

THE BARBADOS CHILDHOOD OBESITY PREVENTION COALITION

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CIVIL SOCIETY TO PROVIDE HEALTHY HAMPERS FOR PERSONS LIVING WITH NCDs

The Barbados Childhood Obesity Prevention Coalition is coming to the aid of the most vulnerable in the society as they seek to cope with the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Coalition, which comprises a wide cross section of civil society organizations (CSO) and individual members, is embarking on a Healthy Hamper Initiative (HHI) focussing on those who are living with non-communicable diseases (NCDs). The Initiative will allow these persons to access more nutritious foods which are essential to help them better manage their condition and boost their immunity at this time.

Coalition members will be donating fruits and vegetables to about 300 vulnerable families across Barbados during the month of May, in the first instance. This initiative will be in partnership with the Government's Household Mitigation Unit which has identified the persons living with NCDs within their programme.

Spokesperson for this Initiative and Coalition member, Dr Kia Lewis, explained that persons with NCDs are at particular risk of succumbing to the COVID-19 virus: "These have been challenging times for all of us, but we must still highlight the importance of maintaining good health. If we do not, the fallout after will be devastating, especially for those living with diabetes and hypertension."

Dr Lewis also added, "This pandemic has brought to the forefront just how vulnerable our people are because of the high prevalence of non-communicable diseases in our population. We want to partner with Barbadians to both encourage and empower them to practise good nutrition while we offer tangible support to those living with NCDs."

Statistics show that of a local population of 270,000, 1 in 5 persons has diabetes and some 49,000 people or 18% are currently being treated for hypertension. Added to that, 1,000 new cases of ischemic heart disease (IHD) and stroke result in hospitalization each year.

In light of this sobering reality, the Coalition is encouraging other organizations who are preparing hampers for vulnerable families, to include more fruits, vegetables and other healthier options in their care packages.

This Initiative has been welcomed by the Mitigation Unit. According to Head of the Unit, the Special Advisor to the Prime Minister on Poverty Alleviation and the Sustainable Goals, Corey Layne, "Recognizing that the number of persons with non-communicable diseases in our vulnerable family database is notably high, we are extremely pleased and excited to partner with the Barbados Childhood Obesity Prevention Coalition to provide these hampers for these families at this time.

For more information on this Initiative, please call 268 – 7364.

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