



# Centre for Counselling Addiction Support Alternatives

Registered Charity # 449

## Chairman's Remarks to 19<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Service

At The Jackson Church of God

5<sup>th</sup> May, 2019

Good morning to the Church. On behalf of the Centre for Counselling Addiction Support Alternatives (CASA) allow me to express sincere thanks to your Pastor Rev. Patrick Drakes for this opportunity to share in your worship. Before I give my remarks, it is my pleasure to introduce our team to you – with us is our Director Mr. Orlando Jones; the Board of Trustees, Staff and Volunteers. I am indeed delighted that you are here this morning for without the gift of time that you have given to CASA, we would not have been able to accomplish all that we have over the years.

This morning we are here in observance of our 19<sup>th</sup> anniversary. CASA is a Non-Governmental Organisation with Charity Status and is a community-based substance abuse treatment centre established in 2000 with the purpose of helping individuals and families experiencing substance abuse, mental health and other psychological and social problems. We offer a range of services including telephone support; referrals; assesment; drug testing; counselling; after care; an employee assistance programme; family support sessions; rehabilitation; and outreach to schools, communities, the private sector and government agencies, faith based organisations and others. Our programmes include: Special Therapy for Adolescents' Rehabilitation programme (STAR) to habilitate adolescents and young adults by teaching social skills, values clarification and coping skills to combat drug use; Anger Management; Children Education and Prevention Awareness Group (CEPAG) a Support Group for children ages 5-13 years to educate and foster good life skills to prevent and combat drug use. Sessions are held on Saturday mornings; The Teen Development programme (TDP) for ages 13-19 years to build self esteem and confidence. We are also working with the Drug Treatment Court programme which works with the Drug Treatment Court in helping adults who are referred with drug problems. In addition we provide training through placement for students from the University of the West Indies and Barbados Community College who are undertaking degree programmes.

Our work makes a tremendous difference. We ensure that families, friends and partners affected by a loved one's addiction get the support they need. Because when families have to face addiction, they really do need that support. And I believe that, often for families, it is very difficult to know where to turn, to know what to do for the best. Sometimes, through love, families take steps that they think are the right ones but sadly sometimes are not. And it is for those feelings of helplessness, of shame, of isolation and fear that CASA exists today to show people there is someone to help, there is someone there to turn to. We know that we face a huge challenge as a country in overcoming addiction. There are no quick solutions or easy answers. And for those affected by the addiction of a loved one, the impact can be immense and can last a lifetime. That's why CASA's work is so essential – providing long-term support and advice at every stage.

The youth are the greatest resource for a society to thrive. Investments in the youth bring a triple benefit: healthy young persons; healthy adults; future healthy generations. It is therefore necessary to initiate, formulate and implement strategies to assist the youth in redirecting their energies toward positive activities as opposed to punishment by incarceration of young people who then return to communities

with the same challenges such as poor education, poor social skills and challenging family issues. Since its inception CASA has done a lot of work with children ages 5-18 who were referred to CASA for some measure of intervention as a result of anti-social behaviour. It is with this in mind that CASA is seeking to further the work of helping young persons in our homes and communities along with parents to find ways to communicate and solve family conflicts. This will be done through our programme **Strengthening Youth and Family (SYFY)**. Through this programme young persons will have an opportunity to develop coping skills in living from day to day; strengthen their resolve to resist temptation to use drugs and curb antisocial behaviour. **During the course of this week our Director and I will be meeting with the Barbados Christian Council to discuss how we can work together to address the challenges facing our country at the present time.** The issue of both legal and illegal drug use and antisocial behaviour by children and young persons and the disruption of family life is an ongoing subject of concern for families in homes and communities across Barbados. CASA is therefore presently engaged in communication with our primary and secondary schools regarding Education, Prevention & Counselling Programmes for Children and Youth.

