

Combining Centre-based with Community-based Practice; the Experience of a Paediatric Occupational Therapist in Establishing an Inclusive Intervention Programme for Young Children and Contributing to the Development of an Inclusive Community in Jamaica

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Introduction: This paper provides insight into the pathway used by a Paediatric Occupational Therapist who 30 years ago identified a disenfranchised group of children with disabilities who were out of the mainstream education and health systems. She initiated an inclusive early childhood programme offering early intervention and educational services that became a benchmark for inclusion at the Early Childhood Level. Successive Jamaican Governments have signed to International Treaties that support Rights of Persons with Disabilities but the acceptance of inclusion has been slow.

Objectives:

To provide a programme of intervention for children with disabilities despite societal prejudices;

To contribute to building an inclusive community that is accessible and equitable for all.

Method:

1. Addressing sociocultural prejudice towards children with disabilities by starting the first inclusive early childhood programme
2. Lobbying and educating key stakeholders in Health, Education and Social Services.
3. Informing the development of policy by providing evidenced-based information through research and special projects.

Results: The McCam Model evolved into a three-tiered approach which includes Education, Clinical Services and Community Outreach.

Research findings have contributed to national policy development, notably the Prevalence Study on ADHD 2007 used by Ministry of Health

Projects include initiatives such as School-wide Positive Behaviour Intervention Supports, (McCam, Ministry of Education, 2016)

Conclusion: The influence on the wider community to be aware of children with disabilities is ongoing with sensitisation sessions for police officers, taxi drivers, educational partners. After 30 years there has been positive change in sociocultural practices but attitudes are embedded in culture.