

# COUNTRY REPORT

JAMAICA

*TRAINING COURSE IN  
INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES  
(JFY 1999)*

*COUNTRY REPORT*

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## ***INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES (JFY 1999)***

***NAME OF ORGANIZATION: MICO COLLEGE  
CENTRE FOR  
CHILD ASSESSMENT & RESEARCH  
IN EDUCATION (C.A.R.E)***

### ***Outline of the Function of the Organisation***

The MICO CARE Centre is strategically located as the only assessment centre of its type which diagnoses and remediates the special needs of children with multi handicapping conditions in the English speaking Caribbean. It is a separate, but related unit within the Mico Teachers' College and is subject to the College board but has its own budget.

#### ***The main functions of the Centre are as follows:***

- To provide in-depth assessment of children exhibiting a range of handicapping intellectual, physical, and behavioral conditions. This assessment approach utilizes the services of a multidisciplinary team consisting of psychologists, special educators, social workers, nurse, speech therapist, physical therapist and occupational therapist.
- As an intervention approach, the Centre provides ten week programs of remedial, diagnostic and prescriptive teaching for select numbers of the children assessed. This allows for experimentation with new instructional strategies, and for the development of remedial programs for use with these children.
- The Centre also provides practical and clinical training for students in the Teacher Training Program in Special Education at the Teachers' College as well as serving as a training site for emerging clinicians.

- In addition, the Centre also disseminates information to, and seeks to educate the public on, all aspects of Special Education. This is done in order to foster the right attitude to the 'Special Child' in the society. This program of public education is conducted through workshops, seminars, radio and television, and the distribution of literature.
- The CARE Centre also initiates and conducts research in various areas of Special Education in Jamaica. Of note, is the development of a local reading instrument which is one of the chief tools used in the academic assessment offered at the Centre.

### *Current Situation and Trends in Rehabilitation Services*

#### ***Brief Background to Service:***

The year 1998 marks the 43<sup>rd</sup> year that the Jamaica Association for Persons with Mental Retardation (JAPMR) has been in existence. The Association, along with one of Jamaica's oldest and largest special education institutions, the School of Hope for the Mentally Retarded, was founded in 1956 by Randolph Lopez, a parent of a child with Down Syndrome.

The formation of the Association, and the School of Hope which provides educational services to mentally retarded individuals aged 6 –20 across the island, was typical of the evolution of services for persons with disabilities in Jamaica. Historically, the care and education of persons with disabilities, especially impaired vision and hearing was either carried out by church organisations or voluntary organisations founded by concerned citizens. After being in existence for a period of time these organisations received the support of the State with regard to the salaries of teachers.

By 1973, the Jamaican Ministry of Education began to see its role as that of providing, not only financial support, but also professional support, and to that end Special Education was established in Jamaica. At this time Special Education was linked to the Early Childhood Education unit in the Ministry of Education. During the decade of the seventies the Jamaican government invited the assistance of the government of the Netherlands in developing a strategy for Special Education in the island. During this period plans were laid for, among other things, the establishment of a central diagnostic center which later evolved into the MICO CARE Center in 1981.

In 1989 the Special Education Unit was established in the Ministry of Education. This Unit has 6 officers, and offers curriculum, supervision and monitoring services for the 52 Special Education schools and units island wide. Presently there is at least one special education facility in each parish.

## Current Trends

### ***Education:***

The educational models currently in use in special education facilities are segregated self-contained units for children with all levels of intellectual disabilities, and resource rooms in regular classrooms for students with mild intellectual disabilities. The education of children and adolescents with intellectual disabilities is provided through the School of Hope for Mental Retardation and its 28 units island wide. The current student population is 1,300 with some 107 teachers and 72 teachers aides.

Functional Academics is the primary focus from ages 6 – 12 in this institution. Vocational training is introduced at age 12 and then the emphasis is on skills training, developing appropriate social skills and work ethic. However, the School is encouraged to use the National Curriculum in Education and to make modifications as necessary. This year, 1999, was the first year that all Special Schools in Jamaica were included in all local examinations offered at every level. For the first time the School of Hope had 4 students who sat the National Grade Six Achievement Test.

The Special Education Unit has been lobbying for all students with mild intellectual disabilities to be included in the regular classroom with the necessary support in the form of assistance from a special educator.

### ***Welfare/Social:***

The welfare and social development of students with intellectual disabilities is monitored by the guidance department of the School of Hope. The counselors based at the parent branch of the School of Hope are responsible for planning and implementing the family life programs, disciplinary and welfare policies of the School. They also maintain contact with the parents.

The School also helps to coordinate Parent Training Seminars and workshops on current issues which affect children in the Jamaican society. These are presented with a direct slant towards the needs of the child with intellectual disabilities.

