



**MINISTRY of EDUCATION  
YOUTH & INFORMATION**



# **National Guidance and Counselling Policy**

National Guidance and  
Counselling Policy © Ministry  
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## 1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**T**he profession of guidance and counselling has long been established within the structure of the formal school system. It benefits from the development and organisation of the profession, as well as the evolution of specific programmes of study at the tertiary level. Through these developments and with the numeric growth of the profession over time, guidance and counselling has evolved in Jamaica – in tandem with international trends and local needs – to place increased focus on counselling and related interventions, as opposed to broader guidance functions. This reflects the nature of the issues facing children within the classroom, the home and the community, as guidance counsellors aim to bridge the gap between the child's holistic development, educational achievement and the psycho-social factors that can hinder same. The profession however, remains relatively undefined and unstructured within education sector policies. Counsellors are treated alternately as teachers, or administrators, and spend less and less time in direct contact with children in need of interventions. This can be a result of the need for more guidance counsellors in some schools, or the need to provide more specific focus to the guidance counsellor's core activities.

This policy attempts to address both factors and to provide a more structured and standardised approach to guidance and counselling in schools. The ultimate benefit and desired impact of the policy is related to the need that children in schools have for on-site psycho-social interventions and assistance in navigating the issues that impact on their classroom performance, inter-personal relations, personal development and acquisition of life skills. However, the policy approaches the problem from the most pressing need facing the profession and creates a solid framework for the standardisation and upgrading of the services provided by guidance counsellors to children and schools.

In addition to improving the level of interventions provided across the board, the policy aims to secure the role of the guidance counsellor in the strategic development of schools and improve the counsellor's accountability and functionality within the school community.

### **The policy objectives are as follows:**

1. To clarify and define the role and functions of guidance counsellors
2. To set ethical guidelines and principles to guide routine decision-making of guidance counsellors and articulate appropriately the duty of care with which they provide services to children
3. To put in place new management strategies and accountability mechanisms to support the National Guidance and Counselling Policy.
4. To improve the strategic direction and effectiveness of guidance and counselling services within the education sector

The policy envisages several major changes to the ethical and performance standards and accountability structure within which the profession operates. These will begin in the training institutions, as well as involve changes to the ways in which guidance counsellors are selected and recruited, appraised, managed and deployed within schools. By prioritising the time spent by guidance counsellors in counselling and related activities, as well as consolidating health and family life education (HFLE) teaching and student support services, the policy aims to expand the resources within schools to deal with the wide range of psycho-social issues emerging within the classroom. The policy is also the basis for the introduction of a licensure system for guidance counsellors, which is currently under development.



## 2.0 INTRODUCTION

The Guidance and Counselling Unit currently provides oversight and direction for the development and implementation of key policies and programmes of the Ministry of Education (MoEYI), including initiatives designed to improve the health, well-being, life skills, choices, practices, attitudes and overall performance of students. The programme is integral to the strategic management and improvement of schools, and provides critical linkages between the educational environment and the student's home, community and peer relationships. It seeks deliberately and iteratively to influence and shape the behaviours, choices and values of students, equipping them to navigate their passage into responsible adulthood and citizenship.

The Guidance and Counselling Unit is guided by the overall policies and objectives of the MoEYI, and has iterated operational plans and programming strategies designed to achieve the Ministry's policy priorities. To this end, the Unit has spearheaded the development of key policies and programmes including the National Policy Reintegration of School-Aged Mothers into the Formal School System, the Health and Family Life Education (HFLE) policy and programme, the HIV/AIDS programme for schools, the Programme for Alternative Student Support (PASS) programme and others. The Unit, and guidance counsellors in general are also typically identified as key implementers for education and multi-sectorial policies targeting children and students. Yet, the Unit has not had a comprehensive and congruous policy statement on guidance and counselling for co-ordinating the approaches and expectations of the Ministry, its partners, schools, parents and children in this critical area.

This policy has been many years in the making. A policy document was drafted in 2000 and revised in 2010, but is currently being updated to take into account:

- a. New issues, challenges and opportunities facing the school environment
- b. The policy development and formatting guidelines of the Cabinet Office, as applied by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Information's Policy Unit.

The policy aims to identify the ethical and professional standards and parameters by which guidance and counselling is implemented in schools. It further aims to improve the management and accountability of guidance counsellors, and ensure the full integration of guidance programmes and strategies into the overall development of the Ministry and each individual school.

## 3.0 SITUATION ANALYSIS

### 3.1 THE INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

#### 3.1.1 INTERNATIONAL TREATIES AND PROGRAMMES OF ACTION

This policy will take into account Jamaica's child rights commitments which impact on the scope, content, and nature of services provided to children by the state. The policy will be implemented in a framework that acknowledges, protects and fulfils the rights of children and will therefore be impacted by the following child rights related treaties and policy statements:

- **The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)** is the foremost holistic statement on the rights of children. It identifies the best interests of the child as the primary principle guiding decision-making for and on behalf of children. Non-discrimination is a core principle of the convention, which requires signatory states to ensure that children within their jurisdiction enjoy their rights *“without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's, or his or her parent's or legal guardian's race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status”*. The CRC couches the right to an education in progressive terms, requiring states to ensure that the education of the child is directed towards the development of *“the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential”*<sup>1</sup>. In addition to other survival and development and protection rights, the CRC recognises the right of children to participate in decision-making and to express their views, in keeping with their evolving capacities. This supports the freedoms undergirded by the CRC, including the child's freedom of conscience, religion and expression.

- **The Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women** guides policies, laws and programmes in protecting women and girls against discrimination and violence. It acknowledges the proactivity role of states (and by extension state-run programmes) in eliminating gender stereotypes that contribute to discrimination and violence against women and girls. This respon-

sibility should influence and be reflected in the goals and objectives of the education sector.

- **The Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD)** supports a range of policies and programmes addressing adolescents and youth. This includes provisions for adolescent access to sexual and reproductive health information and services. The importance of formal mechanisms for providing children and youth with health and family life education is underscored by the policy commitments emerging from this global policy document. It also underscores the role of the education system in addressing a range of development concerns, including the prevention of gender discrimination, and the curtailment of sexually transmitted infections, including HIV.

- **The Millennium Development Goals** provides a complementary set of policy goals geared at improving development outcomes across the globe. While much of its specific goals address key areas of poverty reduction, the MDGs support a view of education as a catalyst for achieving wider development goals.

#### 3.1.2 INTERNATIONAL BENCHMARKS

##### (a) Definitional and Methodological Scope of Guidance and Counselling in Schools

Guidance is still a relatively new field of study, having emerged in the United States of America (USA) in the early decades of the twentieth century. Caribbean countries are at this time, still attempting to create a guidance model appropriate to their individual realities.

Guidance practice is necessarily guided by the level of understanding of its possibilities, as well as the emerging social needs that impact educational policy goals. Within the educational context, guidance models and activities can be implemented to emphasise various methodologies:

<sup>1</sup>CRC, Article

## 3.1 SITUATION ANALYSIS

- Developmental guidance, which adopts a life cycle approach;
- Group guidance, which favours group rather than individual interventions;
- Counselling, which focuses on individualised therapeutic interventions;
- Educational guidance, which supports the building of skills and disciplines required for academic advancement;
- Career guidance, which promoted lifelong learning towards the achievement of career goals.

This speaks to the wide variation of issues covered by guidance policy in different countries, depending on the underlying goal and focus of guidance programmes. Historically, guidance programmes emerged as a career guidance component of educational programmes, but have evolved to place greater emphasis on counselling. This is consistent with a holistic approach to education and a recognition that problems in the home, society and within peer relationships have a significant impact on educational outcomes.

Some countries however retain a strong focus on career and academic guidance. In its draft resolution on strengthening the field of guidance, the European Union (EU) links guidance to its key social and economic goals, as follows<sup>2</sup>:

*"Guidance throughout life contributes to the achievement of the EU goals of economic development, labour market efficiency and occupational and geographic mobility by enhancing the efficiency of investment in education and vocational training, lifelong learning and human capital and workforce development. Effective guidance provision has a key role to play in promoting social inclusion, social equity, gender equality, and active citizenship by encouraging and supporting individuals' participation in education and training and their choice of realistic and meaningful careers."*

This highlights a life-cycle approach to guidance, and one

that puts guidance in its strategic context as a development tool. Educational and vocational guidance appears to be the central focus of the profession in some parts of the United Kingdom (UK), with counselling arising as an emerging component of the profession<sup>3</sup>. According to the Ireland National Centre for Guidance in Education (NGCE) the work of a guidance counsellor includes counselling, assessment, information gathering and sharing, advice, educational development programmes, personal and social development programmes, and referral<sup>4</sup>. One descriptor of the Irish model identified guidance counsellors as having a core role to "advise students and young people so that they can make informed choices about their future in relation to employment, education and training". The NGCE concludes that there is not currently a shared understanding of the counselling aspect of the guidance counsellor's role, which is emerging as a response to demands occasioned by social conditions.

In contrast, the American School Counsellor Association (ASCA) describes the school counsellor as being professionally equipped, trained, certified and licensed to address student's academic, personal/social and career development needs<sup>5</sup>. One state applies the model by defining the scope of its programme as providing "developmental opportunities and experiences that address three central student-development areas: (i) learning to live (personal/social), (ii) learning to learn (academic), (iii) learning to work (career)"<sup>6</sup>. This model sequences gaining competence in the knowledge of self and others prior to acquiring the capacity to identify educational and career goals.

A similar focus on individualised counselling and social adjustment applies in some Canadian provinces<sup>7</sup>. In Manitoba, for example, student services covers the provision of counselling to students and parents. Assistance to students in personal, career and social development is also identified as a core function.

2: EU Resolution titled "Draft Resolution of the Council and of the representatives of the Member States meeting within the Council on Strengthening Policies, Systems, and Practices in the field of Guidance throughout Europe", 2004

3: The following definition was retrieved from <http://gradireland.com/careers-advice/job-descriptions/guidance-counsellor-second-level> and relates to the Irish model: "Guidance counsellors advise students and young people so that they can make informed choices about their future in relation to employment, education and training. Responsibilities include assessing ability and potential in students, providing one-to-one counselling, and liaising with other professionals in this area. Guidance and counselling in Ireland is made up of three separate yet interlinked areas. These are (1) Personal and Social Guidance and Counselling; (2) Educational

Guidance and Counselling; (3) Vocational Guidance and Counselling.

4: NCGE Research on the Practice of Counselling by Guidance Counsellors in Post-Primary Schools - 2011 The National Centre for Guidance in Education is an agency of the Department of Education and Skills, with responsibility to support and develop guidance practice in all areas of education and to inform the policy of the Department in the field of guidance.

5: ASCA ethical standards for School Counselors is the recognised standard for American schools. This is from the 2010 revision of their Code of Ethics

6: The South Carolina Comprehensive Developmental Guidance and Counseling Program Model – South Carolina Department of Education. See the 2008 revision of A Guide for South



### (b) Standards and Ethics in Guidance and Counselling

Guidance and counselling is named and described in some countries as an integral part of their education systems. Ireland<sup>8</sup>, for example, addresses the provision of guidance and counselling within their Education Act. In other jurisdictions, national professional organisations have set oversight of standards and ethics in guidance and counselling, with carefully managed and monitored procedures. The American School Counsellor Association's ethical standards, for example, are applied and adopted throughout the USA and Canada. Guidance and counselling practice in the UK is guided by the ethical principles of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy<sup>9</sup>. The NEGC in Ireland defers to the Institute of Guidance and Counselling (IGC)<sup>10</sup>, which developed its code of ethics for guidance counsellors.

