



# SOUTHERN REGIONAL HEALTH AUTHORITY

3 BRUMALIA ROAD, MANDEVILLE, MANCHESTER, JAMAICA WI

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## PRESS RELEASE

**March 8, 2017**  
**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

### **Re-establish Marriages and Nuclear Families to Transform Communities...Regional Technical Director**

Regional Technical Director of the Southern Regional Health Authority (SRHA), Dr. Michael Coombs is calling for the re-establishment of marriages and nuclear families, which he said must be done as a matter of urgency, for sustained transformation of communities in Jamaica and the Caribbean.

Dr. Coombs expressed the view in his keynote address to the 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Fathers and Families Conference on February 28 in California, USA, which was organized by the Fathers and Families Coalition of America.

Dr. Coombs, who is also the Founder and Chair of the National Association for the Family (NAF) shared compelling evidence to support the call to strengthen weakened family structures noting that the evidence included the link suggested by research, between fractured, unstable families and the high levels of crime and violence, including violence against women and children, being experienced in Jamaica.

"With a homicide rate of 50 per 100,000 population, a 40 percent decline in marriages between 2005 to 2015, along with a 70 percent increase in divorce rates between 2005 to 2010, there is a undoubted link to the fact that almost nine out of ten births in Jamaica are to unmarried mothers, one of the highest out-of-wedlock birth rates in the world" Dr. Coombs said.

Dr. Coombs added that that based on this evidence, without a sustained, comprehensive National Programme, supported by requisite legislation and policies related to every aspect of the natural family, but in particular to re-establishing parental marriage and addressing the varying degrees of fatherlessness, the odds will be sharply stacked against success in the achievement of peace, health and prosperity in the communities and the society at large.

(more)

**Chairman: Wayne Chen; Vice Chairman:** Michael Stern **Board Members:** Marcus Greenwood, Krishan James, Stafford Houghton, Lorraine Green Mason, Lennox Powell, Dr Lloyd Reynolds, Winston Maragh, Dr St Aubyn Bartlett, Dr Lundie Richards, **Directors: Regional Director and Secretary:** Michael Bent; **Regional Technical Director:** Dr Michael Coombs; **CEO Mandeville Regional Hospital:** Alwyn Miller; **SMO, Mandeville Regional Hospital:** Dr Everton McIntosh



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"While policing and social interventions are undoubtedly important in addressing community violence, poverty and pressing public health challenges in the short term; from compelling research-generated evidence, re-establishing parental marriage and the nuclear family, beginning with the provision of needed support for fathers and educating fathers-to-be, is arguably the most urgent need if there is to be sustained transformation of communities and the nation" Dr. Coombs said.

He told the audience that if the intergenerational cycles of crime and violence, including violence against women and children, teen pregnancies, sexual abuse, gang membership and in particular the plight of males, are to be broken, interventions targeting young men are most urgently needed.

Dr. Coombs informed the conference that in response, the Ministry of Health and the SRHA in partnership with the NAF, the Ministry of Education and Youth, the church and other partners, have implemented the initiative 'Man Up Jamaica – A call to Healthy, Responsible Manhood', targeting young males 12-25 years, and which is being piloted in south-central Jamaica.

He explained that the intervention is a part of the wider initiative, 'Good Health Begins at Home', also initiated by the SRHA, and aims to educate and empower young men about the importance of their role as husbands and fathers, commitment to family, responsibility in sexual conduct, self development and the need to treat females with respect and love.

(more)

Picture 1



Dr. Coombs addresses the 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Fathers and Families Conference in the USA.

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Picture 2



Dr. Coombs engages a group of youths at a recent 'Man-Up' Retreat for males in Manchester.

-30-

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