



About the Jamaica Dyslexia Association

The Jamaica Dyslexia Association (JDA) is the first and only charitable dyslexia organization in Jamaica of its kind. It is the brainchild of Ms. Heather Christian, a Jamaican-born Canadian whose struggles with dyslexia lead her through frustration, trepidation and distress to help others. In 2010, she developed the Jamaica Dyslexia Association Facebook Page to raise dyslexia awareness. In 2015, the JDA was incorporated as a non-profit organization under the Laws of Jamaica with company number (90779) and granted charitable status registered (CA100 -1212C) in 2018.

The JDA provides helpful information and appropriate services that best meet the needs of those who have dyslexia without compromising quality and professionalism. The Association developed through extensive consultation with key stakeholders that involved a range of organizations, individuals and families who have or experienced dyslexia.

The Jamaica Dyslexia Association (JDA), as a charitable organization, is seeking to address the needs of children and adults with dyslexia and bring awareness, understanding, resources, and services to all people with dyslexia.

Established in 2016, the JDA is the first and only charitable organization in Jamaica that focuses 100% on dyslexia. The inspiration behind the JDA is Ms. Heather Christian, a Jamaican-born Canadian whose struggles with dyslexia lead her through frustration, trepidation and distress. Ms. Christian decided to make it her personal goal to unlock Dyslexia in Jamaica.

Our Vision Statement:

Our vision is to be an effective advocate that influences public policy and laws by enlightening government officials, educational institutions, employers and the public on the needs of those who have dyslexia."

Our Mission Statement:

Our mission is to be the leading provider of services to people who have dyslexia to reach their highest personal, educational and financial growth to benefit themselves and society.

Our Core Values:

The JDA commitment to being non-judgemental, supportive, confidential, and respectful is the fundamental forces behind our five (5) Core Values that the JDA guiding principles:

1. **Empowerment** – We work collaboratively to build effective solutions to make positive changes happen for people with dyslexia.
2. **Excellence** – We challenge ourselves to deliver outstanding service at the highest level to improve the lives of people who have dyslexia.



Charity # CA100 -1212C

3. **Inclusiveness** – We work with our partners and supporters to help provide services to people with dyslexia, regardless of gender, age, race, colour, nationality, belief or political affiliation.
4. **Integrity** – We are fair and transparent in all that we do, and we will carry out all our work with tremendous responsibility and accountability.
5. **Opportunity** – As part of our bylaws' objectives, we believe that every person who has dyslexia deserves a fair chance to achieve their fullest potential

Our Objectives

The JDA believes that all individuals with dyslexia deserve the right to information, understand their learning differences, access to resources and services.

The objectives by which this Company established are:

- To promote and develop public awareness of Dyslexia throughout Jamaica and the Caribbean Region.
- To create, facilitate and provide best practices for evaluating and educating dyslexic persons in Jamaica and the Caribbean Region.
- To establish educational facilities, lend support and advice on dyslexia matters to further develop and implement new and improved workable practices and policies derived from research findings.
- To help persons of all ages, genders, socio-economic, cultural and linguistic groups who have dyslexia to reach their full potential.
- To promote and foster collaborations with corporate and government entities to establish specific learning centres within the schools' curricula for dyslexic students in Jamaica and the Caribbean Region.

The Company shall have the following powers which shall be exercised solely in the furtherance of its objects, namely to:

- Evaluate through testing, screening and diagnosing persons experiencing dyslexia in communities, places of employment and areas of learning, including but not limited to: early childhood education centers, schools, primary schools, secondary schools, tertiary institutions and vocational training institutions.
- Establish centres to facilitate diagnosis of the types of dyslexia, remediation and research on dyslexia and dyslexics in communities throughout Jamaica and the Caribbean Region.
- Develop and enact best practices to evaluate and educate people with dyslexia to facilitate the early detection and greater sensitization of dyslexics' learning needs.
- Foster a cadre of professionals and enthusiasts through forums, consultations and literature to support and sponsor persons affected with dyslexia in their communities.
- Provide guidelines on learning and attention issues in educating and assisting teachers of people with dyslexia in determining standards by which to educate.
- Facilitate and provide testing for phonological, surface, rapid naming, double deficit, visual and all types of dyslexia through determined evaluation policies.



