

# Protect the health and development of Caribbean children!

Youth across the globe including the Caribbean are impacted by choices they make regarding their sexual health. Teen pregnancy, viewed by some as the direct consequence of teen sexual activity is merely the tip of the iceberg. The epidemic rates of Sexually Transmitted Infections and the sequelae of the diseases which these infections cause is a major health concern most especially in the 15 - 19 year old age group. Additionally teen sexual activity is also associated with increased rates of depression, suicide and long-term poverty.

In an attempt to mitigate these problems, it is important to acknowledge that it is in fact teen sexual activity that is at the root of the issue. Unsafe sexual practices, failed condoms,

or other failed contraceptives are not the culprit. As such we must arm our youth with the knowledge and the skills that they need to avoid engaging in teen sexual activity and other risk behaviours that can have a potentially ominous effect on their futures.

The debate over how to approach this issue has been a topic of debate in many nations for the past several decades. The American College of Paediatricians (ACP) and the National Physicians Center (NPC) both promote Abstinence-centred or Sexual Risk Avoidance Education (SRAE) as the best public health approach. The ACP recommends that all children be taught to abstain from sexual activity.

In fact, effective Sexual Risk

Avoidance (abstinence-centred) educational programs reduce teen pregnancy by approximately 50%. Increased SRA programs in the US have been cited as being responsible for at least half of the decrease in teen pregnancy. Clearly abstinent teens avoid sexually transmitted diseases and corresponding medical costs, a lesser-known fact is that abstinent teens are nearly three times less likely to be depressed or to attempt suicide than their sexually active counterparts.

Studies prove that investing in sexual risk avoidance (abstinence-centred) education is a cost savings for taxpayers. Providing youth with the skills to wait to have sex is easier and less expensive than treating youth for the possible con-

sequences of teen sex. Teens who avoid these consequences are more likely to be successful in reaching their goals. Students who abstain from all risky behaviours are more likely to achieve their goals, more likely to succeed academically, less likely to live in poverty and more likely to have successful long-term relationships.

Today's teens encounter unprecedented pressures from all sides to engage in sexual activity. Media, the culture in general, and even sex education classes too often communicate a message that encourages sexual experimentation and downplays the risks associated with that behaviour.

Parents are often informed that so-called "Comprehensive" Sex Education (CSE) programs offer the best approach to address this problem. In reality, these programs often add to the problem by promoting curricula that normalises teen sex. The CSE approach ignores a needed priority on risk avoidance and, instead, primarily focuses on merely reducing the physical risks of teen sex, without adequately addressing the many other possible consequences of that activity.

The CSE approach has been the mainstay of sex education for decades in the United States, receiving the lion's share of all funding even though research results for this approach are dismal, particularly in the school setting. During this same

time, STD rates have skyrocketed while condom use has increased. Emotional consequences to teen sex also persist, yet the message remains focused simply on increasing condom use, rather than decreasing sexual activity. Today, a mistaken and dubious view argues that bringing this failed approach to other nations including the Caribbean will yield better results. (The website stopcse.org contains analysis and information on CSE and its content and dismal impact globally.)

The Sexual Risk Avoidance (SRA) approach, sometimes called the Abstinence-centred approach, is effective, supported by parents, and is a message that more and more teens are adopting in their own lives. SRA programs address teen sexual activity from a holistic standpoint, recognising that possible consequences far exceed pregnancy and the transmission of sexually transmitted diseases (STD). Therefore, SRA provides teens with multi-faceted information and skills that will help them avoid all the risks associated with teen sex. It mirrors the effective public health approach of primary prevention most often followed in addressing other youth risks, such as tobacco, alcohol and drug use. When parents and educators understand SRA, they are overwhelmingly supportive.

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## MINISTRY OF WORKS AND TRANSPORT Corporate Communication Unit

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## PUBLIC NOTICE

Tuesday 22nd March, 2022

### TEMPORARY TRAFFIC DISRUPTION TUNAPUNA CULVERT RECONSTRUCTION PROJECT

The Ministry of Works and Transport wishes to advise the public that there will be a temporary traffic disruption between the **Eastern Main Road and Old Macoya Road (in the vicinity of the old NP Gas Station)**. The disruption will take place from **Wednesday 23rd March, 2022 to Friday 25th March, 2022**. This has become necessary to facilitate **Road Rehabilitation works**.

#### Hours of Work

8:00pm to 4:00am

*Considering the above, motorists are advised to comply with the following:*

- Please proceed with caution and observe all directional signs and barriers.
- Please comply with instructions from Police Officers on site to facilitate a safe and orderly flow of traffic.
- Please be aware of heavy equipment entering and exiting the site.
- Motorists should drive at a reduced speed on approaching the work zone.
- Drive with caution on all milled (possibly uneven) surfaces

The Ministry of Works and Transport regrets any inconvenience caused and thanks the public for its continued cooperation. For further information, please visit the Ministry of Works and Transport's website at [www.mowt.gov.tt](http://www.mowt.gov.tt) or call the **PURE Unit at 638-2350/675-4052**.

## Justice for Zephaniah

His safe return was the expectancy and sadly we are met with this tragedy. Zephaniah Harripaul did not deserve his fate. If one reflects daily on these lives viciously taken from us, there would be the thought of what their future could have been. Such a wonderful and kind soul is no longer with us and it is deeply troubling to repeatedly bid our farewells.

I pray that the families, loved ones, and friends are comforted

during this time of bereavement to really see the impact of this precious legacy. Injustices that are deceptively creeping around do not deserve a place in our homes or society.

"The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty, he will save."  
Zephaniah 3:17 KJV Bible

**ANCILLA ASHLEY KIRBY**  
Port-of-Spain  
via email

## Adjust the solar panels, please

When driving to "South" Trinidad and marvelling at the undulating, green carpet-like landscapes, by now you would've observed a large NP and CNG gas station, just after the Ato Boldon Stadium. Familiar, not so? You would've also surely acknowledged many Solar Photovoltaic Panels.

Have a closer look at the solar panels at that Preysal multi-fuel service station on Rivulet Road, Couva. Those solar panels are in all different directions and are installed with the wrong orientation.

The angle of the slope when installing solar panels, is dependent on the latitude of where it is being positioned. We learned from Social

Studies in Standard Four that Trinidad & Tobago is located 10 degrees north of the equator. To maximise the exposure of radiation (sunlight) on the solar panels, it needs to be elevated at an angle of 10 to 20 degrees facing south. 15 degrees would be acceptable for its location.

I am appealing to the NGC, to adjust all solar panels to an angle of 15 degrees to the horizontal (floor) facing south for the benefit of better efficiency in the service station's operations. Of course, a recommendation only notable if the solar panels are functioning.

**KENDELL KARAN**  
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