



THE AGENCY FOR PUBLIC INFORMATION

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24/3/2026

REACH Project Launched to Advance Adolescent Health in the Eastern Caribbean

The **Reproductive Education and Adolescent Community Health (REACH) Project** was launched at Beachcombers Hotel in Villa, bringing together regional and local stakeholders committed to improving adolescent health outcomes in St. Vincent and the Grenadines and across the Eastern Caribbean.

Director of the REACH Project at Alinea International, Heather MacIntosh, welcomed attendees and highlighted the importance of collaborative action in supporting adolescent health and well-being. She noted that while adolescent fertility rates in St. Vincent and the Grenadines have declined in recent years, many young people still face barriers to accessing essential services. She emphasized that the REACH Project aims to ensure that no adolescent is left behind, particularly those in vulnerable communities, by improving access to care and support systems.

Project Manager of the REACH Project, Cynthia Fontenelle, provided an overview of the four-year initiative, funded by Global Affairs Canada and implemented by Alinea International in partnership with the Caribbean Technical Assistance and Education Centre for Health (CTECH) and the OECS Commission.

Fontenelle revealed key findings from a baseline assessment, noting that stigma, fear of judgment, and limited communication between parents and youth continue to hinder access to sexual and reproductive health services. She added that the project will focus on strengthening services, increasing community awareness, and improving policy coordination across participating countries.

Executive Director of the Caribbean Technical Assistance and Education Centre for Health (CTECH), Dr. Natalie Irving-Mattocks, described the launch as a significant step toward transforming health systems to better serve young people. She stressed

that adolescents must not only benefit from services but also play an active role in shaping policies and programmes that affect their lives. Dr. Irving-Mattocks noted that young people are ready and willing to engage, and it is the responsibility of stakeholders to ensure that systems are inclusive, responsive, and supportive of their needs.

Minister of Health, Wellness, Environmental Health and Energy, Hon. Daniel Cummings, underscored the national importance of the initiative, pointing to broader social challenges such as declining population growth, shifting family structures, and the need for stronger parental and community support.

He emphasized the critical role of male involvement in family life, stating, “Too many do not begin to understand the significant role of a father, not just in the family, but in our society.” He called for a more holistic approach to addressing adolescent health, noting that meaningful change will require addressing underlying social issues alongside healthcare interventions.

The REACH Project will be implemented in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Dominica, Grenada, and Saint Lucia, with the goal of improving adolescent sexual and reproductive health through stronger systems, increased access to services, and greater community engagement.

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