Charity # CA100 -1212C

- To facilitate discussions through forums with government agencies and bodies, local, regional and international bodies, by lending support and advice on matters pertinent to a national and regional framework for dyslexia.
- Encourage the government, workplaces, and learning institutions to promote a dyslexia-friendly atmosphere by developing national policies on dyslexia.
- To encourage and support the implementation of a legal framework by the government to establish policies on dyslexia.
- To promote early detection of dyslexia children and lend support to families and schools.
- Encourage teachers to get additional training on how to identify students who may have dyslexia.
- Encourage schools to set up specific learning centres within schools' curricula for dyslexic students.
- Collect and disseminate information on: the different types of dyslexia; the challenges experienced; the practices that work best for remedial actions; and some success stories.
- Collect and disseminate information on dyslexia to adjust to research findings of modern demands and experiences and report on the practices that work best.
- Educate the public through publications, workshops, lectures, seminars, conferences, radio, press, webinars, social media, panel discussions to promote awareness.
- Promote and engage in educators, specialists, and facilitators' training through seminars, workshops, site visits, symposium news-letters, books, journals, publications, databases, and other appropriate means to increase public awareness.
- Support and implement the education and training of specialists in screening, treating, diagnosing.
- Refer people with dyslexia to an educational psychologist.
- Provide information to schools, teachers, government and workplaces on remedial education practices used internationally.
- Use educational tools through webinar series, infographics, training teachers, conferences, workshops, school networking, books and other literature to assist students and adults with dyslexia.
- Develop and foster self-esteem and self-confidence in people with dyslexia while shifting their focus from inabilities to abilities.
- Provide and encourage people with dyslexia to use assistive technology for learning.
- Promote and foster Community Outreach programmes in providing welfare and support services for people with dyslexia in schools, colleges, universities and the workplace.
- Seek out corporate and government sponsorship to fund and support the setting up learning centres within communities across the Island for people with dyslexia.
- Lend support and advice on dyslexia matter to dyslexic youth entrepreneurs and act as facilitators in assisting them in accessing financial assistance through grants or start-up loans.
- Evaluate engaging practices and implement new cutting-edge methods and policies derived from research for people with dyslexia to manage their feelings and socialize with other dyslexics and persons in society.



Charity # CA100 -1212C

- Assist places of employment as to the methods and approaches to managing adults with dyslexia.
- Network locally, regionally and internationally to conduct high-quality research and implement educational development initiatives, sharing skills and culture to help dyslexic people to live and work in the Jamaican society.
- Redefine the current practices and policies on dyslexia to foster the continuous improvement of screening, evaluating and educating people with dyslexia.
- Promote and encourage appreciation of improved educational content access to knowledge by heightening awareness and educational activities throughout facilities like community centres, learning institutions, and workplaces.
- Disseminate information collected and research findings derived through networking and interaction with the international and local collective database on people with dyslexia.
- Encourage and inform governments and other bodies and individual members of such government bodies upon issues of relevance to the Association's objects.
- Establish and support measures to help people with dyslexia within their homes, schools, employment places, and communities.
- Establish awareness campaigns to remove the stigma associated with dyslexia.
- Support, administer or establish other not-for-profit entities to the cause of the Association's objectives.
- Hold, deal with, manage and direct management to buy, sell, exchange, mortgage, charge, lease, dispose of or grant any right or interest in, over or upon any real or personal property of any kind whatsoever, including contingent and revisionary rights in any property and to undertake and carry on any business undertaking or transaction.
- Apply for and acquire and hold charters, Acts of Parliament, privileges, monopolies, licences, concessions, patents or other rights powers or orders from any government or state, or any local or other authority in any part of the world and to exercise, carry on and work any powers, rights, privileges so obtained and to constitute or incorporate the Association as an anonymous or other society in a foreign country or state.
- Procure, obtain, contributions and donations of money to the funds of the Company, gifts, devices or bequests of the property of any kind for the use or purpose of the Company and to receive and deal with any such amounts of money or property for any of the objects of the Company as may seem reasonable.
- Invest and deal with any money of the Company not immediately required for any of its objects in such manner as may from time to time be determined.
- Initiate, organize, identify, maintain, obtain funding and financing from individuals, agencies, organizations, firms, members and other bodies to assist and support the Association's furtherance in its activities.
- Ensure the Association's property against any foreseeable risk and take out other insurance policies to protect the Association when required.



Our Organizational Structure

The JDA Organizational Structure is broken down into three primary categories:

1. Services & Programs
2. Governance
3. Administration

These three primary categories are submerged with the Advisory Committee and JDA Goodwill, and Youth Ambassadors.

Figure 1:



This figure shows how our organization is structured. It's a visual representation of how the JDA team works to best move forward in achieving our mission.

Our Board of Directors

The JDA Board of Directors is the governing body of the organization. The members are the fiduciaries who steer the organization towards a sustainable future by adopting sound, ethical, legal governance and financial management policies to efficiently have the adequate resources to advance its vision and mission.

