

NHF Increases Drug Subsidy for Children - Jamaica Information Service

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Photo: Mark Bell

Chairman of the National Health Fund (NHF), Christopher Zacca, provides details about the increase in subsidy on drugs for children during a JIS Think Tank on August 31.

Story Highlights

- The National Health Fund (NHF) will be increasing its subsidy on drugs, respiratory devices and diabetic supplies for children from zero to 18 years by 100 per cent effective September 1.
- The entity will be spending approximately \$70 million per year to facilitate the increase.
- NHF CEO, Everton Anderson said parents and caregivers, who use NHF cards to purchase prescription drugs for children, will now pay less.

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Speaking at a JIS Think Tank on Wednesday (August 31), NHF Chairman, Christopher Zacca, said the cost of doubling the subsidy for children “will cover the actual impact of the increase as well as the uptake by parents registering their children, so it is a significant cost but we think an efficient use of public funds.”

NHF CEO, Everton Anderson said parents and caregivers, who use NHF cards to purchase prescription drugs for children, will now pay less.

He said that the largest group of beneficiaries will be children suffering from asthma, which represents approximately 9,000 or 76 per cent of the almost 11,000 minors on the NHF Card programme.

“In the case of asthmatics, the subsidy will increase from approximately 46% to an average of 92% of the cost of the prescribed asthma drugs,” he noted.

The new subsidy for devices used in asthma treatment is \$742.06 for masks and \$1, 209.32 for spacers for a combined sum of \$1, 951.38.

The second largest group of beneficiaries is children afflicted with epilepsy at 1,018, followed by diabetes at 317, and sickle cell sufferers at 280.

According to the CEO, the increase forms part of a broader review mandated by the board to look at access for beneficiaries.

In 2015, the NHF approved over four million claims at a cost of \$3.9 billion.

The NHF covers prescription drugs for 16 chronic illnesses including arthritis, glaucoma, major depression, psychosis, rheumatic heart disease and sickle cell disease.