The ethical principles and standards established by these various models tend to address:

- a. Ethics and principles involved in the one-to-one counselling relationship, including client confidentiality and the importance of obtaining informed consent for any intervention.
- b. Respect for the rights and dignity of the client, including freedom from discrimination and the right to privacy and respect for self-determination
- c. Honouring the values of the school and community, including the scope of parental beliefs and the impact of these issues on children
- d. The need for professional competence and common standards among guidance counsellors. This includes providing attention to self-care, and seeking support and supervision in order to maintain personal professional standards
- e. The responsibility of guidance counsellors to act in a re-

sponsible and reputable manner, and to avoid any harm to clients. This is linked to the acceptance of a special duty of care towards children, and the importance of always acting in the best interests of the child

- f. Integrity, honesty and fairness in the practice of guidance and counselling. This includes avoiding conflicts of interest and client exploitation

Some ethical principles and standards include clear statements of the social and policy intent for children in the educational system. This will include the child's right to education, but may also extend to focussing on the child's self-esteem, social adjustment and inclusion, personal development and educational success. Standards can also speak to the role of guidance and counselling in the school setting, as an integral aspect of a holistic and child-centred approach to education.

## 3.2 THE NATIONAL CONTEXT

### 3.2.1 POPULATION SIZE

Estimates for the year 2012<sup>11</sup> places the current population at 2,711,500, an increase of 7,400 over 2011 figures. As at the 2011 census<sup>12</sup>, the population stood at 2,704,100, a 3.5% over the 2001 census (less than 100,000).

#### Jamaica Population composition by age group, 2001, 2006, and 2010

Year	Population	% Children 0-14 years	% Working Age 15 -64	% Old age 65+
2001	2,610,500	33.0	57.7	9.3
2006	2,657,800	31.0	59.0	10.0
2010	2,695,500	29.2	60.8	10.0

Source: Jamaica Survey of Living Conditions, 2010

Carolina School Counselling Programs, Pre-K through 12, which is based on ASCA standards.  
7: The Manitoba Education Student Services Unit (SSU) offers clinical/counselling consultant supports to school clinicians/counsellors, student teams, families, and schools. The clinical/counselling team hold their permanent school clinician's certificate and often provide supervision for new clinicians/counsellors working in Manitoba schools to assist them in meeting permanent professional certification. The SSU clinician/counselling may provide supervision in the areas of School Counselling School Psychology School Social Work School Speech-Language Pathology, sourced from: <http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/specedu/services.html>

8: See NGCE in previous note.

9: Source: [www.bacp.co.uk](http://www.bacp.co.uk); The Ethical Framework for Good Practice in Counselling and Psychotherapy is published by the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy, BACP which is the largest professional organisation for counselling and psychotherapy in the UK. The current revised edition was published 1 February 2010.

10: Source NCGE website: <http://www.ncge.ie/about-us/faqs> This is second revision of the Code, incorporating clauses borrowed with permission from the Psychological Society of Ireland's Code of Professional Ethics, was approved by the members of the Institute at the AGM of the Institute held on Saturday 3rd March 2012.

## 3.2 SITUATION ANALYSIS

Trends show the population is aging; there is an increasing proportion of older persons, reflecting low fertility rates and improved mortality rates. The Jamaica Survey of Living Conditions, 2010 shows particular declines in the population of the 0-14 age group. Hence the child dependency rate is declining, and the adult dependency rate increasing.

### 3.2.2 GENDER AND EDUCATION

**Table 1: Enrolment in Educational Institutions by Gender, 2009-2012**

Year	Early Childhood		Primary: Grades 1-6		Secondary: Grades 7-11	
	M	F	M	F	M	F
2009-10	n/a*	--	150 764	144 026	132 275	132 900
2010-11	--	--	148 186	141 426	128 000	132 371
2011-12	66 791	65 352	145 029	138 598	122 430	129 308

Source: Economic and Social Survey of Jamaica, 2012

NB: The male/female breakdown for EC Institutions is not available for the years 2009-2011.

Gender analysis shows differentiated experiences in the school system. While population is divided equally between males and females, gender enrolment differs across age-groups. For example, it is significant that although there is mandatory attendance at primary and secondary level schools, the ratio of males and females begins to change, so that more females are enrolled in secondary institutions, while significantly more males are enrolled in the primary (including private or preparatory schools) and early childhood institutions. This also shows a notably higher drop-out rate among boys than girls.

### 3.2.3 CAREER GUIDANCE AND EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES

In stakeholder consultations conducted in June 2013<sup>13</sup>, it was notable that parents, students, school personnel and community stakeholders alike made little reference to the performance by guidance counsellors of their critical role in providing career guidance to students. Education officers – including guidance officers – noted the gap, which was seen to reflect the emphasis on administrative tasks and ‘crisis’ interventions.

Yet career guidance represents a key strategic function of guidance counsellors.

The output from the secondary school system, expressed in the percentage of children passing at the general and technical proficiency levels in the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) examinations, gives a general, if one-dimensional, indication of the success of the education team, including the guidance programme. The following 2012 statistics can be taken as an indication of the general interest and proficiency of students:

**Table 2: CSEC Pass-Rates in Key Subject Areas**

Subject Areas:	Pass rate expressed as percentage of total students sitting CSEC exams in a selection of subject areas
Arts/Languages	Religious Education: 82%; French: 81.6%; 60-76.5% in Spanish, Geography, History, English Literature English Language: 52%; Music: 53%
Sciences	63% - 76% in Chemistry, Physics, Integrated Sciences Human and Social Biology: 59.8% Mathematics: 37.5%,
Technical/Vocational	Over 90% in the Agricultural Sciences; Over 80% in Clothing and Textiles, Food and Nutrition, Home Management, Information Technology; Theatre Arts; 60%-75% in Construction, Engineering Technology, Physical Education, Technical Drawing etc. 57% in Woods;
Business	Over 80% in Principles of Business and Office Procedures Over 60% in Economics and Principles of Accounts;

Source: Economic and Social Survey of Jamaica, 2012

These figures show significant weaknesses in mathematics and English language, both considered core subjects for matriculation for a number of tertiary and vocational training programmes. Proficiency is highest among technical/vocational and business subjects. Career guidance must take these issues into consideration, as well as show sensitivity to the economic challenges currently facing the work force.

11 Planning Institute of Jamaica: Economic and Social Survey, 2012

12: Statistical institute of Jamaica, 2011 census.

13: A Stakeholder Consultation Report is appended

### 3.2.4 SOCIAL ISSUES AFFECTING CHILDREN IN SCHOOLS

Educators in Jamaica face the mounting challenge of imparting to children who are in increasing numbers becoming involved in a wide range of maladaptive behaviours. These behaviours, which put children at risk and make the job of educators more difficult, include high-risk sexual behaviour, violence and substance abuse. There has also been a notable increase in reported incidences of child abuse, which also negatively impacts on the success of teachers' efforts in the classroom.

#### Child Labour:

According to the 2011 Jamaica Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS 2011), approximately 10.6% of children between ages 5 and 14 years were engaged in child labour. It is notable that all the sample respondents between 5 and 11 years were attending school while being involved in child labour. The highest proportion of children involved in child labour was located in rural areas (12.2%), while the proportion was 9.1% in urban areas.

#### Early Years Preparation for School:

Exposure to books in early years provides children with greater understanding of the nature of print, and may also give the child opportunities to see others reading, such as older siblings doing school work. Presence of books is important for later school performance and IQ scores. According to the MICS 2011, only 54.7 per cent of children aged 0-59 months were living in households, where at least 3 children's books were present; this figure fell to 30.4 per cent for 10 or more children's books.

#### High-Risk Sexual Behaviour:

While the teenage pregnancy rates and sexual initiation among adolescents under the age of consent are both decreasing, data from the Knowledge, Attitude, Behaviour and Practices (KABP) Survey 2012 reveals that sexually active youth between the ages of 15 and 24 are likely to engage in a range of high risk sexual behaviour, including unprotected sex, multiple sexual partnerships, transactional sex, casual sex and age-mixing. Of concern is the fact that the study showed a 2% increase in multiple partnerships when compared to data in 2008 for this age group, as well as an increase in the number of partners involved.

There was also an increase in transactional sex and casual sex among adolescents and youth.

#### Drug/Substance Abuse:

The 2006 Youth Risk and Resiliency Survey has shown that the five most abused substances among post primary students were alcohol, cigarettes, cannabis, crack and cocaine. The data showed that the number one drug used by adolescents was alcohol, with one-third of all adolescents having drunk alcohol. Of note, by age 15 years, approximately 50% reported consuming alcohol; nearly 20% had smoked cigarettes and 8.4% had smoked marijuana. More recently, the 2010 Jamaica Global School Health Survey (GSHS) indicated that the majority of students polled had used drugs before the age of 14.

#### Violence in Educational Institutions:

The incidence of violence in schools has significantly increased, reflecting the incidence of crime and violence in the wider society. According to statistics compiled by the Ministry of National Security during the 2007/08 academic year, police reported high incidences of the seizure of guns and other offensive weapons from students in schools, arrests of students for criminal offences, criminal gang activity among students and possession of packets of ganja. There were also two cases of sexual assault in schools during the same period.

#### Child Abuse:

There has been an increase in reported cases of child abuse which may be partially due to an increase in reporting due to the establishment of a mandatory reporting system in 2007. Statistics from the Office of the Children's Registry (OCR) reveal more than 25,000 reports of child abuse since 2007; including over 6,000 cases in each year since 2009. Girls account for about 50% more cases than boys.

## 3.3 HUMAN, FINANCIAL AND INSTITUTIONAL RESOURCES

Of the 990 schools in the system, approximately 564 at the primary and secondary levels benefit from the services of 806 counsellors (see Table below). The majority of all counsellors are located in secondary level schools where counselling was first introduced. With few exceptions, secondary schools have been allocated two counselling posts yet the ratios are still



### 3.3 SITUATION ANALYSIS

intolerably high (1:729), as compared to ratios in primary and junior high schools (1:387). Counsellors are being introduced at the infant school level, and not all primary schools have counsellors on staff. The regional guidance officers will however have a remit to serve all schools within a region, and not just schools that have a counsellor on staff.

#### Distribution of Guidance Counsellors by School Type (2012/2013)

School Type	Male	Female	Total	Enrolment	Pupil/ Counsellor Ratio
Infant	1	19	20	14,235	1:712
Primary	46	248	294	190,186	1:647
All Age	10	71	81	27,641	1:341
Primary & Junior High	18	91	109	42,152	1:387
Sec. High	69	201	270	196,700	1:729
Tech. High	10	20	30	20,954	1:698
Agri. High		2	2	317	1:159
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>154</b>	<b>652</b>	<b>806</b>	<b>477,950</b>	<b>1:593</b>

Source: MoEYI Statistics Unit, 2012/2013

NB. The ratios are computed using data only from those schools where there are counsellors and therefore apply only to such schools. Ratios of students to counsellors across the system would be much higher.

