



November 2020

**Special points of interest:**

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- **Guidance and Counselling**
- **School Social Work**
- **Special Education**
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- **Recognition of Past Employees and SSSD Team**



**Professor Dennis Conrad –  
Manager of Student  
Support Services**

# SSSD INSIDER

## **Welcome to Our 1st Issue**

The Student Support Services Division is embarking on a new initiative to enhance the social relationship among the peers within and outside of the division by way of a termly newsletter.

The purpose of the newsletter is to share information and success stories with the internal stakeholders of the Ministry of Education. Information sharing will allow the division to build and sustain a professional community where intra-SSSD collaboration is encouraged. The target audience of the newsletter are the internal stakeholders of the Ministry of Education. The newsletter will be published at the end of each academic term – hence three issues will be published within each Academic Year.

The Student Support Services Division (SSSD) was established in 2004 with the aim of facilitating a healthy learning and teaching environment that nurtures and sustains responsible and productive citizens.

The *Vision of SSSD* – all learners are effectively supported in their process of learning.

The *Mission Statement of SSSD* – to provide on-going support for all students to maximize their learning potential, do well at school, achieve their capabilities, and develop holistically.

The division provides an array of specialized career counselling, career guidance, youth guidance, psychological support, school social support, care and protection of students, special education support for children with special educational needs, support for behavioral and clinical issues, and psychoeducational assessments. There is also an increased emphasis on Inclusive Education.

### **Main units of SSSD:**

- Developmental, Assessment and Intervention
- Guidance and Counselling
- School Social Work
- Special Education

## **Message from Manager of SSSD**

Colleagues, over the last two years, our division has experienced great achievements, weathered significant limitations and exerted tremendous resilience and resourcefulness. Our response to the pandemic evidenced a division of tenacious and resolute officers, striving to transition a face-to-face model of service delivery to virtual applications. Our efforts were indeed fruitful, however our task has not yet ended.

As I reflect on the years past, I

reaffirm my commitment and dedication to guiding and supporting a leadership team that encourages collaborative practice, drives divisional expansion and development, fosters healthy communication and enhances professionalism and advocacy.

While some have subscribed to the endearing term “ghost manager”, I reiterate my obligation to empowering officers and exposing their potential for leadership. The

goal is to nurture persons within our division to build a service that can positively impact the 21st century students. The world is evolving and our students’ needs have significantly diversified. This requires SSSD to rapidly and progressively shift our perspectives to enhance divisional outcomes.

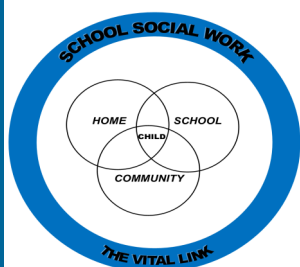
I endorse the *SSSD Insider* as an appropriate medium for sharing and celebrating district’s and unit’s successes. I look forward to your fullest participation.



**The Developmental Assessment and Intervention Unit Logo**



**Guidance and Counselling Middle Management Team**



**School Social Work: The Vital Link**

## Developmental Assessment and Intervention

The Developmental Assessment and Intervention Unit, (DAIU), is within the Student Support Services Division (SSSD). Established in 2014, the unit comprises Clinical Psychologists, School Psychologists and Behavioral Specialists.

Clinical Psychologists function to provide intense psychological support for students experiencing developmental, emotional and intellectual challenges. School Psychologists work to support students and teachers in the process of building academic competencies

and fostering supportive systems. Both specialization facilitate psychoeducational assessments. Behavior Specialists function to support students' development of positive behavior practices that can result in academic, social and emotional success.

Through ongoing collaboration with SSSD Multi-Disciplinary Team, the DAIU provides interventions that mitigate academic challenges, psychological distress and/or disorders. Students can benefit from the following services:

- Psycho-educational and Psychological Valuations
- Consultations
- Functional Behavioral Assessments
- Behavior Modification Therapy
- Psychotherapeutic Support

Within this "new normal", the following services are anticipated from the unit:

- Promoting Mental Health in Education
- Online Therapeutic
- Behavioral Intervention
- Symposium
- Awareness/Sensitizations Workshops

## Guidance and Counselling

For over fifty (50) years, Guidance and Counselling practitioners have been positively impacting the lives of our nation's children, supporting them as they *Learn to Learn, Learn to Live and Learn to Work*.

