



Child and Adolescent Mental Health in Jamaica

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Jamaica

Largest English speaking
Caribbean country
Situated 90 miles south of
Cuba

Population of 2.8 million

31% less than 15 yrs

Fourteen parishes, in four
Regional Health Authorities

Each RHA has a cadre of
staff for mental health

50% of population live in the
South East Region



What are we known for?





Child and Adolescent Mental Health


- Part of the mental health services
- Delivered through the four regional health authorities
- Out patient care- Twenty child guidance clinics (staffed by part time psychiatrists, psychiatric nurses, psychologists and social workers)
- In- patient care accessed in general hospitals and psychiatric ward of the University Hospital (adolescents)
- Liaison services to Child Development Agency, Family Court, Juvenile Detention Centre, Ministry of education



Diagnoses



- ▶ Approximately 3000 children and adolescents are treated annually in Child Guidance Clinics
- ▶ Most common diagnoses are Conduct Disorder, Attention Deficit Disorder, Learning Disorders, and Depression
- ▶ Most clinics have shared staff (between Adult and Children)
- ▶ 3 of 20 clinics have dedicated staff
- ▶ There are 4 Child and Adolescent Psychiatrists



Achievements _ Leadership and Governance

- National Policy and Strategic Plan for mental health (Draft) aligned with regional and global mental health plans
- Mental Health Law is being amended to ensure compliance with international human rights instruments
- Director of Child and Adolescent Mental Health in the Ministry of Health
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Protocols and Guidelines developed by Ministry of Health and disseminated to service areas
- Monitoring visits arranged periodically from Ministry of Health



Community Based Mental Health Services

- Increase in number of Child Guidance Clinics
- Introduction of Programmes for “most vulnerable” groups , for example SMILES Mobile Mental Health Services for wards of the state. Mental Health services delivered by team on a bus for children living in Children's Homes. Funded by UNICEF
- Crisis intervention -Assignment of Retired Psychiatric Aides to the Juvenile Detention Centre for Girls , as a measure to decrease suicidal behaviour among the wards
- Psychosocial support for pregnant and HIV positive teens (other agencies)
- “Dream a World Project” by Carimensa (Grand Challenge Funds) using culture and art to change behaviour in children.
- All above increase access to mental health care for vulnerable children and adolescents
- The MHGAP was recently introduced in Jamaica
- Children and adolescents are not admitted to the mental hospital


SMILES MOBILE BUS FOR MENTAL HEALTH





Promotion and Prevention

- ▶ First Child and Adolescent Mental Health Day was launched in June 2015
- ▶ Ongoing opportunities in collaboration with media to promote mental health and prevent mental illness. Sometimes these may be in response to reports of violent and tragic death or abuse of children
- ▶ Collaboration with Ministry of Education- Healthy Schools initiative
- ▶ Suicide Prevention Strategies – development of educational teaching tools for Teachers, Parents, Guidance Counsellors and students, aimed at increasing awareness and building resilience
- ▶ Protocols developed by Ministry of Health for management of suicidal behaviour in the emergency rooms



Information Systems – Evidence and Research

- ▶ Information systems being strengthened through collaboration with PAHO-
- ▶ Review of basic mental health indicators, and service level indicators
- ▶ Improvement of data management through use of mobile electronic device (tablets)
- ▶ Research on Suicide done in 2014 – Approximately 20% of students were “at risk” for suicide



Existing gaps and Challenges

- ▶ Inadequate Staff Cadre, resulting in long appointments
- ▶ Inadequate infrastructure, not child friendly in some areas
- ▶ Need for designated inpatients beds in general hospitals
- ▶ “most vulnerable populations” need special attention
- ▶ Improved services needed for children and adolescents in crises due to social upheavals
- ▶ More school based initiatives needed for promotion of mental health and prevention of mental illness

THANK YOU

