



FULL STORY

Child abuse rampant in Tobago

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Sexual child abuse is rampant in Tobago, according to District Health Visitor Vere Jack who yesterday called for a special system so that "the child will not be raped again and again" when the tale is related.

Jack, who is attached to the Tobago Regional Health Authority, issued the appeal when the Commission of Enquiry into the country's health care rolled into the Mount Hope Hospital.

Jack said often times when sexual abuse cases are reported, the child is expected to relate the tale of abuse to people including doctors, nurses, police officers, and medical social workers, some of whom are not trained to deal with such delicate matters.

Jack said the trauma experienced by children when the tale is related over and over is unimaginable, and is calling for a network to be set up where persons will be specially trained to deal with such issues.

The six-member commission met with over 60 health care professionals from the five major regional health authorities, in pursuit of its mandate to examine the operations and delivery of public health care services in the country and to make recommendations for its improvement.

Yesterday's attendees included primary care nurses and District Health Visitors (DHV) from all areas of Trinidad and Tobago. The institutions represented included the South West Regional Health Authority, Eastern Regional Health Authority, North Central Regional Health Authority, North West Regional Health Authority, and Tobago Regional Health Authority.

Briefly addressing the attendees, Commission chairman Gladys Gaffoor said the commission began its work in early 2005, and has since visited over ten health facilities in Trinidad, as well as Tobago.

Many of the nurses and DHVs shared similar complaints which included staff shortages, lack of incentives, no performance appraisal systems, poor work ethics, absentee doctors and nurses, lack of equipment and maintenance, cramped buildings, inadequate security, no courier services, lack of medical social workers, need for additional health centres, and timely delivery of supplies.