Distribution of counsellors continues to be an issue, particularly at the primary level, and among rural schools. Increasingly, guidance counsellors are expected to coordinate, lead, or be sole implementers of the guidance programme. A more desirable course of action is one in which teachers are more directly involved in implementing aspects of the programme. Training of teachers must complement the training of guidance counsellors. Whereas the guidance counsellor is regarded as the specialist, the role of the classroom teacher in the process presently, is too limited and must be expanded to provide support especially at initial contact stage and in the reinforcement of common messages.

The expectations and the potential impact of the guidance programme on the positive development of youth are significant. However, the real impact will always be consistent with the inputs. Necessary inputs include adequate and appropriate facilities, adequately trained personnel in adequate numbers, policy direction, programme monitoring and evaluation. Principals have usually indicated provision of funding for facilities and other financial inputs based on the availability of "extra" funds. This gives rise to the unsatisfactory situation where an

inordinate amount of the counsellor's time is spent trying to raise funds for student welfare and other facilities.

The provision of extrinsic motivation e.g. promotional opportunities and professional recognition of counsellors is also a necessary input, which is often lacking. Guidance and counselling is a specialised discipline, separate from, though related to teaching and should be so recognised. Non-recognition of their professional status has had a demotivating effect on counsellors who also suffer lack of promotional opportunities within their ranks.

The Ministry's ability to monitor the delivery, and evaluate the impact and outcomes of the guidance programme is a critical input. A significant element of this input is the structure of the unit charged with responsibility for planning, directing, upgrading, monitoring and evaluating guidance activities.

The ratio of guidance officers to educational institutions remains excessive at approximately 1:116 with the prospect of even higher ratios as more guidance counsellor posts are created, without the corresponding increase in the officer complement. Additionally, the performance management appraisal (PMAS) system requires that all guidance counsellors be appraised annually. In preparation for this appraisal, the guidance officer must conduct at least two clinical visits to the counsellor. This exercise is very time consuming and has proven to be extremely challenging to meet with all counsellors under their supervision. The present regional guidance and counselling units should require additional services of specialists. Health and family life education officers have recently come on board. Social workers and psychologists have been approved, as well as an administrative officer for each region. Management of, and responsiveness to, crises can distract officers from developmental guidance tasks and retard efforts to create real change in the way the service is being delivered.



# The Policy

## 4.2 POLICY

### 4.1 POLICY GOAL

*To create a common set of objectives, strategies and ethical and performance standards for the provision of guidance and counselling in schools.*

### 4.2 POLICY PRINCIPLES

1. The child's right to education is a high development priority and is based on constitutionally grounded principles of child rights.
2. Guidance is grounded in the values and vision of the education system, and is designed to advance the moral and social development of students.
3. The education system aims to secure positive learning outcomes for all children. Guidance in identifying and achieving personal, academic and career goals is a catalyst for the achievement of such goals, and shall be directed to reach the widest possible cross-section of students.
4. Equality of access and treatment are intrinsic aspects of any government-led initiative. This often requires the provision of special support to groups that are typically excluded or under-served.
5. In addition to the Education Act and Regulations, guidance counsellors are guided in their operations by the Child Care and Protection Act, and shall seek to act in the best interests of children, fulfil their care and protection responsibilities and uphold the primacy of the family.

### 4.3 POLICY SCOPE

This policy will adopt the following shortened version of the definition of guidance posited by late Jamaican sociologist, Professor Barry Chevannes (1999):

*“Guidance constitutes a range of aptitudes, activities and dispositions that seek to empower children to get a grasp of themselves and the social and cultural environments in which they live and operate and help them make the transition to adulthood.”*

As this definition suggests, the policy will cover the ‘aptitudes, activities and dispositions’ of guidance counsellors. It will set parameters and expectations for the role, functions, ethical and performance standards of the professional counsellor, as well as identify objectives and strategies for the provision of guidance and counselling in schools. It will seek to provide the framework for empowering children by equipping them with the appropriate perspectives, values and attitudes to secure their passage into responsible citizenship.

### 4.4 POLICY ISSUES, OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

#### Policy Area 1: Defining the Role and Functions of Guidance Counsellors

##### ISSUES:

- a. In the absence of a policy definition, the role and functions of a guidance counsellor are susceptible to differences in interpretation and application.
- b. Subjective interpretations of roles and functions can leave some counsellors over-stretched, while some schools have guidance and counselling programmes that are not adequately serving their needs.
- c. Guidance and counsellors come from varying professional backgrounds, including social work, theology, education and education administration. This can result in the overlapping of functions, particularly where other roles (e.g. Dean of Discipline) are not adequately filled.

##### OBJECTIVE:

To clarify and define the role and functions of guidance counsellors.



### POLICY STATEMENT:

The role of a guidance counsellor shall be defined by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Information and applied consistently at the school level. Schools shall be guided by the protocols and guidelines developed in the implementation of this policy, under the guidance of the Ministry's Guidance and Counselling Unit.

Schools shall ensure that the day to day roles and responsibilities ascribed to guidance counsellors are in keeping with the requirements of this policy. In particular, 80% of the guidance counsellor's work-week (during school term) shall be dedicated to counselling and related activities.

Guidance counsellors shall conform to, and be assessed in accordance with the standards established by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Information periodically including the standards set under this policy in relation to professional requirements, priority activities and character profile. Guidance counsellors shall operate in accordance with the values and principles of this policy, having regard in particular to the rights and best interests of children and the laws designed to protect children from harm and fulfil their rights.

The Ministry shall adopt a licensure system for guidance and counselling which will facilitate the management of occupational and character standards for persons permitted to enter and remain in the profession of guidance counselling in schools, as well as ensure that such persons are continually assessed to ensure their adherence to these standards.

The Ministry shall work to ensure the integration of the standards for guidance counsellors in this policy in the recruitment, selection, promotion, appraisal and management of guidance counsellors, as well as the protocols established from time to time for dis-qualifying persons from the profession. Schools and teacher training institutions shall be guided by the standards and requirements in this policy in their recruitment and selection of candidates as guidance counsellors or students of guidance and counselling, and shall ensure that these persons are informed of the content of this policy.

### STRATEGIES:

#### 1. The Adoption of an MoEYI Occupational Profile for Guidance Counsellors

The MoEYI shall develop and keep under review an occupational profile for guidance counsellors, which shall at minimum address and include the following:

- A.** A character profile for guidance counsellors, that sets out the personal aptitudes and dispositions required for this sensitive and significant post. This should include the ability to work in teams, to be self-directed and to guide the moral and social character of young children. It shall also cover expectations regarding the personal deportment of counsellors, and their ability to manage conflicts.
- B.** The priority activities to be undertaken by all guidance counsellors, as a minimum standard. This should include the minimum proportion of the counsellor's time to be spent in the counselling process, family interventions and individual and small group therapeutic sessions, which shall not be less than 80% of the work week during the school term.
- C.** Minimum standards, requirements and expectations for each of element of the guidance counsellors' core tasks. This shall include the following considerations:
  - a. Counselling:** Counselling and activities related to counselling shall occupy 80% or more of the counsellor's time during the school year. This shall include individual and group interventions, meetings and discussions with parents and teachers, home visits and other related activities. Guidance counsellors are expected and required to engage in developmental counselling. Where there is a need for clinical or other interventions (e.g. religious counselling), these shall be referred to appropriate agencies.
  - b. Guidance:** Guidance activities begin in the planning cycle, where the guidance and counselling staff in a school conduct an annual needs assessment to determine gaps in the holistic development, welfare and wellbeing of children. Guidance activities (including career guidance programmes and the roll-out of the HFLE curriculum) will then be planned and implemented to address these gaps.

## 4.4 POLICY

**c. Career Guidance:** The scope and content of career guidance in the curriculum shall be guided by the Career Guidance Unit of the HEART Trust/NTA. Guidance counsellors shall apply the career guidance programmes and policies developed by the HEART Trust/NTA periodically, in keeping with each school's needs and available resources as identified by the guidance counsellor during the annual planning process.

**d. Reporting:** Guidance counsellors are required by law to fulfil reporting obligations under the Child Care and Protection Act. The requirement to report shall not be taken to limit the counsellor's engagement in legitimate and appropriate preventive and interventional activities, as required under this policy. Outside of these statutory reporting requirements, guidance counsellors are not required to supply confidential information to the school administration, to police investigators, to parents or any other third party.

**e. Planning:** In addition to coordinating and conducting the school's needs assessment and developing a guidance plan, guidance counsellors shall be integrated where possible in strategic planning activities within a school. This will ensure cohesiveness (e.g.) between the guidance assessment and plan and the school improvement plan (SIP).

**f. Coordinating:** Management and coordination responsibilities will be integrated in the work programme of guidance counsellors, to varying degrees. More senior counsellors will be required to coordinate the activities of a guidance department, as well as other school support services. Guidance counsellors shall also be the focal point for coordinating HFLE teaching and will liaise with HFLE teachers on a routine basis.

**g. Discipline:** Guidance counsellors will ordinarily have minimal involvement in the disciplining of an individual child. However, guidance counsellors shall seek to promote and uphold respect for and adherence to the rules of a school, and of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Information. Guidance counsellors shall work with deans of discipline to ensure that the best interests of the child are considered and upheld, and shall collaborate with the school administration in improving overall school discipline.

**h. Teaching:** Guidance counsellors will continue to conduct scheduled classes in accordance with their guidance and counselling plan. The guidance counsellors timetable should not exceed a maximum of 8 hours per week. The guidance counsellor will utilise the guidance and counselling programme's needs assessment to: (1) deliver developmental guidance sessions and; (2) via mandatory team planning, assist HFLE teachers to deliver targeted life skill instruction to match the needs of the population they serve.

**D. Minimum professional requirements for holding the position of guidance counsellor, which shall include tertiary level training in counselling, social work or counselling psychology, with an approved educational component.**

### 2. The implementation and roll-out of the Occupational Profile for Guidance Counsellors

1. The MoEYI Guidance and Counselling Unit will ensure the adoption and institutionalisation of the occupational profile for guidance counsellors, in keeping with the attached implementation plan.
2. The MoEYI Guidance and Counselling Unit will work with its Human Resource (HR) Unit, the Jamaica Teaching Council (JTC) and the Jamaica Association of Guidance Counsellors in Education (JAGCE) to review and refine the job description for guidance counsellors and guidance officers to ensure their synchronisation with this policy.
3. The MoEYI Guidance and Counselling Unit will update the performance management and appraisal system (PMAS) for guidance counsellors, (including key performance indicators, job evaluation criteria and targets) to reflect the requirements of the new occupational profile.
4. The MoEYI Guidance and Counselling Unit will work with the Jamaica Association of Guidance Counsellors in Education to promote the new occupational profile among its members.
5. The MoEYI Guidance and Counselling Unit will work with teacher training institutions to ensure the integration of relevant aspects of the occupational profile in curricula used to train prospective guidance counsellors.

### 3. Adopting a Licensure Model for Guidance Counsellors

- a. The MoEYI Guidance and Counselling Unit will work with the Jamaica Teaching Council, the Jamaica Association of Guidance Counsellors in Education and other key stakeholders to develop and adopt a model for licensing guidance counsellors. This shall define a link between the minimum standards, ethics and aptitudes set out in this policy and the capacity of counsellors to obtain and retain a licence to operate as guidance counsellors or guidance officers.