Guidance and Counselling as an Education-based discipline is focused on supporting all students in the areas of their Personal-Social, Academic and Career Development. Guidance Officers / Counsellors prioritize

preventative and developmental work with all students at our Primary and Secondary Schools.

Over 80 per cent of our nation's schools currently benefit from the implementation of a Comprehensive Guidance and Counselling Programme.

Some of the services provided include, but are not limited to:

- Counselling
- Psycho-Educational

- Educational Advising
- Career Advising
- Select /Targeted Intervention
- Consultation
- Management of Referrals
- Information Services
- Parent Education
- Teacher Education
- Coordination of Learning Enhancement Centre

## School Social Work

The School Social Workers (SSW) are the link between students, schools, parents, communities, governmental social services agencies, and other civil societies as they advocate on behalf of students. They provide psychosocial /educational intervention in the lives of students, families, teachers and communities.

School Social Workers provide targeted intervention to assist

students and families by removing psychosocial barriers so students can reach their fullest potential.

Some of the services provided include, but are not limited to:

- Crisis Intervention
- Parenting in Education
- Teacher Information Session
- Home Visits
- Individual and Group Work
- Advocacy
- Networking

- Community Engagement
- External Referrals
- Family Intervention
- Consultations
- Care and Protection of Students

### Ongoing/ Upcoming Projects:

- Community Voices
- Adolescent Ambassador Programme
- Student and Parent Support Groups

## Special Education

The Special Education Unit offers diagnostic and intervention services for students with Special Education Needs (SEN), primarily via a school-based system of service delivery.

Support services are aimed at identifying and supporting students with disabilities and other SEN. The services are also designed to ensure that students with SEN benefits from equitable access to educational opportunities.

These services include but are not limited to:

- School Based-Needs Assessment
- Referrals
- Diagnostic Screening, Curriculum Based and Standard Assessment
- Client Advocacy

- Curriculum-based Support and Intervention
- Development of Individualized Education Programmes
- Specialized and Therapeutic Interventions
- The Management and Administration of Concessions
- Transition Planning and Services
- Management of Special Needs Grants

The Unit also works closely with Public and Private Special Schools, and external stakeholders. Information on these schools will be provided in Issue 2.

The New Academic Year continues to be a hectic one, as we continue servicing students with SEN. Officers were advised to design interventions to engage their

assigned students and to support parents in managing students' learning while at home.

In coping with the 'new normal', the Unit implemented:

- Play and social skills development
- Life skills and targeted coping strategies
- Activities for fine and gross motor skill development
- Social Stories
- Disability Awareness
- Support to General Education Teachers

These measures, along with other initiatives, will continue during the current academic year.

## Inclusive Education

The Education Policy Paper 2017-2022 defines Inclusive Education (IE) as *"a process of strengthening the capacity of the education system to reach out to all learners and can thus be understood as a key strategy to achieve Education for All"* (UNESCO). Inclusive education policies and practices are based on the fact that education is a basic human right and the foundation for a more just and equal society.

As outlined in the Inclusive Education Policy of Trinidad and Tobago (2009), IE aims to

fulfil the Ministry of Education's commitment to make education available, accessible, acceptable and adaptable to all. Four key principles that characterize IE are:

- Attitude
- Presence
- Participation
- Achievement

These applies to all learners that embraces differences and diversity.

In continuing the move towards this, SSSD has embarked on a pilot Inclusive Schools

Project aimed at modelling the principles of IE. This will ensure that the rights of all students' to an education is protected.

Although emphasis is presently on primary and secondary schools, we have begun dialogue with the ECCE Division, and the Division of Education, Innovation and Energy, towards their involvement on the ISP.

**SUCCESS STORY:** Leading up to the July-August examination period, students with SEN worked tirelessly, along with their Aides, to prepare themselves for undertaking such exam – SEA, CSEC, CAPE. Notwithstanding the high tension and challenges associated with the Covid-19 pandemic and closure of schools, these students triumphed! It is an achievement that parents/guardians, Aides and students must be recognized and congratulated for. We extend our sincerest thanks to all those who assisted.

