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PRESS RELEASE

March 20, 2017
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Cohabitation Increases Children's Risk of Harmful Outcomes Fueling Social and Public Health Challenges...Health Administrator

Regional Technical Director of the Southern Regional Health Authority, Dr. Michael Coombs, has informed that a 2017 World Family Map Report recently released from the Institute for Family Studies, USA and the Social Trends Institute, USA is advising parents who want their children to enjoy the benefits of a stable childhood, to marry and not cohabit. This, he says follows the analysis of data from over 60 countries across the world.

This latest study, like others before, indicating the relative instability of cohabiting parents when compared to those who are married, was highlighted by Dr. Coombs, in his keynote address to the 18th Annual Families and Fathers Conference hosted by the Fathers and Family Coalition of America in California, USA from February 27 to March 3, 2017.

The Regional Director noted that the report indicated that children of cohabiting parents are 98 percent more likely to see their parents separate by age 12 compared to children of married parents.

"The study is in keeping with previous studies, some of which have indicated a greater likelihood of parental separation for cohabiting as opposed to married parents, up to 500 percent more likely. This significantly increased likelihood of parental separation in cohabitation or common-law unions creates an instability that is very traumatic for children, particularly during the early years of life. These children are more likely to be delinquents, abuse drugs, have behavioral disorders, be depressed and involved in high risk behaviors among other things"" Dr. Coombs explained.

Dr. Coombs, who is also the Founder and Chair of the National Association for the Family, further explained that cohabiting parents are significantly more likely to experience intimate partner (domestic) violence either as a perpetrator or victim. This, he said, when witnessed by a child, may result in scars which may lead to dysfunctional and harmful relationships in their adult years.

(more)

Chairman: Wayne Chen; **Vice Chairman**; Michael Stern **Board Members**: Marcus Greenwood, Krishan James, Stafford Haughton, 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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Dr. Coombs pointed out that Jamaica's high rate of out-of-wedlock births, almost 9 out of 10, along with a sharp decline in marriages suggest much instability in homes which are adversely affecting many children.

He underscored the urgent need to re-establish traditional marriage and the nuclear family noting that it should not be viewed as outdated institutions, but as the keys to optimum child health and development, societal success, and national development for Jamaica and other Caribbean States.

He stated that for this to be accomplished, legislative and policy frameworks need to provide incentives to get married, especially among men. He also suggested that greater focus should be placed on educating youths through Health and Family Life Education and other programmes about the clear benefits of parental marriage to the health, wellness and success of children.

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