### 4. Disqualification from Performance of Guidance and Counselling Functions

- a. A person shall be disqualified from performing the functions of a guidance counsellor and shall be immediately relieved of duties as a guidance counsellor in the following circumstances:
  - Where the guidance counsellor engages in any physical altercation or act of violence in a public place or against another member of the school community;
  - Where the guidance counsellor is charged with a criminal offence which falls within one of the following categories:
    - An offence that was committed in the school, or that directly impacts the school community;
    - An offence that involves violent, sexual or inappropriate behaviour involving a child.

In these circumstances, the guidance counsellor shall be placed on interdiction pending the outcome of the case. A guidance counsellor who is under investigation for such an offence may (prior to being charged) be removed from direct contact with children pending the completion of the investigation, and given administrative or other duties.

- b. Each school shall notify the Ministry of Education, Youth and Information Guidance and Counselling Unit of any person whose employment as a guidance counsellor has been terminated for the reasons identified above. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Information shall maintain a list of such persons for reference by schools. It is the

responsibility of principals and guidance officers to check such lists prior to hiring a new counsellor.

### 5. Screening and Recruitment of Guidance Counsellors and Guidance Counselling Students

- a. The MoEYI shall work with the Jamaica Teaching Council, the Jamaica Association of Guidance Counsellors in Education and various teacher training colleges to design and implement a screening programme for candidates for employment as guidance counsellors and for enrolment in guidance counselling training programmes. This shall seek to identify the levels of maturity, personal aptitudes and character traits deemed suitable for a guidance counsellor, based on the requirements of this policy, and the occupational profile developed as set out above. While the screening process shall not be used to exclude persons from the study of guidance and counselling, it shall be made clear to prospective students that the personal aptitudes and traits of a guidance counsellor are as critical to their ultimate qualification and employment as their educational performance.
- b. Schools shall ensure that the MoEYI Regional Guidance and Counselling Unit is included in the recruitment of all guidance counsellors.
- c. Prior to his or her employment as a guidance counsellor, each candidate shall be required to obtain and submit a copy of his or her police record. Any person convicted for an offence involving violent, sexual or inappropriate behaviour involving a child shall be excluded from consideration and shall not be employed as a guidance counsellor.



## 4.4 POLICY

### Policy Area 2: Setting Ethical Standards and Guidelines for Guidance Counsellors

#### ISSUES:

- a. Guidance counsellors can routinely find themselves conflicted between acting in the interests of school administrations and school boards, children, parents, security officials or other stakeholders.
- b. Guidance counsellors can experience conflict between personal values and preferences, policies of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Information and the lifestyle choices and preferences of students.
- c. The guidance counsellor's reputation is a key element of his or her effectiveness in guiding the attitudes and actions of students and families. Loss of respect or reputation is a direct risk to the operations and functionality of any guidance programme.

#### OBJECTIVE:

To set ethical guidelines and principles to guide routine decision-making of guidance counsellors and articulate appropriately the duty of care with which they provide services to children.

#### POLICY STATEMENT:

The Ministry of Education, Youth and Information shall promote, adopt and apply the highest standards of ethics to the practice and conduct of guidance counsellors in education. The ethical conduct of a guidance counsellor both within and outside of the school environment shall be considered a key element of the counsellor's performance and effectiveness.

Schools and other implementation partners, including the Jamaica Association of Guidance Counsellors in Education and teacher training institutions, shall promote and seek to uphold the ethical standards developed by the MoEYI for guidance counsellors. Schools shall incorporate ethical considerations in the selection, monitoring and evaluation of guidance counsellors.

A fundamental principle in the standards and ethics applicable to guidance counsellors shall be the best interests of the child, as defined in the Child Care and Protection Act and ap-

plied by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Information. This principle shall guide decision-making wherever the interests of the guidance counsellor (or a third party) and the interests of the child conflict. The best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration in determining the scope of guidance, counselling, corollary interventions, reporting responsibilities and other professional obligations in relation to a child.

#### STRATEGIES:

##### 1. The adoption of MoEYI Ethical Standards and Guidelines for Guidance Counsellors

The MoEYI shall develop and keep under review ethical standards and guidelines for guidance counsellors. These shall address at minimum the following issues:

- a. The minimum deportment and dress standards of a guidance counsellor. This shall reflect the standards common to teachers and other leaders in the school environment, as well as the standard of deportment necessary for counsellors to maintain the respect of students, parents and the school administration.
- b. Counselling standards and ethics, which shall be guided by the ethical standards for guidance counsellors that are developed by the Jamaica Teaching Council and the Jamaica Association for Guidance Counsellors in Education. These standards shall include the following professional requirements:
  - To obtain the informed consent of participants in therapeutic interventions;
  - To operate within the boundaries of developmental counselling, which is the focus of MoEYI guidance counsellors' job requirements, and refer any major clinical counselling or social work to appropriate agencies.
- c. Confidentiality standards and requirements, including the context in which individual and small group counselling should be conducted.
- d. The level of information that should be shared outside of the client-counsellor discussion, including the types of information that can, or should be shared with principals for the protection and development of the wider school community. These guidelines shall include the following:

- The requirement to share information in an aggregated or anonymous form that can support a comprehensive sight of and strategic response to critical issues by the MoEYI and/or school administration;
- The requirement to report, as necessary and using the appropriate channels:

- i. Information regarding a child who is at risk to self or others;
- ii. Information regarding a child in need of care and protection, as defined under the CCPA;
- iii. Information that will support a mitigated response to the child's behaviour, by the school administration, law enforcers or other affected parties.

In making any formal report, a guidance counsellor should provide only the information relevant to the issue being reported, while maintaining confidentiality regarding other issues raised in the client-counsellor relationship.

- The requirement to act in the best interests of the child in determining what information should be shared with other members of the school community.

**e. Guidelines for managing conflicts of interest.**

**f. Guidelines for addressing differences in personal beliefs, as well as any gaps between the stated values and moral standards of schools and the lifestyle choices of children and parents.**

**g. Conflict management standards that define the approach counsellors should take to conflicts or potential conflicts with students, parents or other school staff.**

**h. Guidelines for mitigating any risks involved in the interactions between guidance counsellors and students. These shall cover at minimum the following issues:**

- Types of activities for which parental permission must be acquired.
- Protocols for transporting students; these should at minimum address the following:
  - i. the requirement for parental approval;
  - ii. the acknowledgement that guidance counsellors are not ordinarily provided with special insurance for transporting students and should do so

with careful consideration regarding the number of students, the distance being travelled, the time of travel and other relevant factors.

- Guidelines for one-on-one meetings and/or counselling sessions between guidance counsellors and adolescent students of the opposite sex.

**i. Guidelines for interfacing with members of the Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF) on issues regarding the allegations of criminal conduct by students. These should at minimum cover the following considerations:**

- Guidance counsellors shall cooperate with police investigations, as long as they do not breach their confidentiality requirements.
- Guidance counsellors may also share aggregate or generic information regarding a child involved in a police investigation, but may not share confidential information shared by the child or parent, except information that is requested by a warrant or order of the court.
- Guidance counsellors must be guided by the best interests of the child. This shall include the duty to share information that may lead to a mitigated response to the child's behaviour. Counsellors may therefore share information that will assist law enforcers or the courts in acting in the child's best interest, particularly as relates to child diversion or rehabilitative activities.
- Guidance counsellors are not compelled to conduct investigative work on behalf or in the interest of the JCF;
- Guidance counsellors are not required to transport students to police stations for or on behalf of the JCF;
- Guidance counsellors are expected to admonish and encourage students, to the best of their knowledge and ability, to abide by the law and show respect for law enforcement.

## 4.4 POLICY

### 2. The Implementation and roll-out of the Ethical Standards for Guidance Counsellors

- The MoEYI Guidance and Counselling Unit will conduct wide scale sensitisation and communications activities on the new ethical standards and principles for guidance counsellors, in keeping with the attached implementation plan.
- The MoEYI Guidance and Counselling Unit will work with the Jamaica Association of Guidance Counsellors in Education to promote the acceptance of the new ethical standards among their members.
- The MoEYI Guidance and Counselling Unit will work with teacher training institutions to ensure the integration of the ethical standards in curricula used to train prospective guidance counsellors.

### 3. The Commissioning of an Ethics and Standards Committee for Guidance Counsellors

The MoEYI Guidance and Counselling Unit shall work in tandem with the Jamaica Teaching Council, the Jamaica Association of Guidance Counsellors and other key stakeholders to form and commission an Ethics Committee for Guidance Counsellors. This Committee shall:

- a. Guide the interpretation and application of the ethical standards;
- b. Issue guidelines to address common ethical issues facing guidance counsellors;
- c. Address from time to time ethics cases referred for resolution.
- d. Set its own procedures and meeting protocols from time to time.

### Policy Area 3: Improving the Management and Accountability Structure for Guidance Counsellors

#### ISSUES:

- a. The new occupational profile and ethical standards for guidance counsellors will remain tangential and unimplemented unless specific management systems and accountability mechanisms are articulated and a change management process supported.
- b. Accountability gaps exist at times between guidance counsellors and school leadership.

#### OBJECTIVE:

To put in place new management strategies and accountability mechanisms to support the National Guidance and Counselling Policy.

#### POLICY STATEMENT

The MoEYI recognises that guidance and counselling is a distinct profession within the school setting, and underscores the strategic linkages between effective guidance and counselling and the capacity of schools – and students – to attain their educational and developmental goals. It shall be the policy of the MoEYI to position the management and accountability structure within which guidance counsellors operate to ensure that those linkages are optimised. This shall include improving the synergies between the management and monitoring of guidance counsellors and the operational management of schools, at the central, regional and institutional levels. This shall require improvements in the requisite levels and composition of staffing at the regional and institutional levels.

The Guidance and Counselling Unit will seek to ensure that the monitoring and management of guidance counsellors remains responsive to the needs and views of the school community. Child participation and stakeholder consultation shall be routinely integrated in the assessment of the profession as a whole, as well as in evaluative activities within a school or region.



**STRATEGIES:****1. Improved Management Framework for Guidance and Counselling**

- a. The MoEYI will conduct a review of the management systems of the Guidance and Counselling Unit, including reporting parameters and performance management systems, and shall seek to achieve the following:
  - The clarification and strengthening of linkages between the Guidance and Counselling Unit and the operations management of the MoEYI, including the inclusion of the Assistant Chief Education Officer (ACEO) for the Guidance and Counselling Unit in all operations planning and management systems.
  - The improved integration of guidance management in the regional management system, including the involvement of (senior) guidance officers in all planning and management systems and activities.
  - The formation of student support services units in schools, which integrate guidance counselling, nursing, student welfare, HFLE, HIV prevention, Reintegration of School-aged Mothers, PATH and other relevant programmes, to provide a holistic and collaborative strategy for addressing all student welfare and support needs; and the provision of essential staff to fulfil these functions.
- b. The MoEYI shall review the management support provided to guidance and counselling, including:
  - The full implementation of the Cabinet-approved structure for regional guidance and counselling units, including the staffing of social worker positions.
  - The assignment of guidance officers at a ratio and using a methodology similar to the assignment of territorial educational officers (TEO), to ensure that a substantial structure exists for the supervision and monitoring of guidance counsellors, as well as for the oversight of and responsiveness to guidance issues in schools that have not been assigned a guidance counsellor.

