



RUDOLPH BROWN/CHIEF PHOTOGRAPHER

Bertrand Bainvel (left), UNICEF country representative, chats with Dr. Maureen Samms-Vaughan (centre), executive chairman of the Early Childhood Commission (ECC), and Adelle Brown, chief education officer in the Ministry of Education and Youth, during the launch of the Regional Conference on Screening, Referral and Early Intervention, hosted by the ECC in association with the National Health Fund and UNICEF at the Alhambra Inn Hotel, Kingston, yesterday.

Early intervention system for children

CHILDREN WITH behavioural and developmental disorder will soon benefit from early monitoring as the Early Childhood Commission (ECC) will be implementing a screening, referral and early intervention system.

A regional conference, to be held June 20 to June 22, will be aimed at sharing information and developing a National Plan of action on how screening, referral and early intervention can be implemented.

Currently the first screening for children begins at grade one, when the child is six years old. But, Dr. Maureen Samms-Vaughan, commission chairman, said earlier intervention could make a difference.

According to the commission, studies outlining the status of screening, referral and early intervention services for young children in the Caribbean have found that although most developmental and behavioural disorders first present within the first two to three years of life, they often go undetected for years.

REGIONAL SCREENING

In light of these findings, representatives from across the region will, through the conference, develop an appropriate regional screening and referral system to detect developmental and behavioural disorders in young children within the birth to age eight cohort.

Speaking yesterday at the launch of the conference, Adelle Brown, chief education officer in the Ministry of Education and Youth, endorsed the initiative. According to Mrs. Brown, the initiative is timely because there is no structured screening instrument to detect disorders in early childhood.