities, 44 are children’s homes and 1 is a place of safety. The remaining 9 are government-run institutions (5 places of safety and 4 children’s homes). All residential child care facilities are held to set standards of care, which are derived from the Child Care and Protection Act (CCPA) and the Child Care and Protection (Children’s Homes) Regulations.

However, section 47 of the CCPA stipulates that all privately run children’s homes and places of safety must be issued a valid license to operate. The licensing process is governed by the Child Care and Protection (Children’s Homes) Regulations, which require that each private facility is financially viable, has a sound management structure, practices proper record keeping, and adheres to health, educational, safety and security standards. The CPFSA is the regulatory and licensing authority for the sector.
**Routine monitoring**

Routine institution monitoring is the internal mechanism through which the Agency is able to measure compliance with service standards, maintain frequent and ongoing dialogue with operators, staff and children; detect emergent problems; investigate critical incidents and plan interventions to improve care services as needed.

The institution monitoring team is required to conduct announced and unannounced visits to both private and government run residential child care facilities. Visits to children’s homes and places of safety are done once per month and twice monthly, respectively, during regular business hours, at night, on weekends and public holidays.

**Disaster Management**

The CPFSA’s policy on Disaster Management and Contingency Planning, which covers flooding, fire, hurricane, earthquake, riots, bomb threats and personal security threats, aims to ensure the effective coordination of contingency measures across the Agency’s network of offices, and all residential child care facilities.

Since the development and implementation of this policy in 2006, the CPFSA has continuously sought to build the capacity of operators and their staff in disaster management. To this end, the Agency has spearheaded various initiatives including sector-wide disaster management workshops and individual consultations.
Despite these efforts, a site inspection audit conducted in 2012 highlighted the absence of disaster preparedness plans in a number of the facilities. Against this background, the Agency, in partnership with UNICEF and the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management (ODPEM), sought to equip residential child care facilities with the tools to develop their own Emergency Preparedness and Response Plans (EPRPs), the template for which has been customized to feed into the Agency’s disaster response mechanism. Over ninety percent of all residential child care facilities participated in the workshops.

**Private home subvention**

Currently, the subvention paid to privately operated children’s homes and places of safety stands at J$6000.00 per week per child. There are one thousand nine-hundred and eighty three (1983) children who benefit from the subvention, which totals **Six Hundred and Eighteen Million, Six Hundred and Ninety Six Thousand dollars (J$618,696,000.00)** and represents a third of the Agency’s budgetary allocation.

The last increase by J$1000.00 per week per child was granted in 2012. Our latest proposal, in the current budget negotiations in 2017, is for a general increase of $4000.00 per week per child and a $6000.00 per week per child increase for special needs children.
Audit and Review of the Sector

In an effort to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the sector, the CPFSA from time to time commissions external assessments, which also promote probity and transparency as it relates to the performance of our oversight responsibility. The Site Inspection Audit of Residential Child Care Facilities, which was mentioned earlier, is one such external assessment. The audit, which aimed to record and highlight breaches, exceptions and non-conformity with a view to taking corrective action, is used as a guide and a marker for the Agency, which as part of our transformational leadership, has been working with the facilities to effect the necessary changes, point them to external funding sources and other initiatives.

A strategic review of the sector, conducted in 2017 by Trevor Hamilton and Associates, gave a “modest but satisfactory” rating for the overall performance of the residential child care sector at 3.3 out of 5.0. The review looked at a wide range of issues aimed at identifying gaps and making recommendations for the modernization of the sector.

Close to sixty challenges were identified in the review, some of which require a significant outlay of capital to be adequately addressed. These are mainly programmatic modifications that directly impact the lives of the children, whose individual needs are diverse and require more targeted interventions. The continued integration of technology to achieve greater efficiency in the delivery of care services is a recommendation that applies in respect of a number of the challenges identified. The Agency has implemented a Child Case Management System, which has brought about increased efficiency in terms of planning for and
tracking the rehabilitation and development of each individual child in the care of the State. Other challenges can be met with improvements in the operational and management or leadership structures in place.

Notably, while a few of the recommendations touch and concern the need to upgrade the physical plant of many of the facilities, which also requires significant funding, none of the facilities visited were identified as being inadequately equipped for disaster response. This represents an improvement from the 2012 Site Inspection Audit.

For our part, the Agency continues to work along with the residential child care sector to bring about marked improvement in the outcomes for our clients. The measures that we employ and the strategies for heightening service delivery in residential care are sensitive to the delicate balance that must be maintained in light of the Agency’s role as both client and regulator of the sector.

Other initiatives include arrangements for the Jamaica Fire Brigade to conduct periodic site inspections and send to the CPFSA. Additionally, the Agency has engaged the Electrical Inspectorate, under the Ministry of Science, Technology, Energy and Mining, to conduct an electrical audit.
Capacity Building of Management and Caregivers

In September 2017, the Agency held the first of a series of development seminars for operators of residential child care facilities to provide further guidance from experts in security, public health and safety, nutrition and meal planning, as well as interior design.