The current Board of Directors comprises four (4) members: the President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer. All served as volunteers without any compensation. They bring to their role a combination of passion, personal and professional knowledge of dyslexia.



The JDA Board of Directors has three (3) primary legal duties:

1. **Duty of Care** - To take care of the JDA by ensuring prudent use of all assets, including facility, people, and goodwill:
2. **Duty of Loyalty** – To ensure that the JDA's activities and transactions are, to first and foremost, advance its mission, The Directors recognize and disclose conflicts of interest. Make decisions in the best interest of the JDA corporation and not in the best part of the individual board member (or any other individual or for-profit entity).
3. **Duty of Obedience** - Ensuring that the JDA obeys applicable laws and regulations; follows its bylaws; and that the JDA adheres to its stated corporate purposes/mission.

In addition to their legal duties, the board members play significant roles by contributing to the JDA's culture, strategic focus, effectiveness, and financial sustainability by serving as advocates. (*see the JDA organization's Bylaws*).

Administration

The administrative team of JDA includes the executive director, marketing /public relations, and the Fundraising Committee Members. (*see Fundraising Committee Terms of Reference*) (*see Administrative team Terms of Reference*)

Our Advisory Committee

The JDA Advisory Committee was formed to give advice and support to the JDA Board of Directors. The committee members are appointed by the Board and do not have any formal legal responsibilities. The Committee is consists of important and influential individuals who serve remotely, individually or collectively. Each member contributes to the JDA based on his or her expertise and sound judgment. This Committee is continuously growing, and additional members will be announced as they are added. (*see Advisory Committee Terms of Reference*)

International Goodwill Ambassadors

The JDA International Goodwill Ambassadors are a team of prominent individuals from the world of education, art, sport, and entertainment, who have dyslexia. They contribute to JDA's efforts to raise awareness, highlight priority issues on dyslexia, and draw attention to our work. (*see Administrative Assistant Terms of Reference*)

Youth Ambassadors

The JDA Youth Ambassador is an honorary title given to students with dyslexia. Students are selected from each of the three counties in Jamaica, Cornwall, Middlesex and Surrey. The Youth Ambassadors' role is to raise awareness of dyslexia in their schools and their local communities. The most important part of being a JDA youth ambassador is the gift of being different! (*see Fundraising Committee Terms of Reference*)



People With Dyslexia

People with dyslexia face many stigmas and challenges in their day-to-day lives. Despite the increased awareness about dyslexia, many misinformed Jamaican parents, educators and employers see dyslexia as a disadvantage, thereby creating stigmas and antagonistic behaviour that contributes to people with dyslexia remaining invisible in educational institutions, the workplace and their community.

The stigma of dyslexia can occur both externally and internally. It is a barrier that prevents many dyslexic people from seeking help. Through our services and programs, the core of the JDA is to help eradicate the negative stigma of Dyslexia in Jamaica. We do this through awareness and by recognizing the significant contributions made globally by people with dyslexia.

Dyslexia is a neurological condition identified in 1881 by Oswald Berkhan, a German doctor, The word 'dyslexia' was first introduced in 1883 by a distinguished German ophthalmologist, Rudolf Berlin (Wagner, 1973). The term derived from the Greek word 'dys' (meaning faulty or impaired) and 'lexis' (words or language) (Merriam-Webster, 1934 edition). Dyslexia is referred to in many publications as a learning disorder, disability, or difficulty.

Dyslexia has been defined in different ways. These contemporary definitions have evolved through research so that dyslexia is now often defined according to a description adopted by the International Dyslexia Association (IDA) Board of Directors in 2002, as: "difficulties with accurate and, or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities. These difficulties typically result from a deficit in the phonological component of language that is often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities and the provision of effective classroom instruction."

In addition to the IDA's definition of dyslexia, it can also vary from individual to individual in terms of severity and the nature of abilities and difficulties experienced (British Psychological Society, 1999). Dyslexia is lifelong and can't be cured and tends to be generational. It is not due to either the lack of intelligence or a desire to learn. Many highly successful people at the top of their fields, including a large percentage of high-profile celebrities, have dyslexia. For more about dyslexia, visit the JDA website @ <https://www.jamaicadyslexiaassociation.com>

The JDA organization was set up to provide the needed practical support and information about the positive changes for people with dyslexia. Our dedicated team members are working together to make a difference by providing personal services and expertise to deliver the greatest of impact. We survive through the generosity of individuals, businesses and organizations, who's gifts will help fund research, professional education, programs, and resources to help students and adults with dyslexia to accomplish their goals.

The Jamaica Dyslexia Association is open to all. Please lend us your support.

Thank you.