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New software to greatly improve monitoring of children in care

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GOVERNMENT is streamlining services within the child protection sector with the launch of the Child Case Management System (CCMS), incorporating the Social and Health Management (SOHEMA) software.

Developed by Canadian software development company, Avocette, the software allows child protection officers to upload and track cases of children who are registered in the child protection system.

The software will enable users to digitally track, update and evaluate client information.

According to the developer, the software interface system will also facilitate real-time information sharing among key child protection agencies, including the family and children's courts; the Office of the Children's Registry (OCR); the Centre for the Investigation of Sexual Offences and Child Abuse (CISOCA); the Office of the Children's Advocate (OCA) and the Ministry of Education, Youth and Information.

State Minister for Education, Youth and Information Floyd Green, who brought greetings at the launch Wednesday at the CDA's downtown Kingston headquarters, said the software will greatly enhance the CDA's ability to track the needs of each child in the system and effectively monitor and manage cases.

"Part of our role and responsibility as a Government is to formulate a child protection sector that is effective and efficient, especially considering we are dealing with the most vulnerable members of our population," Green said.

"To put it in context, we get about 13,000 child abuse reports each year. That means we are treating with about 1,200 reports of child abuse cases each month. Can you then imagine the difficulty our childcare officers had when all these cases were paper and files and were passed around to ensure that the work was being done. This will help us to rid ourselves of that system and the inefficiency that is inherent in that kind of (paper-based) system," he added.

Meanwhile, Acting Mission Director for the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Rebecca Robinson, said the agency remains committed to working with the Jamaican Government to improve the outcomes of youth in State care.

"Technology presents effective tools at our fingertips which can ease the process of enormous amounts of data that organisations such as the child-protection agencies are expected to maintain. We hope that the system will bolster the capacity of the CDA to respond to the needs of the wards of the State right from the time that they enter the child-protection system up until they exit care," she said.

Chief Executive Office of the CDA Rosalee Gage-Grey said 150 CDA staff members have, so far, been trained in the use of the software, and expressed her enthusiasm for the use of technology-based solutions to advance the work of the child protection sector.

"We are excited to be able to reveal a product that will enable our officers to efficiently track clients and cases, so that our officers will dedicate their time to serving our children," she said.

The SOHEMA Child Case Management System is developed and implemented under the USAID's 'Transitional Living Programme for Children in State Care' project. The agency provided $16.4 million in funding for the development of the system.