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MEDIA RELEASE

MORE HELP FOR THE NEEDY

The Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports (MCYS) will be providing more help to needy families through the following initiatives:

- (i) Enhancement to the Public Assistance Scheme;
- (ii) A new ComCare Transitions Scheme to help needy persons who are temporarily unable to work;
- (iii) More help for children from needy families to attend kindergarten and childcare centres; and
- (iv) More resources for Grassroots Organisations, Voluntary Welfare Organisations and Self-Help Groups to help the needy.

2 These initiatives are on-top of the 2007 enhancements to the ComCare Fund (see Annex A). In total, MCYS expects to spend \$16.1 million more in FY08. The new initiatives are expected to help an additional 10,500 needy cases. As at end Dec 2007, there were about 17,500 cases receiving assistance under the ComCare schemes.

3 The ComCare Fund budget for FY08 is \$63.7 million, up by 34% from the \$47.6 million for FY07. MCYS also provides other social services for the low-income and the needy, such as homes, family service centres, senior activity centres, and other social infrastructure. In all, the expenditure for FY07 on help for the low-income and needy is \$147.4 million. This figure is projected to increase to \$168 million in the coming year.

Enhancement to the Public Assistance Scheme

4 The Public Assistance allowance is calibrated to **provide for the basic living needs of PA recipients**. At the same time, the allowance is only one of four components of help they receive. The other three components include:

- (i) Additional Government subsidies viz free medical treatment, subsidised rental, utilities and service, conservancy charges rebates and education subsidies.

- (ii) Additional payouts for low income and elderly from the GST Offset package, Senior Citizens' Bonus as well as Growth Dividends.
- (iii) Community support from Voluntary Welfare Organisations.

Increase in Public Assistance Allowance Rates

5 MCYS will increase Public Assistance rates, to give Public Assistance recipients more assurance that they can meet their basic needs. Recipients can expect an increase of between \$40 and \$165 a month, depending on their household type. An elderly Public Assistance recipient living alone will see a 14% increase from \$290 a month to \$330 a month. A family with two adults and two children will see their assistance increase by 19% from \$855 to \$1,020 a month, while families with five or more persons will see their assistance increase by 17 percent from \$940 a month to \$1,100 a month. (See Annex B for details)

Expansion of Public Assistance Eligibility Criteria

6 The eligibility criteria for the Public Assistance Scheme will also be revised. Financially needy individuals, who are permanently unable to work and whose family members are unable to provide adequate support because they have their own families to look after, will now be eligible for Public Assistance. Their family members would be considered as being unable to provide support should they have to support their own children on a household income of less than \$1,000 per month.

7 This revision is welcomed by Mr Matthias Yao, Mayor for South East District. He noted, "I have come across needy elderly residents who have working children. Their children earn just enough to support their own families. They have hardly anything left to give to their aged parents. Placing them on PA would go a long way to helping them with their living expenses."

Launch of the ComCare Transitions Scheme

8 MCYS will also be launching a new scheme called the ComCare Transitions to provide interim assistance to those who are temporarily unable to work and who do not qualify for Public Assistance. These include those who have medical certificates, or who have heavy caregiving responsibilities etc. These individuals are currently helped on a case-by-case basis.

9 Besides financial assistance, they will also receive help with their rental, utilities, services and conservancy charges as well as support for their medical expenses. At the same time, case workers may be assigned to help them improve their family circumstances.

10 ComCare Transitions beneficiaries would be given help for up to 12 months. Assistance may be extended if necessary, subject to reviews of their circumstances. The CDCs will administer this programme

More help for children from lower-income families

11 There is currently extensive support for children from low income families to attend pre-school. Besides the government childcare subsidy of \$150 for working mothers, or \$75 for non-working mothers, low income families also benefit from the Centre-Based Financial Assistance Scheme for Childcare (CFAC). Children who attend kindergarten benefit from the Kindergarten Financial Assistance Scheme (KiFAS). On top of this, the government gives additional subsidies for the pre-school fees of at-risk families on the Healthy Start Programme. These families pay only what they can afford for pre-school. There are also other forms of community help available for pre-school.¹

12 To further enhance developmental opportunities for low-income children, MCYS will make changes to the KiFAS and CFAC.

Extension of KiFAS to cover nursery programmes

13 MCYS will be extending KiFAS support to cover nursery programmes at eligible non-profit kindergartens. Children from low income families will receive subsidies of up to \$65 per month to offset the cost of their nursery education. In addition, they may also benefit from the \$200 start-up grant. (See [Annex C](#) for details)

Increase in CFAC subsidies

14 MCYS will also be increasing the subsidies provided under CFAC by up to \$20 a month. (See [Annex D](#) for details) Depending on the family's income and the birth order of the child, the family will get CFAC subsidies of up to \$340 a month. With this increase, a child from a two-child family earning \$500 or less a month need only pay \$10 a month for childcare. A child in a two-child family earning \$1,500 a month need only pay an average of \$100 a month for childcare. At-risk families on the Healthy Start Programme may find childcare nearly free.