The School of Hope, along with its parent group, the Jamaica Association for Persons with Mental Retardation, host a number of parent support groups. One such group, Parents and Professionals in Partnership, was started in May 1994. Its aims are to increase parent to parent communication and to provide parents and professionals with greater opportunity to exchange ideas. A new support group for parents of children with Autism was started in October 1998. The parent support for this group has been encouraging.

### ***Medical:***

The medical needs of children and adults with intellectual disabilities are handled through the regular services provided in the hospitals and clinics across the island.

### ***Financial:***

Persons with disabilities presently receive concessionary fare benefits on public transportation. The National Housing Trust reserves 5% of all its scheme houses for persons with disabilities.

***Other:***

The **Special Olympics Association** is keenly involved in the social lives of persons with disabilities. Jamaican athletes have done extremely well at the World Special Olympics and it helps to garner public awareness and support for persons with intellectual disabilities.

***Philosophy on Rehabilitation Services for People with Intellectual Disabilities***

I believe that persons with Intellectual Disabilities should be afforded the full opportunity for education and training to help them enjoy a full and decent life in dignity and achieve the greatest degree of self-reliance and socialization possible.

***Problems to Solve When Making the Philosophy Actual***

***Need For:***

- Greater teacher awareness, thus earlier detection of disabling conditions.
- The establishment of more facilities within schools to accommodate the number of children with intellectual disabilities.
- Establishment of vocational centres to offer skills training.
- Establishment of more sheltered workshop programs to provide greater job opportunities.
- Greater public awareness and support for the cause of persons with intellectual disabilities.
- Greater avenues for parent involvement.
- Development of group homes/services with emphasis on the future adulthood and daily living skills of persons with intellectual disabilities.
- Government policy needs to be more adequately advised re the needs of persons with intellectual disabilities. The merging of the many splinter groups which provide services for persons with intellectual disabilities into a central unit. This will facilitate the development of a stronger voice for advocacy and funding.

### Community-Based Rehabilitation Programs

There are a number of organisations which have been central in providing community-based rehabilitation programs. In the Jamaican setting, the majority of these are Non Government Organisations (NGOs). Among these are the following:

#### The Randolph Lopez Adult Center

At this Center, the Jamaica Association for Persons with Mental Retardation provides a vocational based training program in the form of a sheltered workshop. While providing employment for some I D adults who have been unable to find jobs, it is in need of funding and further development. At present, only 15 persons can be accommodated at that location. They provide training in basketwork and woodwork.

#### 3D Projects (Dedicated to the Development of the Disabled)

This is Jamaica's first community home-based rehabilitation program. It works with a network of rural community groups comprising of parents of children with disabilities and persons with disabilities. It provides rehabilitation services for persons with disabilities requiring home training programs, counselling, educational placement, job placement or employment development. It also provides advocacy for persons with disabilities and helps to develop parent associations. It provides a home-visiting program which serves some 800 families. It holds clinics weekly and have developed a Stroke Rehabilitation program. Adolescent and Adult programs exist to develop advocacy skills and job habilitation. Individuals who have benefited from these programs are now working in several enterprises in the parish of St. Catherine where the 3D Projects are based. The 3D projects have recently started an inclusive preschool unit in the town of Mandeville.

39 The strength of the 3D Projects lies in their emphasis on training. This training is continuous and geared towards parents, adolescents, adults and 3D staff. Their training programs are documented in a series of 12 videos and accompanying manual packages.

#### The Clarendon Group for the Disabled

This agency is a private voluntary organisation based in the town of May Pen in the parish of Clarendon. It is committed to the rehabilitation of all persons with disabilities through the provision of training opportunities.

To this end the agency provides community-based rehabilitation programs which monitor the progress of its clients and provides an opportunity for parent training and parent advocacy.

Additional services offered by the Group include the early identification of disabilities, psycho-educational assessment and training for teachers, day care workers and medical personnel.

### Private Voluntary Organisations Ltd. (PVO)

The PVO was established in 1982. The organisation takes services to all categories of disabled children in the homes and communities in rural Jamaica. PVO provides a multidisciplinary team for the screening of individuals in health centers. Their main focus is the provision of early stimulation for children diagnosed with a disabling condition. To this end the training of parents and health teams in the communities is central. They have established an integrated preschool in Lucea in the parish of Hanover. Many of PVO's field staff are international volunteers.

### Abilities Foundation

This organisation was established in 1991 and is a regional voluntary organisation. Its goals are to provide vocational training for young adults with disabilities and to assist entry into the work world. The Foundation provides training in Computer Studies, Garment Construction and Woodwork. The curriculum is designed with a heavy emphasis on practical application. The organisation is a joint venture between the local, non-governmental organisations serving in the field of disability and the Government of Jamaica.