Walker’s Place of Safety

In 1972, Walker’s Place of Safety was founded by the late Ms. E. Walker, after whom the facility was named. She operated same until her passing in 1996. This brought about significant change for the place of safety, which up until then was managed by her. The reigns were handed to Ms. Grace Allen, who held the position up to the time of the fire.

In 2004, the enactment of the Child Care and Protection Act and the subsequent introduction of the Child Care and Protection (Children’s Homes) Regulations, in 2007, ushered in a new dispensation that would again bring about significant changes for the facility.

When the Agency introduced the new licensing regime, Walker’s Place of Safety applied for and was issued a valid license to operate from October 1, 2009 to September 30, 2012.

Application was submitted by Management for renewal.
During the license renewal period, certain deficits in the management of the facility were detected by the Site Inspection Audit (mentioned earlier in this report), which needed to be addressed. These include the absence of written job descriptions, human resource procedures and proper records. There were also issues in terms of terms of standards of care that were flagged for improvement.

Being acutely aware of the implications of non-renewal, the Agency took the decision to extend the validity of the licence with a view to partnering with Walker’s to streamline its forty-five year old operations and meet the requirements. See letter dated September 1, 2014.

An examination of the facility’s operations was commissioned in 2014 to assist in formulating an action plan to be implemented by a steering committee that was established for the purpose of helping the manager of the facility to achieve full compliance. This report highlighted problems concerning the facility’s management including the absence of a management board and the ad hoc nature of financial arrangements.

The Monitoring Officer assigned to Walker’s Place of Safety prepared a monitoring assessment overview for the period 2014 to 2017, which showed that a majority of the safety issues identified in the Site Inspection Audit were rectified and the facility registered compliance in those areas.

In 2017, the agency commissioned Guardsman Elite to conduct a Security Inspection to assess the presence of an Emergency Preparedness and Response
Plan at the facility and that various other safety procedures such as fire drills were being done. The facility had working smoke detectors, an alarm device and emergency exit signs in place. Fire extinguishers were present and the last inspection by the Jamaica Fire Brigade had conducted in July 2017.

However, the management issues remained a problem and, in January 2018, a decision was taken by the Agency to intervene in its management and appoint an interim Board of Management. This was to have taken effect on February 1, 2018. The management was sensitized of our decision.

**Incident Report**

On Tuesday, January 16, 2018 at approximately 1:00a.m, information received by the Child Protection and Family Services Agency (CPFSA) was that there was a fire at the Walker’s Place of Safety.

Preliminary reports indicated that caregivers and children were alerted of the fire and utilized fire drill tactics. Information received from caregivers was that they were able to open the two (2) exits to get the children out of the building and that the children also assisted in rescuing others.

Thirty four of the 36 children at the home at the time of the fire were accounted for, while two were missing. A further search by fire personnel of the location revealed that the missing children were found and pronounced dead.

The children and caregivers were assisted by members of the Shiloh Apostolic Church located on Little Kew Road where they were housed. A team from the CPFSA arrived and initiated grief counseling and assessment of immediate needs.
The agency’s Emergency Response was activated and plan of action was detailed following the assessment.

Representatives from the agency’s Mobile Mental Health Unit as well as the Ministry of Health later joined and provided counseling with the children and caregivers.

Contact was made with family members and counseling was also provided.

Profile of the deceased children

1. Ornieka McCrae (13 years old; Jan. 28, 2005) was made the subject of a Fit person Order on February 27, 2012 as a result of her family’s inability to provide care, control and protection due to a family crisis. Her mother’s place of residence was destroyed by fire on May 21, 2011. Ornieka was then temporarily in the care of her maternal grandmother, whose circumstances changed, incapacitating her previous interest and capacity to assist the mother in caring for Ornieka. Ornieka was reportedly living on maternal grandmother’s verandah. Ornieka attends the Best Care Foundation. She spent four days with her mother during the Christmas period 2017.

2. Anna Kay Moreland (13 years old, Jan. 10, 2001) was made the subject of a Fit Person Order (FPO) on February 23, 2016 as result of parental neglect which resulted in her exposure to physical, psychological and moral danger. This FPO came after the expiration of a supervision order, which resulted in the Agency’s intervention with father to improve his parenting capacity.

Anna Kay attended the Best Care Foundation.
Plan of Action: Intervention with the family of the deceased children

Contact was made with parents of the deceased and meeting held to initiate grief counseling support.

Further discussion was held with the family in relation to:

1. Ongoing psychosocial support for family of the deceased
2. Arrangements for burial
3. Long term support for family
4. Dr. Wendell Abel from the UWI has committed to provide a team of counselors to work with the affected families.

Meeting was held between family members, senior officials at the CPFSA, Senator, Hon. Ruel Reid, Minister of Education, Youth and Information (MOEYI) as well as Hon. Floyd Green MP., Minister of State, MOEYI. This meeting finalized funeral arrangements for the deceased children and further support to be given to the family by the Ministry.

