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Training Session Held to Address Mentally Ill Inmates

The Ministry of National Security (MNS), held a workshop on Friday August 24 with a team of lawyers assigned to work with inmates who are unfit to plead. The workshop sensitized and updated the lawyers on the cases of mentally ill inmates who were found unfit to plea as well as those who became mentally ill subsequent to their conviction.

The Chief Technical Director (CTD) at the MNS, Miss Laura Plunkett who spearheaded the workshop noted that the initiative was in partnership with the Ministry of Health, the Legal Aid Council, the Department of Correctional Services among other entities.

“We are all on board to chart a path to assist those who have been committed to the care Department of Correctional Services, who have either become mentally ill by a way of incarceration or those who have been detained with mental illness before standing trial, the CTD shared”

She said the workshop reviewed the psychiatric approach to the treatment of the mentally ill in correctional centers, the legal provisions such as the inmates’ entitlement to duty council, their application to re-list and application to Supreme Court for review of inmates held at the Court’s pleasure.

Ms. Plunkett further indicated that the lawyers also did a session to guide them on the process of petitioning to the Governor General for pardon, on behalf of the mentally ill inmates where necessary.

The CTD explained that, ***“Each lawyer has been assigned a case file to ensure that all inmates have proper representation. The Lawyer’s responsibility is to meet with the inmate or the correctional officer to get the details of the case to present to the court based on the Mental Health Act.”***

Miss Plunkett noted that the integrated workshop with the various stakeholders is a capacity building exercise that will create a synergy need for effective rehabilitation.

This workshop she added, *“will see the medical practitioners provide the relevant healthcare to help with restoration of self, the legal team that will provide a framework to ensure mentally ill inmates receive a fair trial, as well as the correctional services giving them support to enhance rehabilitation and redemption.”*

In closing she said, *“Helping inmates regain health and improve coping skills, mental health treatment promotes safety and order within the correctional institutions and enhances community safety when inmates are ultimately released.”*

The workshop was in keeping with the MNS Five Pillar Crime Reduction Strategy that speaks to the Rehabilitation and Redemption of those incarcerated.