### National Parent Advocacy Group

This group is a more recent development on the disability landscape. It is an island-wide group and covers all disabilities. Their aim has been to promote parent training and to empower parents to be advocates for their children with disabilities. They have held national conferences to serve this end since their establishment.

### Relevant Laws and Regulations

In the area of public policy and programming, a number of changes have taken place in recent years. Since September 1998, Special Education training has become a compulsory part of the curricula of Teachers' Colleges.

The Special Education Unit has been working with teachers who, they hope will help to form a core of trainers to assist in developing individual educational programs for students with disabilities in schools.

Provisions have been made for students with disabilities, who are sitting examinations to be given extra time if needed. All local examinations are now available to students with disabilities.

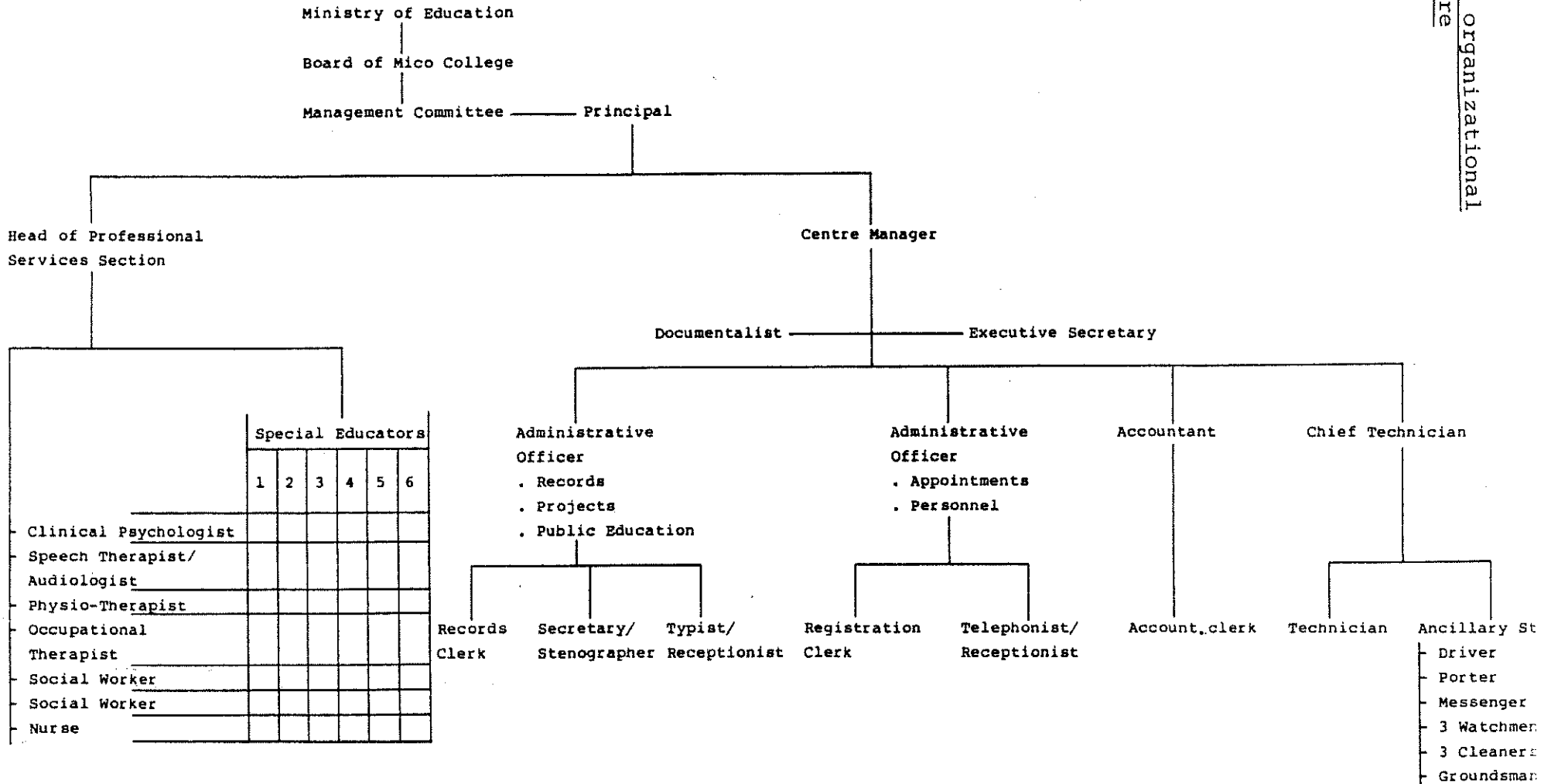
As mentioned previously, concessions in the areas of transportation and housing have also been introduced for persons with disabilities.