Temporary Placement and Relocation

In light of the fire, children are caregivers were housed temporarily at the Shiloh Apostolic Church where group counseling was initiated with the children, their families and caregivers.

Through coordinated effort between the CEO, Director of Children and Family Programmes, placement coordinator, social workers and managers for various child care facilities, a total of 52 spaces were identified for the children to be relocated.

Relocation of children

Best practices inform that in situations such as this, the children should be kept together so that they can receive therapy together and begin the process of healing together.
On Wednesday, January 17, 2018, thirty two children were placed at three (3) child care facilities; Maxfield Park Children’s Home, City of Refuge and Jamaica National Children’s Home. One (1) child was reintegrated with family and the other placed in our foster care programme.

A breakout of the placement of these children can be found in the Appendix, Table 1.

**Update on cause and response to fire**

Contact was made with personnel at the Fire Department who advised that an investigation has been launched into the cause of the fire.

Information received from the Fire Department indicates that there has been an ongoing intervention with the Walker’s Place of Safety through a series of fire safety and prevention training as well fire drill exercises.

By all indications, the staff and children at the home were compliant with the procedures in case there was a fire.

**Needs Assessment of the Children**

Our initial assessment of the needs of the children was looked at based on the following categories;

- Educational
- Basic supplies-food and clothing
- Psychological wellbeing

As it relates to **educational supplies**, the preliminary needs are as follows for children of school age:

- Hardcover notebooks
• Pens
• pencils
• rulers
• rubbers
• calculators etc
• Rental Books (High School Students)

Our Officers made contact with the various schools in ascertaining booklists. Majority of books were replaced by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Information and the agency.

**Report on Psycho social assessment by the Psychology Unit- January 18 & 19, 2018**

Our team of Clinical Psychologists visited the children after they were relocated. Based on the continued intervention, they reported the following:

1. Counselling support with the children has been positive, checks are being conducted twice daily; morning and evening.

**Sessions with the children relocated to Maxfield Park**

The children placed at Maxfield Park Children’s Home were visited by Clinical Psychologist Sophia Brown. Two of them are still traumatized and not dealing with the separation very well. Ms. Brown is still having intervention with them.

**Sessions with the children relocated to Jamaica National**

The children were visited today by Clinical Psychologist Keisha Tomlinson. They are still a bit unsettled but still doing better than those at Maxfield. Intervention will continue.

**Sessions with the children relocated to City of Refuge**
Mr. Williams along with a team visited. The children are settled and doing well. The Smiles Mobile visited on Friday, Jan. 19 and overall the children are doing well and will return to school on Monday, Jan., 22, 2018.

**Actions taken in preparation for Back to School**

1. Khaki uniforms are being purchased; children at the Maxfield Park Children’s Home have received all school clothing items and will return to school on Monday, Jan. 22.
2. Clinical Psychologists will continue counseling intervention as needed.
3. Preparations for burial will be put in place following the release of the bodies of the two deceased children.
4. Counseling intervention to begin with caregivers with Dr. Abel.
5. Human Resource Department communicating with Walker’s Place of Safety staff members who have been displaced by the fire. Meetings are set to be held next week.
6. Monitoring officers have begun investigations, interviews with caregivers to begin next week.
7. Production line has been set up at our Corporate Office with CPFSA staff members to sort through the donation of items. Food items and care packages will be delivered this weekend to all the children. Items are also being packaged for the caregivers. Donation has been expanded to our boardrooms at HQ.

**Communication Plan and Execution**

- Press Release “Children settled after fire at the Walker’s Place of Safety- dispatched on Wed. Jan. 17
- Press Release dispatched with banking information for monetary contributions towards the rebuilding of the home.
- Three-four updates on Twitter daily
- Two to three updates on Facebook daily
- Partnership with I SUPPORT JAMAICA through the Jamaica National Group. This is a crowd funding site in Jamaica. The JN Group met with Public
Relations Manager and CEO to discuss this initiative. Team was advised that proposal will be sent to HM for review and decision would be made and an advisory would be done providing response from HM.

- Outside Broadcast partnership with SUNCITY Radio for persons to drop off items at their location on Wednesday, Jan. 24, 2018.
- A follow up Press Release will be dispatched to the media on Friday, Jan. 19 to provide further update on the children in particular that they will be returning to school.
- ½ page Thank You message to be done in the print media for the outpouring of support being received.

Recommendations for Further Action

- Fast track remaining Security Audit of all Children’s Homes and Places of Safety.
- Fast track Electrical Audit and Recommendations of the Strategic Review.
- Extend existing license for Homes pending the completion of Security Audits.
- Secure up to date Emergency plan for all Homes and Places of Safety to include Evacuation plans and Fire Safety Equipment.
- Implement recommendations for the Strategic Review/Improvement Plan.
- Re commission the Board of Visitors (contact to be made with existing members).
- Fire Department Inspection and Certification
- Series of training for RCCF Management, 2nd to focus on Disaster and Emergency Management.
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