About the HIV/AIDS Coordinating Unit

Office Address
Furness House, 80-90 Wrightson Road, Port of Spain

Vision
To lead the Ministry of Health’s response in the reduction of the incidence of HIV infections in Trinidad and Tobago and also mitigating the impact of HIV/AIDS in persons infected and affected in Trinidad and Tobago.

Background
The Ministry of Health’s National AIDS Programme was renamed the HIV and AIDS Coordinating Unit (HACU) through a Cabinet minute No. 166 of August 2006. HACU is responsible for policy formulation, standard setting, funding, regulatory functions and coordination of the activities of the five Regional Health Authorities (RHAs). Regarding policy formulation, significant ones include the National HIV Testing and Counselling Policy, Health Sector Workplace HIV and AIDS Policy, the Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission policy and the Post Exposure Prophylaxis Policy, latter three approved in 2010. This unit coordinates, advises on policy direction, monitors and evaluates the implementation of the Ministry of Health’s response to the HIV epidemic a Health Sector Plan covers the following priority areas:

- Priority Area I: Prevention
- Priority Area II: Treatment, Care and Support
- Priority Area III: Advocacy and Human Rights
- Priority Area IV: Strategic Information

Mission
To provide a comprehensive, coordinated approach and leadership to all stakeholders involved in the health sector response to HIV/AIDS.

Key Roles and Responsibilities
The unit provides regulatory oversight through monitoring and evaluation as well as continual review of policy and programming initiatives to optimize service delivery programmes. The prevention programmes include

1. Free HIV Testing & Counselling through the RHAs and NGO partners. In Same Day HIV Counseling and Testing Programme, patient risk assessments are done to ensure that persons remain HIV negative and HIV positive persons get the requisite treatment, care and psychosocial support to both optimize their health and not be a transmission risk to others.

2. Prevention of mother to child transmission programme (PMTCT). The current strategy is to eventually eliminate the transmission of HIV from mother to child through the Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission (PMTCT) Programme. All first attendees to antenatal clinics are offered an HIV test twice in pregnancy. Expectant mothers found HIV positive are referred for treatment and with current therapy can effectively prevent transmission to the unborn.

3. Health promotion using Information, education and communication. As a final arm of the main prevention strategy, it is based on health promotion and event campaigns which include RapPort as a youth intervention service offering information, education and counselling to the nation’s youth as well as national testing campaigns as aforementioned for World AIDS Day and Caribbean HIV Testing Day.

4. HIV Treatment and Care through the RHAs (Regional Health Authorities) Regarding Treatment and Care programs, there exists sites that provide free antiretroviral treatment and care programs for both adults and children infected and affected by HIV with access to laboratory HIV diagnostic services.

Target Groups:
- General population (in home, school and work settings)
- General population accessing health services
- Vulnerable populations (eg Youth & young adults, migrants, substance abusers, victims of sexual violence, women, children, elderly)
- Most at risk populations
- Health providers (as a workplace issue and for continuing professional development to deliver services)