



**PRESS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Friday, December 10, 2021

**DCS committed to improving ‘duty of care’ in treatment of infirmed inmates and wards
– Senator Samuda**

Minister without Portfolio in the Ministry of National Security (MNS), Senator, the Hon. Matthew Samuda, says the Department of Correctional Services (DCS) has made great strides in fulfilling the Government’s commitment to improving the ‘duty of care’ observed in the provision of treatment to bedridden and infirmed inmates, as well as the wards within state care.

The Minister was giving an update in the Senate earlier today (December 10, 2021), on the two special investigation reports by the Independent Commission of Investigations (INDECOM) – the tragic death of 81-year-old Noel Chambers, a former inmate at the Tower Street Adult Correctional Centre, and the treatment and care of the wards at the Rio Cobre Juvenile Correctional Centre (RCJCC).

The INDECOM report shed light on notable systemic weaknesses such as, human resource constraints and infrastructural deficiencies within the DCS, particularly in relation to the care of such vulnerable groups.

Minister Samuda told the Senate that in response, the Government commissioned a comprehensive audit into the matter, and **“committed to ensuring the implementation of a Plan of Action, to address the identified deficiencies in an effort to improve the ‘duty of care’ offered to these inmates”**.

He said: **“Having reviewed the findings of the report, I immediately commissioned the establishment of the Correctional Services Technical Working Group (CSTWG), comprising key stakeholders from select Ministries, Departments and Agencies, Donor Agencies, and other interested parties.”**

The CSTWG was tasked with conducting a comprehensive review of the operations of all juvenile correctional centres, with special focus on the ‘duty of care’ to the wards, particularly in relation to, the appropriateness of disciplinary measures, and the timely access to the requisite educational and psychosocial interventions.

The main deliverable of the CSTWG is the provision of a report and action plan inclusive of a roadmap, recommended strategies, policy changes, and infrastructural improvements to ensure the appropriate care and treatment of the wards in the juvenile correctional centres.

As a result of this effort, UNICEF Jamaica, a member of the CSTWG has committed to partner with the MNS for the provision of training to Correctional Officers in the areas of child rights and justice, and support in the development of standard operating procedures.

Further, as part of the MNS' response to the INDECOM report, a twenty-five (25) bed Medical Centre and Infirmary located at the Tamarind Farm Adult Correctional Centre, in St. Catherine was opened on Friday, October 29, 2021. The facility is the first of its kind and will house bedridden and infirmed inmates.

“I am also happy to announce that fifteen (15) inmates who were transferred from St Catherine and Tower Street Adult Correctional Centres are now receiving specialized care at the newly opened facility,” Senator Samuda said.

Additionally, he said the availability of adequate human resources remains a major constraint for the DCS, stating that there are not enough medical practitioners to meet the demands of the current population of inmates with special healthcare needs.

“I am pleased to report, however, that since undertaking this review, the DCS has expanded its cadre of Medical Professionals to include five (5) medical doctors and six (6) health aides, the latter have been assigned to the infirmary.”

“Further approval has been granted by the Ministry of Finance and the Public Service for the hiring of twelve (12) Psychiatrists and ten (10) Psychologists to join the two (2) Psychologists currently on staff, a major increase,” Samuda noted.

Senator Samuda said that the additions will bring significant improvements in meeting the needs of these vulnerable groups.

“Additionally, the MNS is at an advanced stage in the procurement of a specialist Psychiatrist, who will be tasked with ensuring the timely assessment of all unfit to plead inmates, with a view to having their matters relisted before the Courts for a final determination,” the Minister said.