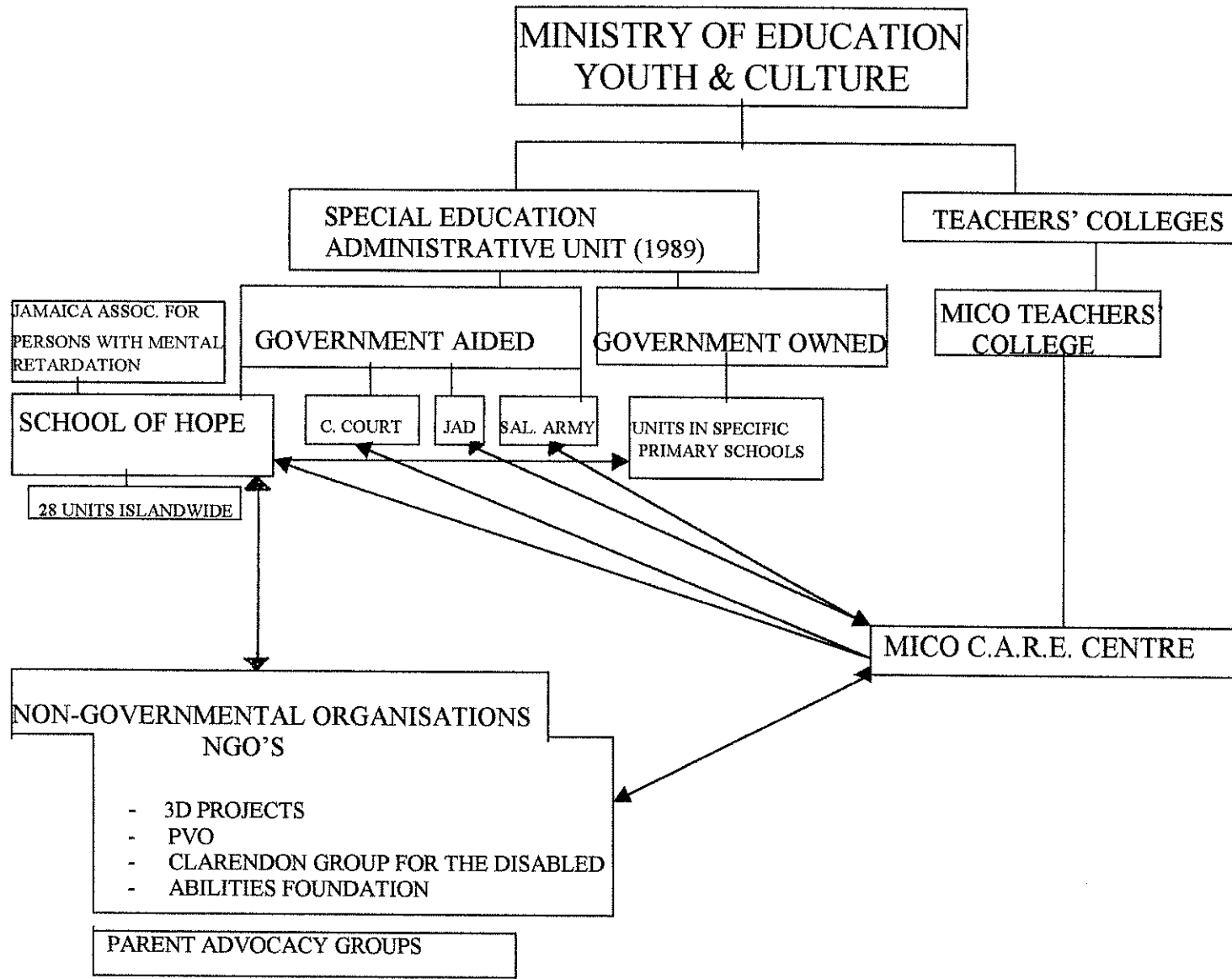
However, what is lacking in Jamaica is legislation to give greater legitimacy to the efforts undertaken and the resulting achievements. Although specific provisions pertaining to the disabled have not been entrenched in law, there is ongoing discussion between the government and various organisations. Of note is the preparation of a draft National Policy on Disability, which looks at areas of Health, Education, Employment, Communication, Housing, Political and Civil Rights, Family Life, Culture, Recreation and Sports as they pertain to persons with disabilities.

In Jamaica, the rights of all children, including those with disabilities, are protected under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

e) Overall organizational structure



Mico C.A.R.E Center's organisational structure.



Service Delivery Model