



Ministerial Statement

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH AND SENIORS,

THE HON. PATRICIA GORDON-PAMPLIN JP, MP

ON: The Integration of Programmes for Persons with Disabilities

**13th September, 2013 at the
House of Assembly**

Good Morning, Mr. Speaker,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide information on the progress that is being made with regard to services for those in Bermuda who have disabilities.

Specifically, I would like to speak to changes planned for the services provided by the Opportunity Workshop and the Orange Valley Centre which are intended to address the specific needs of clients.

Orange Valley Centre (OVC) and our Opportunity Workshop (OWS) provide support and services to approximately 42 adults who have mild to profound cognitive or intellectual disabilities.

Mr. Speaker

In 2010 a review was conducted of the issues and concerns related to persons with cognitive disabilities.

The Review found, among many other things, that deficiencies related to resources, coordination and facilities are creating a burden to caregivers, parents and service providers.

Mr. Speaker,

Since the Review, a transition team has been established to deal with these concerns. This is a multiagency team whose mandate is to identify persons with disabilities and provide a care plan for their

transition through life's various stages. This initiative is in its infancy but has already provided relief to some families.

Mr. Speaker,

Another programme which I am pleased to tell you about today is the roll-out of various initiatives which share the common goal of improving the quality of life of persons with disabilities by preparing them for and providing them with meaningful work experience in an integrated community or sheltered employment through vocational, rehabilitative and supervised work experience that enhances their optimum quality of life.

The programmes, which will begin from the first of October 2013, will include:

- The Employment Placement Programme,
- The creation of a Production Centre and
- The introduction of Vocational Assessment/Management Services.

The **Employment Placement Programme** will encourage clients with mild disabilities to unlock unrealized potential and assist them in becoming less dependent, more self-directed and socially active participants in their community.

Our staff will help them to acquire work and/or volunteering skills with the ultimate objective of obtaining fulltime or part-time employment.

Jobs can include, but are not limited to: data entry, cleaning services, laundry services, packaging services, clerical work, the creation of cards and gifts, etc.

Once placed in a work environment, the programme will provide job support and follow-up services to enable the disabled person to adapt and adjust well to the work environment. To ensure the newly employed individual is transitioned smoothly into the job we will provide one to two weeks (longer if needed) of job coaching and orientation.

The Production Center Programme is an Opportunity Workshop run 'workplace' that provides a supportive environment where persons with disabilities can acquire job skills and vocational experience in a protective and caring work environment.

The programme will provide a sheltered workshop where persons with disabilities will perform a variety of tasks and acquire on-the-job training that will enhance workplace skills. Clients will be trained in specific job skills, workplace etiquette and other disciplines.

The objectives of the **Vocational Assessment/Management Services** programme are:

- To assist persons with disabilities to explore job opportunities and training;
- To provide a link between disabled persons and appropriate services and resources in the community and
- To offer assistance and counseling to persons with disabilities and/or their families on issues relating to disabilities, work and daily activities.

In addition, this programme will focus on identifying and enhancing each individual's interests, abilities, aptitude, job readiness, dexterity and coordination.

Mr. Speaker

In order to make this an effective programme we need the assistance of the business community.

We are seeking their cooperation to partner with us to provide employment opportunities for persons with disabilities. This partnership would be an organization-specific arrangement. It is envisioned that some businesses would provide work that could be done in a sheltered workshop environment, while others would provide on-site work experience for those who have the appropriate skills.

Mr. Speaker,

In order to accommodate the three new programmes we had to re-arrange our current facilities.

An adult day programme that started earlier this year and was located at the Robert's Ave site will be moved to Orange Valley Centre. This programme is for persons who are more than 40 years old and require a more sedate daily programme.

All other clients and programmes will be accommodated at the Opportunity Workshop site.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.