



**PRESS RELEASE
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Uncontrollable Children in DCS' Care to be Relocated

Twenty-six uncontrollable wards of the state are to be separated from juveniles who have been criminally charged or convicted says Minister without Portfolio, Senator the Hon. Matthew Samuda.

In addressing this morning's sitting of the Senate, Minister Samuda said **"a correctional facility is simply not set up to deal with the nuanced issues facing juveniles deemed uncontrollable. In fact, our correctional officers are simply not trained to manage them and provide the necessary psychosocial support. They are trained to manage those on remand, or those convicted of criminal offenses"**.

He pointed out that because of the discretionary power granted to the Courts by the Child Care and Protection Act, 'uncontrollable' children are placed in correctional facilities.

"Successive administrations have committed to correcting this wrong. Mr. President this discretion must be removed, quite frankly we have spoken about it for too long and it is time to act. Consequently, consultations are being had with the Courts and the Minister of Education in a bid to seek their permanent and appropriate relocation", Minister Samuda explained.

According to Minister Samuda, there are over 200 juveniles in the care of the Department of Correctional Services, 17 per cent of whom were remanded by the Courts after being deemed uncontrollable.

"We have wards, who have been remanded and convicted for crimes including murder, shooting, illegal possession of firearms and ammunition, rape, buggery, robbery, house breaking, and destruction of property amongst other crimes", Minister Samuda informed the Senate.

Following a report from INDECOM into the Rio Cobre Juvenile Correctional Centre, Minister Samuda announced that a working group has been convened to address some of the issues identified in the report with a special focus on the duty of care. Some of the issues to be addressed include enhanced training for officers who interface with juveniles as well as an evaluation of the psychosocial support available to wards.

The Working Group will comprise representatives from the Ministry of Education, Youth and Information (Child Protection and Family Services Agency), the Ministry of Health and Wellness, Office of the Public Defender, Centre for Investigation of Sexual Offences and Child Abuse, UNICEF Jamaica, the Children's Advocate, Jamaica Psychiatric Association and the Ministry of National Security.

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