What is IMPACT Justice?

IMPACT Justice is a Project funded by the Canadian Government. It is being implemented by the University of the West Indies Cave Hill Campus in 13 CARICOM Member States: Antigua & Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Montserrat, St. Kitts & Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent & the Grenadines, Suriname and Trinidad & Tobago.

The outcome of the project is enhanced access to justice benefiting men, women, youth and businesses. The components are: legislative drafting, establishment and expansion of legal databases, alternative dispute resolution (ADR), legal professional education and standards, and public legal education.
What are the types of child abuse?

Physical abuse
Physical abuse includes beating, beating with objects, biting, burning, and tying up. In the Caribbean punishment is too often seen as a normal part of childhood, and actions that would be crimes if committed by adults against each other may be seen as acceptable when committed against children. However, one indicator of abuse is that it is unpredictable and the ‘punishment’ is connected more to the abuser's state of mind than to the actual offence. Another indicator is that it is extreme and disproportionate.

According to an Australian support group, characteristics of physical child abusers include emotional impairment, substance abuse, lack of social support, presence of domestic violence and a history of childhood abuse. Adults physically abused in childhood are at increased risk of either aggressive and violent behaviour, or shy and avoidant behaviour leading to rejection or re-victimisation. Men with a history of physical abuse in childhood seem to be more prone to violent behaviour than those who were not abused, and physically abused men are over-represented amongst violent and sexual offenders.

Emotional Abuse
This is one of the most common forms of abuse. It can involve parents who are overly aggressive to their children (without being violent) or who use emotional blackmail. It can include excessive criticism and humiliation. Emotional abuse can result in learned helplessness, and overly passive behaviour. Adults with emotionally abusive parents are at a disadvantage as they try to form personal, professional and romantic relationships, since they may have trouble understanding other people's social cues, or may wrongly apply the rules that governed their abusive relationship with their parents to everyday social situations.

Neglect
Neglect occurs when a parent or guardian fails to adequately provide for the child's needs. This does not simply include the child's physical needs such as food, shelter and clothing, but also the child's emotional needs such as care, love or support. While there is a stereotype that neglect is linked to socioeconomic status, it is important to remember that it can happen in any household, and that there are many poor people who look after their children properly.

Sexual Abuse
Sexual abuse describes any incident in which an adult engages a minor in a sexual act, or exposes the minor to inappropriate sexual behaviour or material. It may involve violence, but more often involves manipulation, in which the child is coerced into believing that the activity is an expression of love, or that someone else will be harmed if the child fails to comply. Whilst all children are vulnerable, girls are more likely to be sexually abused than boys, and children with disabilities are up to seven times more likely to be abused than their peers.

Warning Signs
Warning signs of emotional abuse include extremes of behaviour (extremely passive, demanding, etc), anxiety and fear, and inappropriately adult or infantile behaviour.

Warning signs of physical abuse include frequent or unexplained injuries, and the child being afraid of touch.

Warning signs of neglect in children include consistently bad hygiene, the child being frequently left alone or allowed to play in unsafe situations and the child being frequently late or missing from school.

Warning signs of sexual abuse in children include trouble walking or sitting, displaying knowledge or interest in sexual acts inappropriate to his or her age, displaying seductive behaviour, running away from home, and withdrawn or suicidal behaviour.