Expansion of Eligibility Criteria for KiFAS and CFAC

15 To help relieve the financial burden on parents from lower-income households and encourage them to send their children to pre-school, MCYS will

¹ For example, PAP Community Foundation's Headstart Fund, Mendaki's Education Trust Fund, the SINDA's Pre-School Bursary Scheme, CDAC's Pre-School Assistance and Support (PASS), and the NTUC's Bright Horizon's Fund.

be creating a new tier under the KiFAS and CFAC schemes for families earning between \$1,501 to \$1,800 a month.

16 These families with children in eligible non-profit kindergartens will be given 70% subsidy up to a cap of \$65 a month under KiFAS (if the child is attending a K1 or K2 programme), or \$51 a month (if the child is attending a nursery programme). (See [Annex C](#) for details)

17 Monthly CFAC subsidies of up to \$200 will also be extended to such families with children in childcare depending on the birth order of the child. A child from a two-child family earning \$1,800 a month, for example, need only pay an average of \$150 a month for childcare. In addition, children on CFAC may also be provided a one-off assistance of up to \$1,000, to meet the start-up costs of placing the children in a childcare centre (see [Annex D](#) for details, and [Annex E](#) for an example of how these enhancements may benefit a typical family).

18 Said Associate Professor Debbie Ong, Chairman of Tampines Family Service Centre and member of the ComCare Supervisory Committee, “The additional help for children from lower income families would help their parents to send their children to pre-school, so that their children will be able to benefit from the developmental opportunities available to them.”

More resources for Grassroots Organisations, Voluntary Welfare Organisations and Self-Help Groups

19 Despite the initiatives put in place to help ease the impact of the rising cost of living on the needy, some families may still need additional assistance. Being closer to the ground, Grassroots Organisations and Voluntary Welfare Organisations (VWOs) are best placed to help these families.

20 Last year, Government announced that it would top up the \$4 million Citizens’ Consultative Committee (CCC) ComCare Fund by an additional \$5 million over 5 years. It would also provide \$3 million to VWOs and \$2 million to Self-Help Groups to support their programmes to help lower-income Singaporean families over the 5 years.

21 This year, the Government will be providing a further \$10 million to these groups over 4 years, with an additional \$5 million top-up to the CCC ComCare Fund, and additional funding of \$3 million for VWOs and \$2 million for Self-Help Groups. (See [Annex F](#) for details)

22 Minister-of-State for Community Development, Youth and Sports and Chairperson of the ComCare Supervisory Committee, Mrs Yu-Foo Yee Shoon said, “All of these ComCare enhancements will provide greater assurance that nobody needs to go hungry in Singapore, and that every parent can afford to give their child the opportunities to maximise their potential”.

23 These changes will be implemented in July 2008.

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MINISTRY OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, YOUTH AND SPORTS

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FY 2007 ComCare Milestones

GST Offset Package

- To help recipients of our ComCare schemes cope with the increase in GST, the following ComCare schemes were enhanced, from July 2007, as part of the GST Offset Package:
 - o Public Assistance (PA) and Special Grant (SG) schemes. Increases in PA/SG rates ranged from 12% to 14%.
 - o Work Support Programme. Financial assistance under Work Support was increased.
 - o Kindergarten Financial Assistance Scheme (KiFAS). Subsidies were increased to 90% of kindergarten fees.
 - o Centre-based Financial Assistance Scheme for Childcare (CFAC). Subsidies increased by between \$20 - \$40 a month per child.
 - o Student Care Financial Assistance Scheme (SCFA). Subsidies increased by up to \$10 per month per child.

Supporting more bottom-up initiatives

- From April 2007 to December 2007, the ComCare Enterprise Fund (CEF) supported 2 community-initiated social enterprises. 1 application was approved in January 2008 while 3 other applications are pending the CEF's evaluation in March 2008.
- The ComCare Social Support Projects Fund, which provides seed funding for pilot projects, renewed funding for 7 projects and approved funding for 1 new project for the period April 2007 to December 2007.

ComCare Local Networks (CLN)

- The five CDCs have set up nine ComCare Local Networks (CLNs) with a total of 84 CCCs and 389 VWOs as partners.
- Between January 2007 and December 2007, they launched 28 initiatives to help needy Singaporeans.
- They also organised 206 networking sessions among CLN partners to share best practices and to refine the social assistance delivery system for the needy.