### *Reviews from Parents or Guardians*

"My family and I have always assisted him with his school work but he has shown tremendous improvement since the arrival of the aide and I am truly grateful for that. There were many instances where we were unable to get my grandson to complete certain tasks but the aide was able to do so without any problems. He was also kept out of trouble as she was there with him throughout the course of the day when students were attending schools physically. Since online learning commenced, she was able to keep him interested in his school work throughout the day and he has been working diligently towards his goals. He relates to her quite well and he is very excited to work with her on a daily basis." - **Grandparent**

"His Aide has helped him during those times when he felt overwhelmed by the learning tasks he had to complete, she made easier for him. Especially over the last few months when classes were moved online. Having her logged on virtually to help him has made all the difference to him. She has helped him to focus on new tasks, build his self-confidence, and be comfortable seeking help. He has developed a deeper understanding of learning tasks" - **Parent**

## Recognition of Past Senior Employees



Are you part of SSSD and have information that you'll like to share? Then, contact your Unit Lead to have your information featured in Issue 2!

We would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to all employees who served in SSSD in senior positions:

- ◇ Steve Williams – former Manager, SSSD
- ◇ Kathy Bharrathsingh – former Manager, SSSD
- ◇ Joseph Ragoonanan – former Coordinator Guidance and Counselling
- ◇ Cheryl-Ann Grant – former Coordinator Special Education
- ◇ Renuka Persad – Administrative Officer II
- ◇ Marsha Bailey – Social Work Specialist
- ◇ Sharon Francis-Gaines – Social Work Specialist
- ◇ Charmaine Joel-Gentle – previously served as Guidance Officer II
- ◇ Vanessa Forde-Edward – previously served as Guidance Officer II
- ◇ Marion Taylor – Senior School Social Worker
- ◇ Shelly Ann Simon – Senior School Social Worker
- ◇ Frances Manickchand – Special Education Teacher II
- ◇ Kathleen Patrice – Special Education Teacher II
- ◇ Catherine Sandy-Charles – Special Education Teacher II

Currently employed with SSSD but served in the following capacity:

- ◇ Beryl Riley – Manager, SSSD
- ◇ Amanda Pedro – Manager, SSSD
- ◇ Darlene Smith – Coordinator of Guidance and Counselling

## Introducing the SSSD Team

Manager – Professor Dennis A. Conrad					
Districts	Developmental Assessment and Intervention <i>Ms. Irma Bailey-Reyes</i> - Interim Supervisor	Guidance and Counselling <i>Ms. Mary A. Bastien</i> - Coordinator	School Social Work <i>Mrs. Natalie Robinson-Arnold</i> - Specialist	Special Education <i>Mrs. Leticia Rodriguez - Cupid</i> - Coordinator	Other Key Staff
					Inclusion Education Specialist – <b>Ms. Shirma Swan</b>
					Research Officer – <b>Dr. Sherry-Ann Ganase</b>
Port of Spain	Sonya Sandy – Lead School Psychologist  Patricia Roberts – Lead Clinical Psychologist	Nicole De Four (P) Darlene Smith (S)	Sharon King	Paula Baptiste-Moses	Administrative Officer II – <b>Mrs. Sheriza Ali-Sarran</b>  Clerk IV – <b>Mr. Ian Simmons</b>
North Eastern		Amanda Pedro (P) Courtney Sooknanan (S)	Kesha Pierre	Miquel Lawrence	
St. George East		Carla Harrington (P) Hazel-Ann Boynes (S)	Kimberly Salvary	Anthonella Vaughn-Norville	
Caroni		Ariane Garib (P) Marcia Bridgewater (S)	Sule Dyer	Camille Boodoo-Samaroo	
South Eastern	Allick Delancy – Lead Behavioural Specialist	Judy Seepersad (P) TBD (S)	Marion des Vignes	Mavis Clark	Special Concessions Secretariat
Victoria		Beryl Riley (P) Parbatee Maharaj (S)	Sabrina Peters	Saroja Allahar	
St. Patrick		Hazel Ann Roderick (P) Siobhan George (S)	Keisha Garcia	Alicia Villaruel	