Presently there is much discussion on the benefits of medical marijuana and making it legal. A new study undertaken by researchers at Oxford University shows that cannabis increases the risk of depression in teenagers by a staggering 40%. There is evidence to support the notion that persons, particularly young people who are prone to psychiatric disorders, can be triggered by the use of marijuana. In the United Kingdom, a recent example is that of the murder of a six year old girl committed by a 16 year old boy. The body had 117 injuries. The trial records indicated that the accused was a regular user of this drug. We are witnesses to those whose lives are blighted by psychiatric disorders because of their habit, so I make no apology for how strongly I feel about this. I recommend that there be further investigation on this link and the benefits be weighed against the disadvantages.

Over the past four (4) years CASA has been in partnership with the Drug Treatment Court with the purpose of reducing the number of persons being imprisoned for minor drug offences or those in need of treatment in preference to incarceration. Since its inception, 55 persons have successfully completed the programme. Officials, having recognised its success, are seeking to expand the facility to accommodate more participants. We currently have approximately 15 persons who are enrolled in the current one year programme.

It should be noted that drug offenders comprise one third of the current prison population at Dodds, and studies have shown that Drug Treatment Courts reduce the incidence of relapses among those offenders. The 12 month programme not only helps persons overcome their addictions, but also helps them develop life skills through a ten week module where they learn the fundamentals of setting up a business among other things. The Drug Treatment Court programme needs better funding in order that this important work can be continued.

As we contemplate the future, CASA is experiencing a number of challenges. These are not uncommon for many organisations are facing such challenges. What is important is that they are not insurmountable. In an environment where things are constantly changing, we recognise the need for reviewing our strategic direction.

One of our concerns is the lack of resources available to adequately deliver prevention, treatment and rehabilitation services to persons who fall prey to drug and alcohol abuse or dependency and recent media reports indicate an increase in the use of both legal and illegal substances particularly among the youth in Barbados.

The financial landscape for development work in the Caribbean is changing. The global recession, and austerity measures all make conventional donor driven sources of funding for development projects in the region harder for non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to access.

In recent years due to budgetary constraints, our funds have been reduced and this has had the effect of negatively impacting on some services, particularly the Education and Prevention programmes targeting children and adolescents.

The NGO sector in Barbados is plagued by low membership numbers. We have discussed how to make volunteerism a part of the Barbadian psyche but we are still waiting on actions out of the discussions. The new requirements that University students supported by Government should have a set amount of hours in community service should go a long way if rigorously implemented.

Major forces that shape and limit provider financing are unlikely to change substantially in the near future. Careful strategic planning and assurance of funding from reputable and varied referral sources are essential for new and existing programs.

A programme with only one major funding source is financially vulnerable if its funder's budget or priorities change; Diversification of funding sources should be a major goal. Strategic alliances with other treatment providers and with both public and private sector sources may prove beneficial to NGO's struggling to survive. NGOs such as CASA.

It is with this in mind that CASA is desirous of forming an Inter-Agency Partnership with other Substance Abuse NGOs as we believe that this initiative will be impactful on the services offered to persons with addiction challenges across the island and beyond.

In conclusion, we know that the road ahead will be challenging, as unpredictability will continue to rule, but together as we build for the future, we shall continue to explore strategies for the continued success of this organisation. I take this opportunity to say a special 'thank you' to our Patron Dr. Sir Richard Cheltenham, President of the Senate for giving of his time and for his generosity; to our Director Mr. Orlando Jones for his dedication and commitment, our Board of Trustees, Staff and Volunteers who give of their best to troubled individuals and families. Should you require additional information on our services, or should you care about the problems facing our youth and wish to contribute by way of financial support, your time or expertise, you may call 427-5953 or visit our office which is located on the ground floor of President Kennedy Medical Centre, Corner of St. Leonard's Avenue and Westbury Road and we shall be happy to share with you more about our work. A donation tin has been placed in the church should you wish to give a donation to this worthy cause. Leaflets are also available at the same location. Thank you for allowing CASA to give thanks to God by worshipping with you today; and May God continue to Bless you.

**Jennifer I. Maynard**  
**Chairman – CASA**

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