



## Cayman Islands Human Rights Commission

*promoting, protecting and preserving human rights*

### **Statement on the Report on the Adolescent Health and Sexuality (2013) Survey**

The recently released Report on the Adolescent Health and Sexuality (2013) Survey provided the community with a glimpse into the health behaviour and experiences of 955 young persons in the Cayman Islands, 900 of whom were between the ages of 15-19. The Ministry of Health (“the Ministry”), in its guidance notes identifies the purposes of the study as being “to strengthen existing services for young people and to gain data to inform interventions.”

The behaviour examined is, evidentially, “directly associated with health outcomes such as HIV, other sexually transmitted infections, adolescent pregnancy, infectious diseases and chronic non-communicable diseases.” These general areas were broken down into more specific areas:

- “for sexually transmitted infections and adolescent pregnancy these include age at first sex, number of partners, condom use and sexual violence;
- for infectious diseases they include dental hygiene and hand washing as well as those mentioned for sexually transmitted infection, and other aspects of behavior that affect immunity; and
- for chronic non-communicable diseases they include smoking, lack of exercise, under-consumption of fruit and vegetables and over-consumption of high calorie, high fat food”.

Whilst concerned with a number of local statistics presented in the Report, the Human Rights Commission (“the Commission”) is extremely concerned with the high levels of mental health issues and incidences of sexual abuse amongst the adolescents who participated in the survey.

The Cayman Islands Government, and our community as a whole, must work towards ensuring that our young people have every opportunity to succeed in society and this includes the emotional support required to handle feelings of loneliness, anxiety, depression and suicidal thoughts. Without such support the incidences of young persons turning to drugs, alcohol and violence will continue to increase.

The Commission is pleased to see the Ministry has implemented several initiatives in order to combat these issues and looks forward to seeing these initiatives, and others, develop.