**2. An Improved Accountability Framework for Guidance Counsellors**

- a. The MoEYI Guidance and Counselling Unit will strengthen and reinforce the accountability and reporting systems currently in place for guidance counsellors and will seek to ensure:
  - That principals provide input in and approval of the annual plans and performance appraisals of guidance counsellors.
  - That the committee-based system for assessing guidance counsellors is operationalised in every school having a guidance counsellor.
- b. The MoEYI Guidance and Counselling Unit will define and publicise a complaints mechanism that facilitates the following:
  - The recording and receipt of complaints regarding the performance standards or ethics of a guidance counsellor;
  - A 'whistle-blower' system that allows guidance counsellors to confidentially report ethical and performance issues within their respective schools or among their colleagues.

**3. Improved Classification and HR Arrangements for Guidance Counsellors**

- a. The MoEYI shall move to develop an independent classification of guidance counsellors that will appropriately reflect the role and functions of guidance counsellors in schools.
- b. The MoEYI shall define a promotion path for guidance counsellors, which shall include the identification of posts for senior or supervisory counsellors, in any school having a guidance department staffed with four or more personnel.
- c. The MoEYI shall work with the Jamaica Association of Guidance Counsellors to set new parameters and guidelines for vacation leave that are relevant to the work and functions of the guidance counsellor, and give consideration to the need to protect counsellors from burnout, particularly in schools that have entrenched behavioural issues.

## 4.4 POLICY

### Policy Area 4:

### Setting Strategies and Objectives for Guidance and Counselling

#### ISSUES:

An integrated, strategic approach to guidance and counselling is needed, to maximise and direct the resources available to the MoEYI.

Stakeholders have identified a number of issues that require strategic leadership inputs from the Guidance and Counselling Unit (see appended Stakeholder Consultation Report).

#### OBJECTIVE:

To improve the strategic direction and effectiveness of guidance and counselling services within the education sector.

#### POLICY STATEMENT

The MoEYI, through the Guidance and Counselling Unit shall work to improve the standards of guidance and counselling, and the effectiveness with which guidance counsellors are able to serve children and schools. This shall involve the establishment (and continuous review) of a ratio system that facilitates the assignment and distribution of guidance counsellors in a fair, strategic and evidence-based manner. The MoEYI shall work with schools and other implementation partners to secure the (human and other) re-sources necessary for the effective implementation of this policy.

The needs of children and schools shall remain core to the determination of the scope and content of guidance and counselling programmes. Curricula shall be standardised at the central level, but nuanced at the regional and institutional levels to place emphasis on the areas of greatest need. Child participation and stakeholder consultation shall be integrated in the evaluation of programmes and activities, to ensure that they remain relevant and achieve the level of desired impact on the child's development.

#### STRATEGIES:

#### 1. Improved Methodology of Assigning Counsellors to Schools

- a. The MoEYI will establish a ratio system for the assignment of counsellors to schools, and shall ensure no more than 450 students per guidance counsellor. The MoEYI shall ensure that schools with extraordinary behaviour issues are assigned adequate counsellors, outside of their strict ratio requirements.

#### 2. Coordinated Approach to Guidance in the School Curriculum

- a. MoEYI shall promote the following approach to guidance-related teaching in the school curriculum:
  - A cadre of suitable teachers shall be identified by each secondary school and trained by the Guidance and Counselling Unit to teach HFLE subjects (HFLE teachers);
  - All secondary schools shall ensure that their staffing structure includes a sufficient cadre of HFLE teachers to cover the HFLE Curriculum, and shall assign new teachers to this cadre as the need arises;
  - Once a needs assessment is completed by the guidance counsellor, the counsellor shall work with the HFLE teachers to define a tailored curriculum using materials from the HFLE Curriculum and other resources approved by the Guidance and Counselling Unit, which respond to the needs identified;
  - Health and family life education (HFLE) teachers shall be the main resource for "teaching" guidance information in the classroom setting, while guidance counsellors shall expand the time available for counselling, as provided in this policy;
  - The HFLE Curriculum shall be extended across all grades at the secondary level, including grades 10 and 11;
  - Health and family life education (HFLE) teachers shall be included, wherever possible, in developmental and training activities designed for guidance counsellors;
  - All teachers shall be provided with basic training and

coping skills to manage classroom discipline; the aim shall be to limit referral to guidance counsellors to the most serious or essential cases.

### 3. Facilities and Resources for Guidance in Schools

- a. The MoEYI shall ensure that each school facility shall, to the extent of available space and funding, provide the following resources to their guidance and counselling programmes:
  - Private rooms to facilitate confidential individual and small group counselling (including adequate furnishings).
  - Private facilities for storing files, including locked cabinets.
  - An annual budget for guidance and counselling, including resources for any school welfare programmes given to guidance counsellors to manage.
- b. The MoEYI shall ensure that all newly built or refurbished school plants include sufficient space for guidance and counselling, including a clustering of all student support programmes.

### 4. Standardised Implementation of Guidance and Counselling Programmes

- a. The MoEYI Guidance and Counselling Unit will develop and keep under review a framework of the guidance and counselling programmes that each school is required to implement. This will include an indication of the percentage or proportion of the guidance counsellors work-week that should be dedicated to different programming areas, as well as the contact time that guidance counsellors should set aside for student counselling, as defined by this policy.
- b. Principals and school boards will be required to utilise this framework, as well as all relevant components of this policy, in the planning and distribution of the resources of their guidance and counselling departments/student support services units.
- c. Guidance counsellors shall maintain weekly work plan

and activity logs, to facilitate monitoring and accountability and support the implementation of this policy.

- d. Where third party groups or stakeholder agencies wish to implement programmes in partnership with guidance counsellors, approval of the each regional guidance and counselling unit should be sought beforehand.
- e. Training and professional development seminars for guidance counsellors that are being attended during the school schedule must be pre-approved by the regional guidance and counselling unit prior to attendance.
- f. Guidance counsellors and principals should endeavour to ensure appropriate and strategic linkages between each school's guidance programme and its school improvement plan (SIP).

### 5. Improved Responsiveness to the Needs and Requirements of Children and Schools

- a. The MoEYI Guidance and Counselling Unit shall work to ensure that the needs and requirements of children and schools remain central to determining the scope and content of guidance and counselling programmes. This will involve:
  - The continuous assessments and reviews of existing programmes to ensure that they remain responsive to the needs and requirements of children and schools.
  - The integration of child participation and impact analysis in evaluative activities to ensure that programmes are having the desired impact on the child's development and capacity to transition effectively into adulthood.

The MoEYI Guidance and Counselling Unit, through regional guidance officers, will seek to improve the quality of needs assessments conducted by guidance counsellors within schools, to ensure that guidance programming is evidence-based, child-centred and strategic.



## 4.5 POLICY

### 4.5 KEY STAKEHOLDERS' ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

STAKEHOLDER GROUP	ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES
MoEYI Executive Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Introduce the National Guidance and Counselling Policy to all relevant staff and stakeholder groups and promote adherence to its guidelines and requirements</li></ul>
MoEYI Guidance and Counselling Unit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Roll-out all critical component of the policy, as guided by the implementation plan;</li><li>• Circulate the policy to all schools and guidance counsellors;</li><li>• Promote the policy among stakeholders and partner agencies;</li></ul>
Guidance Counsellors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Inform self and colleagues of the content of the policy;</li><li>• Adhere to all guidelines and standards set out or developed in fulfilment of the policy;</li><li>• Align practice with the requirements of the policy.</li></ul>
Schools and School Boards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Circulate the policy to staff members;</li><li>• Align plans, management arrangements and staffing structures with the policy;</li></ul>
Faith-Based Organisations, including Theological Schools and Seminaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Circulate the policy among relevant departments and training programmes;</li><li>• Contribute to and participate in on-going discussions regarding standards and ethics of guidance and counselling;</li></ul>
Professional Bodies, including JTA, Jamaica Association of Guidance Counsellors in Education and Jamaica Association of Social Workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Inform members of the policy;</li><li>• Contribute to and participate in on-going discussions regarding standards and ethics of guidance and counselling;</li><li>• Contribute to and participate in the implementation of the policy and as when reasonable required to do so;</li></ul>
Civil Society Groups, including Parent Teachers' Association of Jamaica	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Hold accountable schools and guidance counsellors to the standards and guidelines in the policy;</li><li>• Partner appropriately with Regional Guidance and Counselling Unit, to align related NGO programmes and initiatives with the MoEYI framework of guidance programming</li></ul>
Youth Advocacy Groups, including Student Councils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Hold accountable schools and guidance counsellors to the standards and guidelines in the policy;</li><li>• Promote access to and appropriate recourse to guidance counsellors within schools.</li></ul>

## 5.0 OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

*The implementation of this policy shall consider the different issues affecting male and female students within the school setting, and shall ensure that the provision of guidance and counselling services addresses both groups effectively.*

### 5.1 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

This policy does not give rise to any specific environmental issues or concerns. Wherever relevant, the implementation of this policy should take appropriate consideration of the environmental impact of activities, and should seek to preserve environmental health and protect and fulfil the right of every person under section 13 (3) (f) of the Charter of Rights “to enjoy a healthy and productive environment free from the threat of injury or damage from environmental abuse and degradation of the ecological heritage”.

This policy further supports safety and security in the school environment, as further defined under the Safe Schools Programme, water sanitation and hygiene programmes and other MoEYI initiatives and policies from time to time.

### 5.2 GENDER CONSIDERATIONS

The Charter of Rights recognises the right of every person to freedom from discrimination on the following grounds:

- (i) being male or female;
- (ii) race, place of origin, social class, colour, religion or political opinions<sup>14</sup>.

This is the foundation for gender equality in Jamaican law and policy. A draft National Policy on Gender Equality delves into added detail on the policy goals and strategies that will be used across government to achieve this. The policy is grounded in the belief that *Jamaica is an egalitarian society, which values equality and dignity of each citizen by affording and facilitating their human rights.*



Gender mainstreaming is a key strategy within this policy and requires all branches of government to identify the gender impact of actions, decisions, policies and programmes. The implementation of this policy shall be guided by the National Policy on Gender Equality (NPGE) once it is adopted and approved by Cabinet. The implementation of this policy shall consider the different issues affecting male and female students within the school setting, and shall ensure that the provision of guidance and counselling services addresses both groups effectively.

This policy shall reinforce and support the implementation of the responsibilities placed on the Ministry of Education, Youth and Information in the NPGE, including the requirement to address any gender bias in the curricula and supporting texts and materials, and the special role that can be played by schools in reversing gender biases and stereotypes perpetuated in society.

<sup>14</sup>: Section 13 (3) (i)

## 6.0 LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK



Jamaica's new Charter of Rights provides constitutional recognition and protection for the rights of children for the first time. Section 13 (3) (k) recognises the right of every child:

- i) to such measures of protection as are required by virtue of the status of being a minor or as part of the family, society and the State;
- ii) who is a citizen of Jamaica, to publicly funded tuition in a public educational institution at the pre-primary and primary levels;

This provides a boundary for professionals engaged in the children's sector, whose actions and decisions must respect these rights. As part of a family, for example, a child has the right to "respect for and protection of private and family life, and privacy of the home"<sup>15</sup>. This conditions the nature of counselling and other services provided by the guidance counsellor.

