

Search
our archives

Advanced Search

Front Page

News

Sports

Editorial

Columns

Letters

Lifestyle

Western News

Contact Us

Epaper Login

Email Address

Password

Register | Forgot Password ?

News

Four-month waiting list at Mico CARE

BY LUKE DOUGLAS Sunday Observer writer editorial@jamaicaobserver.com
Sunday, June 03, 2007

PARENTS wishing to have their children assessed for a range of learning disabilities may have to wait for up to four months before such tests are done because of the high demand for the service.

The Mico Child Assessment and Research in Education (CARE) Centre, the only public institution of its kind, has seen an increase in demand for its services, despite efforts to expand its reach across the island over the past two years.



A parent consults with clinical psychologist Ghia Townsend.

"We have a waiting list of three to four months; this is because we serve the entire Jamaica," Evelyn Morgan, public relations manager at Mico CARE, told the Sunday Observer.

The centre provides diagnostic testing and offers remediation services for more than 1,000 children with learning disabilities per year, which is up from an average of 500 in the 1980s. It also provides training for students in the special education programmes at Mico University College, facilitates research and educates the public on special education.

Established in 1981 with the assistance of the government of

editorial cartoon



Lifestyle

[Nadine Sutherland's moving forward on all fronts](#)

[A nice taste of China](#)

[Picking up wenchies](#)

poll

Should the UHWI be exempt from the government's abolition of registration fees?

Yes

No

Undecided

[View Results](#)

the Netherlands, which provided a building, equipment and expert staff, Mico CARE is said to be the only institution of its kind in the English-speaking Caribbean.

"You may be able to go to a psychologist or a social worker to get an assessment, but we have all those services under one roof," Morgan explained.

Staff at the centre include two psychologists, two social workers, five special educators, an occupational therapist and a nurse, all of whom carry out a range of tests - psychological and educational testing, sociological evaluation, and medical screening for hearing and sight problems.

The tests usually take three days, after which the professionals recommend action to be taken by parents and teachers, or further treatment options by doctors if required.

Not only is the waiting list long at Mico CARE, but the centre is also hard-pressed to retain its staff, who are paid from the government budget. At present, the institution is in need of a physiotherapist, among other professionals, and is looking to UNICEF to assist in this regard.

"We are having difficulty recruiting a physiotherapist, based on what they can earn elsewhere," Morgan noted.

Despite the challenges, the institution is expanding to other parts of the island. Two years ago, a CARE centre opened at the Ridgemount United Church in Mandeville, while a satellite station at the Beth Jacobs Clinic in St Ann's Bay is to be replaced by a full service branch soon. Already, Ridgemount has a waiting list of about 200 children.

The CARE centre charges a modest fee to assist with maintenance.

"On registration we ask for \$200, which is non-refundable. At intake, if it is deemed that the child is to be assessed further, we charge modest fees based on ability to pay. It ranges from zero up to \$4,500," Morgan explained. Group assessments are also done at schools or in communities on the recommendation of principals or guidance counsellors, or NGOs such as Rise Life Management, she said.

In addition to doing assessments, the institution also provides a number of other activities aimed at improving the learning outcomes of children.

"We have three groups of children who have been assessed as being just below their grade level; we have them in programmes of intensive remediation to bring them up to their grade level," Morgan said.

These groups of no more than 10 children last for one term, after which they are returned to their schools where their progress continues to be monitored.

There is also an in-depth programme of remediation lasting two years, for 'slow learners' aged 12 to 14. These sessions are taught by special educators.

Workshops to train teachers to deal with children with learning difficulties are also held.

Mico CARE has also developed a diagnostic reading test to assist teachers in determining the levels at which to start instruction to children.

"It is for pre-primary to grade six students, and is prepared to world standards, so it is acceptable internationally," said Morgan.

A modern computer lab, a model basic school and conference room are among the other facilities at the Mico CARE centre.

Although there are small groups of students undergoing remedial work at the centre, Morgan emphasises that contrary to popular belief, Mico CARE is not a school.

"We assess the children and suggest the type of education they need," she said.

She noted that the centre does not have the facilities to treat children with autism, but instead refers them to the Child Guidance Clinic at the University Hospital of the West Indies, headed by noted autism expert Dr Maureen Samms-Vaughn. In addition, she said cases of children with mild or severe intellectual disability are recommended to special government schools like Carberry Court or the School of Hope.

Meanwhile, the professionals at the Mico CARE centre are urging parents and caregivers to provide as much stimulation as possible to their children with learning difficulties.

"Parents need to take their children out to expose them, because we learn by being visually stimulated. Once you take them out they are learning more than they do in the school alone," said clinical psychologist Ghia Townsend.

She noted that children who were taken to the zoo and other places of interest, and were provided with colourful charts on their walls at home, always scored higher on individual tests at the centre, even if they fell in the moderate intellectually deficient range.

"I know parents are busy, but we need to find time to stimulate our children at home. School is not enough," Townsend said.

Talk Back

No comments have been posted

[Post your comments](#)

Related Articles

No related articles were found

[Back to Top](#)

[News](#) | [Sports](#) | [Editorial](#) | [Columns](#) | [Lifestyle](#) | [Western News](#) | [All Woman](#) | [2004 Olympics](#)
| [TeenAge](#) | [Education](#) | [Food](#) | [Business](#) | [Health](#)

[Copyright](#)© 2000-2001 Jamaica Observer. All Rights Reserved. Terms under which this service is provided to you.

e-Business Solutions by **info•exchange**