**The Education Act and Regulations:** do not provide details regarding the role and functions of the guidance counsellor. They are identified among a list of specialist teachers that may be added to the staffing quotient of a given school, depending on needs. Guidance counsellors are therefore expected to be guided by the general standards and requirements of the school community.

**The Child Care and Protection Act (CCPA):** is the primary legislation addressing care and protection issues for Jamaica's children. Under this law, actions for and on behalf of children should be primarily grounded in the best interests principle. This suggests that decisions made by guidance counsellor must take into account the various factors identified under the CCPA for consideration in determining what is in the best interest of a child. This requires consideration of the views and opinions of the child.

<sup>15</sup>: Section 13 (3) (j) (ii)

Guidance counsellors are identified in the CCPA among a list of prescribed persons or practitioners having a special duty of care towards children. They are thus endowed with a mandatory reporting responsibility that inherently exceeds that of the ordinary man. The duty arises once a guidance counsellor knows, suspects or *has enough information that should lead to knowledge or suspicion* that a child is being, or has been abused, neglected or otherwise is in need of care and protection. The duty is not unique, to guidance counsellors, but is shared by other persons in the school community and by parents. A duty to report that is linked only to actual, or proven knowledge or suspicion is applicable to all persons.

In actual terms, guidance counsellors report that they are often the identified reporting point in schools, in some cases for administrative ease, but more often because their core duties bring them into contact with the types of information that will lead to the identification of child care and protection issues. This raises the concern that guidance counsellors can be more exposed by the duty to report, and can be seen by parents and children as a doorway to the supply of information to child protection and security services. This can create trust barriers that impact the guidance counsellor's effectiveness. In the context of the anti-"informer" culture, this can also lead to the guidance counsellor actual or perceived vulnerability to the possibility of reprisal. This vulnerability is easily exacerbated by any gaps in confidentiality within the school community, as well as among investigators (e.g.

children's officers or police officers) who follow up on reports.

Sexual offence legislation has an impact on guidance counsellors, who must be aware of the range and scope of offences impacting children's sexual experiences. Guidance counsellors should be aware of the scope of sexual offences against children as defined by the **Sexual Offences Act (SOA)**. These include incest, sexual grooming, sexual touching, rape, grievous sexual assault and carnal abuse. The latter offence prohibits any person from having sexual intercourse with a child under the age of sixteen. Like many other provisions of the SOA, this section is gender neutral.

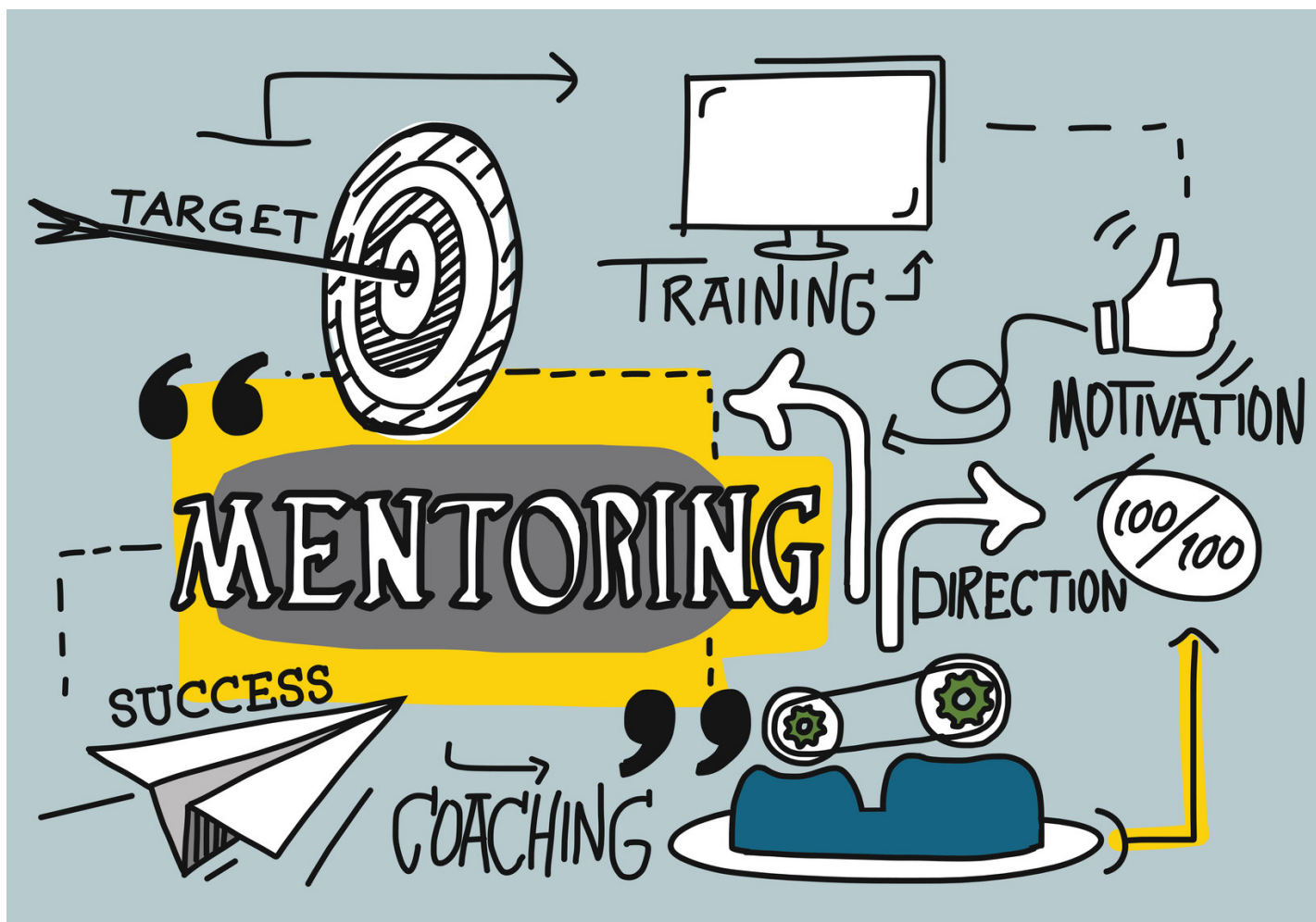
It is also age neutral, which means that a sexual act that would be considered consensual among adults, will give rise to an offence if committed between children under the age of 16<sup>16</sup>. This has raised concerns that a practitioner who provides sexual and reproductive health advice or services to children under sixteen will be seen as a aiding and abetting a crime, if they are aware that these children are likely to have sex with each other.

The SOA is supported by other legislation protecting children from sexual exploitation and abuse. These include the **Trafficking in Persons Act**, the **Child Pornography Act** and the **Cyber Crimes Act**. There are related offences under the **Child Care and Protection Act**, including prohibitions against child trafficking, child labour and the employment of children in night clubs.

*They (Guidance counsellors) are... endowed with a mandatory reporting responsibility that inherently exceeds that of the ordinary man. The duty arises once a guidance counsellor knows, suspects or has enough information that should lead to knowledge or suspicion that a child is being, or has been abused, neglected or otherwise is in need of care and protection.*

<sup>16</sup>: This would be subject to the minimum age of criminal responsibility.





## 7.0 LINKAGES

There are several policies and programmes being implemented through the Ministry's Guidance and Counselling Unit, which will support the full implementation of this policy. These include the Health and Family Life Education (HFLE), the Management of HIV and AIDS in the Education System and the Prevention Education (Substance Abuse) Programmes (PEP), the Programme for Alternative Student Support (PASS) programme and the Reintegration of School-aged Mothers in the Formal School System policy. These programmes give strong emphasis to personal development and the development of life and refusal skills, as well as prevention of issues that promote drop-out rates and other risks.

Other MoEYI initiatives to respond to psychological and

other affective issues include parenting mobilisation, counselling for students, career education and conflict management. These include the Critical Incident Management Plan (CIMP); Parenting Corners; Change From Within (CFW); Changing the Culture of the Classroom (C3) and Pathways to Peace (PTP). These programmes will complement the implementation of this policy and form part of the framework for similar initiatives to be implemented regionally or nationally.

The Guidance and Counselling Unit sits at a critical nexus for ensuring an integrated approach to these programmes, and monitoring the values-bases on which programmes are designed and implemented in order to ensure coherence with the stated ethos of the MoEYI.

## 8.0 MONITORING, EVALUATION AND POLICY REVIEW

### 8.1 MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Policy initiatives shall be monitored at two levels:

- Regional and school-based initiatives shall be monitored by the Guidance and Counselling Unit of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Information;
- National and ministry-wide activities shall be monitored by executive management as part of the accountability requirements of the Guidance and Counselling Unit.

The policies strategies and its implementation plan shall therefore be integrated into the corporate plan of the Guidance and Counselling Unit from year to year.



### 8.2 POLICY REVIEW

This policy shall be reviewed every five years. The review process will be led by the Guidance and Counselling Unit of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Information, and will be supported by the Policy Unit.

The Policy will also be reviewed once a new version of the Education Act comes into force. This review shall ensure that any relevant changes to the Act or its Regulations are considered in the scope and content of this policy.



## 9.0 THE APPENDICES

### 9.1 APPENDIX A

ORGANIZATION	POSITION
MoEYI, Guidance and Counselling Unit	Assistant Chief Education Officer (Chair)
Pivot Consulting	Consultant
MoEYI, Policy Research and Statistics Unit	Assistant Chief Education Officer
MoEYI, Special Education Unit	Assistant Chief Education Officer
MoEYI, Independent Schools	Registrar
MoEYI Jamaica Teaching Council	Education Officer
Jamaica Council of Churches	President
UNICEF	Education Specialist
MoEYI, Guidance and Counselling Unit Region 1	Senior Education Officer
MoEYI, Guidance and Counselling Unit Region 2	Senior Education Officer
MoEYI, Guidance and Counselling Unit Region 3	Senior Education Officer
MoEYI, Guidance and Counselling Unit Region 4	Senior Education Officer
MoEYI, Guidance and Counselling Unit Region 5	Senior Education Officer
MoEYI, Guidance and Counselling Unit Region 6	Senior Education Officer
MoEYI, Guidance and Counselling	National Coordinator, HIV & AIDS Education
MoEYI, Guidance and Counselling	Coordinator, PASS
Jamaica Association of Guidance Counsellors in Education	President
MoH, Adolescents Health Unit	Manager
Women's Center of Jamaica Foundation	Executive Director
Mico University College, Guidance and Counselling Department	Lecturer
National Council for Youth Development	President
National Secondary Student Council	President
National Council on Drug Abuse	Director Field Services
Dispute Resolution Foundation	Youth Programme Manager
Merl Grove High School	Guidance Counsellor
Dunrobin Primary	Guidance Counsellor
National Parent Teachers Association	Immediate Past President
The Trauma Counselling Centre	Manager/Senior Counsellor
National Council on Drug Abuse	Executive Director
Jamaica Teachers Association	President
National Parent Teachers Association of Jamaica	President

## 9.2 APPENDIX B

### Stakeholder Consultation Report

#### 9.2.1 INTRODUCTION

Pivot Consulting has been engaged by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Information to coordinate and produce a review of the Draft National Guidance and Counselling Policy (NGCP). As part of the review process a series of stakeholder consultations were held with guidance counsellors and students across the six (6) geographic regions of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Information. Special sessions were held with children, regional management and guidance officers respectively. During the consultations proposed policy content was outlined, which provided a frame-work for discussion and feedback from participants on what they felt were the key issues impacting upon guidance and counselling policy and practice in Jamaica as well as their recommendations for policy emphases to address these issues.

#### 9.2.2 METHODOLOGY

At each consultation, a PowerPoint presentation on the National Guidance and Counselling Policy was given. The presentation covered the following:

1. The History of the Development of the NGCP
2. The Role of a Policy
3. Key Considerations of a National Guidance and Counselling Policy
  - i. Social Context
  - ii. International Standards and Professional context
  - iii. Legislative and Policy context
4. Proposed Policy Content
  - i. Defining the Role of a Guidance Counsellor (GC)
  - ii. Defining Ethical Guidelines and Principles for GCs
  - iii. The Management Structure for Guidance and Counselling
  - iv. A Compliance and Accountability Framework
  - v. A Policy Implementation Framework

Questions and feedback were received and recorded during the presentation. Following the presentation, participants were divided into small discussion groups on different key policy issues, which were outlined on a response template. Group feedback was presented to the meeting and ensuing discussion was recorded.



## 9.2 THE APPENDICES

The following table displays the groups that participated in stakeholder consultations:

GROUP	PARTICIPANT PROFILE	NO. OF PARTICIPANTS
Region One	Reps from 8 high schools, 2 primary schools and School for the Deaf, including: 5 guidance counsellors, 1 principal, 1 vice principal, 2 students, 1 PTA rep; 3 counsellor educators from The Mico, and JTS, 2 GCEOs, and 1 rep each from CDA, OCA, JAGCE, and the JTA.	20
Region Two	Reps from 4 high schools, 6 primary schools and 1 primary and junior high participated, including; guidance counsellors, principals and teachers; NCB, 2 GCEOs, 1 NYS worker.	15
Region Three	Reps from the school for the deaf, 4 primary, 3 all-age, and 5 high schools participated, including: 5 guidance counsellors, 3 GCEOs 3 teachers, 2 PTA representatives, 2 principals, 2 vice principals, 1 school nurse; 1 CDA rep, 1 NCDA rep, 1 SRO.	21
Region Four	Reps from 4 high schools, 4 primary schools participated, including: 2 guidance counsellors, 1 Dean of discipline, 1 HOD; 1 rep each from: YMCA, Red Cross , NPTAJ, MOH community rep, and the VSU.	15
Region Five	Reps from 5 high schools, 2 all-age schools, and 2 primary schools participated, including: 2 guidance counsellors, 1 Dean of discipline, 2 phys. ed., HODs, 1 vice principal, 1 PTA rep, 2 GCEOs, 2 MoEYI reps; 1 rep each from JGRA, Fontana Pharmacy, 1 SRO and 1 PTA rep.	15
Region Six	Reps from various schools and community groups participated. Numbers to be verified.	19
Children	10 children attended from a mixture of primary and secondary schools, rural and urban, (list to be supplied by MoEYI).	10
Regional Directors	Regional directors, other managers from the regional offices and the deputy CEO.	9
Guidance Officers	Guidance officers from all MoEYI regional offices and officers from the PASS and HIV programmes.	13

### 9.2.3 SUMMARY OF FEEDBACK

The PowerPoint presentation as well as group discussions elicited lively and emphatic feedback from every group. Many of the issues raised were repeated throughout all consultations. This report summarises the feedback received highlighting popular issues as well as crucial ones arising from particular groups. The primary issues can be summarised as follows:

#### 1. Social Issues Affecting Guidance Counselling

Stakeholders emphasised that there are several serious social and economic challenges impacting children and their families. These issues impact the potential for learning and the wholesome development of the child. The guidance counsellor is the best placed school professional to help students manage these challenges, as they seek to embrace learning, personal development and career goals. This points to the need for more counselling to be accommodated within the school structure.

Some of these issues have escalated in the past 10 or so years, have affected the family and community, and are unlikely to be fully addressed in the guidance and counselling curriculum. These issues impact children's behaviour, their ability to learn and to maximise their potential. The groups consulted typically felt the counsellor's role should at least accommodate new techniques and strategies for managing these areas. Key challenges identified include:

- Changing values in the socialisation and understanding of gender, which affects gender identification (now evidenced by dress, boys expecting girls to "mind" them through school, etc). This points to changes in the stereotyping of gender roles and expectations.
- Increased media and technology influences on behaviour, resulting in (among other things) risky sexual behaviour.
- The influence of anti-social role models; some artistes, black-market entrepreneurs, "hustlers", scammers etc., influence the mentalities and goals of children in the direction of seeking quick (at times unlawful) means of earning money. This devalues education in the eyes of some students, who feel education is not important in achieving

life goals. This is made worse in a declining/increasingly difficult economic situation.

- Popular changes in moral standards and practices in the country mean that "right" and "wrong" are not clearly defined for young people. These positions are not officially sanctioned but generally accepted in some communities; some communities support lotto scamming activities, gangs and the leadership of dons, as they derive personal benefit from their illegal activities.
- A lack of effective parenting practices; parents need much more support to understand and support their children's learning and development. Some parents and grandparents are young and inexperienced; many are not emotionally, socially or physically equipped to give proper guidance or leadership to children.
- More children are turning up with difficult-to-control behaviour.
- Economic challenges require innovative approaches to the career guidance aspect of the guidance curriculum.

#### 2. Focus, Scope and Purpose of Guidance and Counselling

Stakeholders concurred that the emphasis of guidance and counselling should be on counselling, one-on-one and group interventions. Regional directors noted that the intent had never been to submerge the guidance counsellor in classroom responsibilities through a heavy load of guidance classes. Classes were seen as one methodology to be employed specifically where the needs assessment for a given school identifies issues that should be addressed preventatively through education and information sharing.

Guidance officers noted that the "Guidance Curriculum" should be seen as a resource from which each counsellor pulls information as needed, and not as a mandatory set of themes or topics to be covered in each school.

It was further recommended that an integrated approach should be taken to guidance and HFLE lessons. In some schools, HFLE teachers are seen as an integral part of the guidance programme, and the needs assessment conducted by the counsellor is used to set learning goals and objectives for HFLE classes, which is supplemented by the materials and information in the guidance curriculum. No separate "guidance class"

## 9.2 THE APPENDICES

is then necessary. This model was recommended by guidance officers as it allows teachers to lead on teaching, while the counsellor provides key guidance inputs, as well as individual or small-group follow-up on issues that may arise in the classroom. This approach will maximise the resource of guidance counsellors and provide a more integrated approach to HFLE, HIV and other co-curricular emphases of the MoEYL.

Stakeholders felt that the majority of the guidance counsellor's time was currently taken up with administrative functions. In some schools, little or no room is left for counselling and other interventive activities. It was felt that this is opposite to needs, as more and more social and family issues are invading the school space, and diminishing educational outcomes. Exposure of children to the misuse of technology (e.g. internet pornography) as well as violence in communities and/or in the media were among the key social influences seen to create problems. Stakeholders also spoke to the negative effects of exposing children to rights without concurrent discussions on their responsibilities. It was felt that such knowledge, in an in-disciplined environment, can worsen the relational gap between children and caregivers. The need for rehearsal of values was seen as a potential solution, particularly where a significant proportion of children stem from homes with actual or potential parenting problems.

Guidance officers were among the stakeholders recommending a clear articulation of the proportion of time spent by counsellors in one-and-one or small group counselling, as opposed to administrative or teaching functions. There were also recommendations addressing the ratio of guidance counsellors to students; it was felt that this ratio should be reduced to at least 1:450. Some stakeholders suggested a smaller ratio, while others suggested that in some schools the scope of a guidance department should be based on the types of problems being faced, rather than being based solely on the numbers of students enrolled.

School administrators should be mindful that once they receive or are exposed to information relating to the child in need of care and protection, they will be required to make a report to the OCR. This will reduce the tendency to push such issues to the desk of the guidance counsellor. Guidance officers felt that the coping skills of teachers should be increased, as there is at times a tendency to forward every disciplinary issue (including minor issues) to the guidance counsellor.

### 3. Ethics and Standards in Guidance and Counselling

Much of each stakeholder discussion explored the ethical and performance standards to which guidance counsellors should be held. Both regional directors and guidance officers agreed generally that guidance counsellors should be held to a higher standard, as reputation was a valuable input in their on-going effectiveness. Issues raised included the need to enforce dress codes and other disciplinary standards applicable to schools, as there have been false assumptions that standards that bind teachers do not apply to counsellors. Deportment and behavioural guidelines were also deemed necessary.

Confidentiality was another major concern for stakeholders. It was felt that confidentiality standards should be set for guidance services, which would be a guide to both the counsellor and the school administration as to how information should be handled.

This should clarify the level of information that can be shared from counselling sessions and OCR reports, which guidance officers maintain should be restricted to aggregate data. Improvement was also needed in the way client confidentiality being maintained by guidance officers. Confidentiality constraints should also be considered in determining the physical facilities in which guidance counsellors are housed, their access to private counselling rooms, and private cabinets for maintaining their files.

Some stakeholders identified reporting requirements as a threat to counsellor-client confidentiality, while others maintained that counsellors only need to explain their reporting obligations to clients beforehand. It was also noted that guidance counsellors should be mindful that in making OCR reports, the information provided should be limited to the care and protection issues arising in a given case.

There was agreement among many stakeholders, including regional directors and guidance officers, that ethical guidelines should be set for guidance counsellors. In addition to confidentiality, this should address the responsibilities counsellors have to the individual student, as well as to the school. It should also address other counselling ethics, such as the need to obtain informed consent from clients.

## 4. Management and Accountability Issues

Stakeholders widely agreed that for improved effectiveness, management linkages between counsellors and school administrations need to be clarified and strengthened. It was noted that the performance appraisal system currently requires principals involvement in, and approval of counsellors' appraisals, however this was not always effectively practiced. Principals are not uniformly proactive in putting in place arrangements for counsellors to be appropriately supervised.

Regional directors were concerned that some counsellors are unaccountable within the school management structure, relying solely on the supervision of the regional guidance education officer. At the same time guidance officers pointed out that their work-year does not facilitate close scrutiny of each school within their purview. The system should therefore require greater emphasis on an integrated approach to managing quality standards in guidance and counselling. This means that principals should be very aware of the role and responsibilities of guidance counsellors, as well as their performance requirements.

Annual guidance plans and reports are essential, and should be based on needs assessments. School principals should sign-off on these documents. This would improve the management of guidance services, as well as underscore the accountability of the counsellor to the principal and school board.

The issue of licensing counsellors came up on a few occasions. It is thought that this will enable greater accountability, and the upholding of standards throughout the career cycle of a counsellor. Sanctions such as the suspension or revocation of a licence could be used to back the core ethical and performance standards that are considered critical to the profession. Licensure can be linked to continuing professional education and development.

There was some controversy surrounding the classification of guidance counsellors. It is felt that this should now be reviewed as different standards obtain in different schools and for different purposes. Counsellors are numbered among the teaching quota as and when appropriate, but are uniformly considered to be part of the administrative staff during the summer. They may therefore experience both the vacation limitations imposed on teachers, as well as have to attend school

consistently during teaching breaks along with the rest of the administrative staff.

It was felt that a separate classification is need for counsellors. This should facilitate different levels within the profession, as well as the acknowledgement and promotion to senior status of counsellors who have a supervisory role over a number of other counsellors.

## 5. Children's Views and Perspectives

During the consultation session held with children, the following comments were noted:

- Children had positive perspectives on counsellors and mixed views on other members of staff. Counsellors were typically viewed by the participating children as trusted and easy to talk to.
- Children noted that a range of problems were taken by students to counsellors, including teen pregnancy, depression and suicidal thoughts, child abuse and family problems, bullying and peer extortion, student welfare and PATH issues, drug-related issues.
- No mention was made of career guidance services or issues.

The sample of children was small, therefore generalised findings cannot be attributed to the children's focus group discussion.



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6. Other Feedback Received

The following table sets out in summary form other feedback from the consultations:

PROPOSED POLICY CONTENT	FEEDBACK FROM CONSULTATIONS
<p><b>Defining the Role of a Guidance Counsellor</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Creating an Occupational Profile for Guidance Counsellors</li></ul> <p>Understanding the distinct but mutually reinforcing components of “Guidance” and “Counselling”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Differentiating the Role of a GC from other roles in the school community</li></ul> <p>Teacher, Administrator, Pastor/Chaplain, Dean of Discipline, Social Worker</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• In the absence of a clearly defined and understood role, the GC becomes “all things to all men”</li><li>• GC role not clearly outlined in Education Act and Regulations</li><li>• GC should have a stronger focus on counselling, conflict resolution and family interventions, including one-to-one and group sessions.</li><li>• Teachers need to be equipped to handle routine disciplinary matters and maladaptive behaviour so that only special cases are referred to GCs (this issue was raised in the majority of consultations)</li><li>• The GC policy must give clear guidelines on the components of the GC’s curriculum while addressing need to tailor emphasis based on a needs assessments</li><li>• Recommendation for a guidance teacher role that takes on guidance curriculum, HFLE Curriculum etc.</li><li>• Recommendation for a student support services department that houses guidance, nursing/health services, welfare/PATH Liaison etc.</li><li>• Recommendation for cluster-based social worker/psychologists to support schools</li></ul>
<p><b>Defining Ethical Guidelines and Principles for GCs</b></p> <p>INFORMED BY:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ministry of Education, Youth and Information Values and Vision</li><li>• Child rights principles</li><li>• Ethics and standards of Guidance Counselling, Social Work and/or related professional organisations (national and international</li><li>• Proposed standards from practicing guidance counsellors, academia, sector experts and stakeholders</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lack of understanding of confidentiality requirements; e.g. GCs requested by principals, teachers etc. to provide confidential information on children following counselling</li><li>• The policy should provide GC with guidelines on their legal disclosure requirements as well as the level of detail required in disclosure and extent to which they are protected under law from retribution</li><li>• Intersection of responsibilities and professional obligations to children, parents, school board and administration etc. needs clarification</li><li>• Special reporting responsibilities associated with certain policies (e.g. CCPA; Safe Schools Programme) have an impact on counsellor-client confidentiality.</li><li>• It is recommended that there be a conduct, deportment and dress code for GCs</li></ul>

PROPOSED POLICY CONTENT	FEEDBACK FROM CONSULTATIONS
<p><b>Defining Performance Standards for GCs</b></p> <p>INFORMED BY:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ministry of Education, Youth and Information HR Standards and Corporate Plans</li> <li>• Proposed standards from practicing guidance counsellors, academia, sector experts and stakeholders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There should be a clear separation in the policy of the teaching of “guidance” from the practice “counselling”</li> <li>• Recommendation that GC candidates should be subjected to both criminal and employment back-ground checks as well as personality test before ap-ointment</li> <li>• The policy must include a structure for holding GCs accountable for performance standards</li> <li>• The policy must address the requirement for GCs to properly document their work and to adequately maintain student records</li> </ul>
<p><b>The Management Structure for Guidance and Counselling A Compliance and Accountability Frameworks</b></p> <p>e.g. Monitoring, Evaluation, Performance Appraisal, Reporting, Complaints, Whistleblowing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There needs to be appropriate classification and grading of the GC role. GCs should be clearly categorised as either administrative or teaching staff so that anomalies are addressed.</li> <li>• GCs with senior responsibilities such as supervising a team of GCs should be eligible for the status of Senior Teachers</li> <li>• Appropriate school-based resources and facilities (e.g. private counselling area) are needed.</li> <li>• Greater regional or cluster-based support is recommended for increasingly prevalent cases of students requiring intensive psychological assessment and therapy.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Policy Implementation Framework</b></p> <p>e.g. Costs and Human Resource Requirements</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The policy should address the need for an official Guidance Budget for schools</li> <li>• The G and C Unit needs to be regularly included in national MoEYI policy development at the planning stages.</li> <li>• Recommendation was made for a structure allowing GCs to collaborate with external agencies such as NYCD, CSJP, CDA, CISOCA.</li> </ul>

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### Policy Implementation and Framework

PHASE	CORE ACTIVITIES/ MILESTONES	RESOURCE CONSIDERATIONS	IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS
<b>Phase 2: Comprehensive Change Management Process</b> Timeframe: Years 2-4	Make recommendations for the inclusion of ethical standards and guidelines in curricula for GC training institutions.	COST-NEUTRAL: This will be incorporated into the work of the G and C Unit. Activities may also be projectised and implemented with support from donors, as appropriate.	Teacher Training Institutions JAGCE
	Conduct a gap analysis of guidance and counselling in schools to identify any barriers to the full implementation of the policy.	COST-NEUTRAL: This will be incorporated into the work of the regional guidance officers. Activities may also be projectised and implemented with support from donors, as appropriate.	JAGCE
	Identify (and cost) human resource needs and requirements to fulfil the guidelines identified in the policy.	COST-NEUTRAL: This will be incorporated into the work of the regional guidance officers. Activities may also be projectised and implemented with support from donors, as appropriate.	
	Conduct an evaluation and impact assessment of guidance programmes, incorporating child participation methodologies, to assess the validity and relevance of programmes to the needs of children.	COST-IMPLICATIONS: This will require the services of an external evaluator. Activities may also be projectised and implemented with support from donors, as appropriate.	JAGCE Schools PTA Groups Other Stakeholders
	Develop and implement screening and recruitment guidelines for GCs and GC students, to include psychometric testing.	COST-IMPLICATIONS: This will require the support of an HR/testing specialist. Activities may also be projectised and implemented with support from donors, as appropriate.	JAGCE Schools Teacher Training Institutions
	Conduct a management Review of the MoEYI G and C Unit to assess its capacity to manage the implementation of this and other policies and programmes.	COST-IMPLICATIONS: This will require the services of an external management/organisational development specialist. Activities may also be projectised and implemented with support from donors, as appropriate.	

PHASE	CORE ACTIVITIES/ MILESTONES	RESOURCE CONSIDERATIONS	IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS
<b>Phase 2: Comprehensive Change Management Process</b> Timeframe: Years 2-4	Identify and implement strategies to integrate GC Unit/Officers in the operational management of schools – at central and regional levels	COST-IMPLICATIONS: This will require the services of an external management/ organisational development specialist. Activities may also be projectised and implemented with support from donors, as appropriate.	Schools
	Develop protocols for the incorporation of GCs in the operational management of schools at the institutional level	COST-NEUTRAL: This will be incorporated into the work of the G and C Unit. Activities may also be projectised and implemented with support from donors, as appropriate.	Schools
	Review performance appraisal system to strengthen the involvement of principals	COST-NEUTRAL: This will be incorporated into the work of the G and C Unit. Activities may also be projectised and implemented with support from donors, as appropriate.	Schools
	Define and establish a complaints mechanism for children and other persons served by GCs	COST-NEUTRAL: This will be incorporated into the work of the G and C Unit. Activities may also be projectised and implemented with support from donors, as appropriate.	JAGCE Schools PTA Groups Youth Advocacy Groups Other partners
	Review classification and HR arrangements of GCs and guidance officers	COST-NEUTRAL: This will be incorporated into the work of the G and C Unit. Activities may also be projectised and implemented with support from donors, as appropriate.	JAGCE
	Review HFLE curriculum to incorporate any aspects of the guidance curriculum that has not been included.	COST-SAVINGS: This will be incorporated into the work of the G and C Unit. Further, as some schools are currently timetabling two different curriculum slots for guidance and HFLE, there is scope for reductions in associated costs.	



## 9.2 THE APPENDICES

PHASE	CORE ACTIVITIES/ MILESTONES	RESOURCE CONSIDERATIONS	IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS
<b>Phase 2: Comprehensive Change Management Process</b> Timeframe: Years 2-4	Develop approved framework of guidance and counselling programmes	<b>COST-SAVINGS:</b> This will be incorporated into the work of the G and C Unit. It is expected that this will facilitate a streamlining of the work being done by GCs in schools, which can in some cases result in reduced HR costs.	Schools PTA Groups Other partners
<b>Phase 3: Full Implementations</b> Timeframe: 4-5	Establish student support service units in all schools	<b>COST-NEUTRAL:</b> This will be incorporated into the work of the G and C Unit. Activities may also be projectised and implemented with support from donors, as appropriate.	Schools
	Complete recruitment for approved staffing profile for regional guidance offices (including social workers and administrative staff).	<b>COST-IMPLICATIONS:</b> This will require the recruitment of new staff, in fulfilment of previous (2010) Cabinet decision on the composition of regional guidance and counselling units. This decision spoke to having social workers and administrative officers in each region, but these posts have not yet been filled. Costs for these posts will be calculated at the point of implementation.	Schools PTA Groups JAGCE Other partners
	Implement recommendations and strategies from the (a) Gap Analysis, (b) HR Needs Assessment, (c) Evaluation and Impact Assessment of Guidance Programmes and (d) Management Review of the Guidance and Counselling Unit conducted during Phase 2	<b>COST-IMPLICATIONS:</b> Some of these recommendations may be integrated into annual work-plans, and will not necessarily incur an added cost. However where any recommendations speak to significant increases in resources, these will require approval from the executive management of the Ministry prior to approval and implementation.	
	Develop and implement staffing plan to achieve quotas and ratios indicated in the policy.	<b>COST-IMPLICATIONS:</b> These costs cannot be surmised in advance of the assessments referred to above. While many schools may be understaffed in their guidance departments, many may simply need to re-appropriate the time of the guidance counsellor as mandated by the policy.	Schools PTA Groups Other partners

PHASE	CORE ACTIVITIES/ MILESTONES	RESOURCE CONSIDERATIONS	IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS
<b>Phase 4: Monitoring and Policy Review</b> Timeframe: Years 5-6	Develop an MoEYI plan for the improvement of guidance and counselling standards across the formal school system	COST-IMPLICATIONS: This activity may benefit from the services of an independent MoEYI specialist. Activities may also be projectised and implemented with support from donors, as appropriate.	JAGCE Schools PTA Groups Youth/Student Advocacy Groups Other partners
	Conduct a review of the policy, and recommend amendments and additions as deemed necessary.	COST-IMPLICATIONS: This activity may benefit from the services of an independent policy specialist. Activities may also be projectised and implemented with support from donors, as appropriate.	JAGCE Schools PTA Groups JTC Youth/Student Advocacy Groups Other Partners



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