- In addition, 22 outreach programmes were organized, reaching out to 65,441 participants/residents in the five districts.

ComCare Connection

- ComCare Connection matches volunteer organisations (such as corporates and cooperatives) to voluntary welfare organisations or social enterprises to better help needy Singaporeans. It was launched in February 2007.
- Between April and December 2007, NVPC successfully matched 8 corporations. The most recent matches include Starbucks Coffee Singapore Pte Ltd and The Salvation Army, Pathlight School, Pontiac Land Group and The Grace Orchard School, and The Public Utilities Board and Peace Connect Neighbourhood Link.

Launch of ComCare Call

- ComCare Call is a call service set up to connect needy individuals and families, who do not know who to approach for help, to appropriate social assistance agencies via an easy-to-remember number – 1800 222 0000. It was launched on 9 Jan 08 and is available 24 hours, seven days a week.
- As at 31 Jan 08, 3,756 calls were received, of which 25% were requests for financial assistance, and 23% were other enquiries on issues related to social assistance.

Review Committee on Financial Assistance Cases

A review committee chaired by Minister of State (CYS), Mrs Yu-Foo Yee Shoon, and involving the 5 mayors, was set up to ensure flexibility in implementation, and that deserving cases do not slip through the net.

Public Assistance Scheme

Purpose

The Scheme provides a monthly cash grant to Singapore citizens who are unable to work and have no means of subsistence, with little or no family support, to meet their basic needs.

Eligibility for Public Assistance

Singapore citizens who owing to age, illness, disability are permanently unable to work, have no means of income, and little or no family support may apply for Public Assistance.

Increase in Public Assistance rates

Depending on household size, the new rate ranges from \$330 for a one person household to \$1,100 for a household with one adult and three children.

Household Type	Current PA Rates	Revised PA Rates	Increase
1-Person 1 Adult	\$290	\$330	\$40
2-Person 2 Adults 1 Adult 1 Child	\$490 \$585	\$570 \$670	\$80 \$80
3-Person 3 Adults 2 Adults 1 Child 1 Adult 2 Children	\$580 \$675 \$765	\$700 \$800 \$890	\$120 \$125 \$125
4-Person 4 Adults 3 Adults 1 Child 2 Adults 2 Children 1 Adult 3 Children	\$670 \$765 \$855 \$940	\$830 \$930 \$1,020 \$1,100	\$160 \$165 \$165 \$160
5 Persons & Above	\$940	\$1,100	\$160

Applications for Public Assistance

Applications for Public Assistance can be made at:

CDC	Address	Telephone Number
Central Singapore CDC	HDB Hub Bizthree 490, Lorong 6 Toa Payoh # 04-10 S (310490)	Tel: 6370 9901 Fax: 6370 9928
North East CDC	3 Tampines Grande # 01-02 AIA Tampines S (528799)	Tel: 6424 4000 Fax: 6424 4077
North West CDC	900 South Woodlands Drive Woodlands Civic Centre # 01-04 S (730900)	Tel: 6767 2288 Fax: 6219 1176
South East CDC	10 Eunos Road 8 Singapore Post Centre # 02-01 S (408600)	Tel: 6243 8753 Fax: 6243 3130
South West CDC	The JTC Summit 8 Jurong Town Hall Road #03-11 S (609434)	Tel: 6316 1616 Fax: 6316 7251

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Kindergarten Financial Assistance Scheme (KiFAS)

Purpose

The scheme is meant to provide a monthly fee subsidy for low-income Singaporean families to help them pay for their children's kindergarten education.

Eligibility for KiFAS

- The child is a Singapore citizen or permanent resident of Singapore (PR). If the child is a PR, then at least one immediate family member of the child must be a Singapore citizen;
- The child attends a K1 or K2 programme (at least 3 hours long) in an eligible non-profit kindergarten; and
- The family's monthly household income is \$1,800 or below.

Extension of Kindergarten Financial Assistance Scheme (KiFAS) to cover nursery programmes

From July 2008, children from low income families earning \$1,500 a month and below, may receive 90 percent subsidies of up to \$65 per month, to offset the cost of their nursery education. In addition, very needy nursery children from families earning \$1,000 a month or less, could also benefit from a grant of up to \$200, to help with their start-up costs like the registration fee, uniforms and insurance.

For example,

- For families that earn a monthly income of \$1,500 and below, if the child's nursery fee is \$70 per month, the KiFAS subsidy is \$63 (90% of \$70), and parents pay the remaining \$7.
- For families that earn a monthly income of \$1,500 and below, if the child's nursery fee is \$80 per month, the maximum KiFAS subsidy for nursery is \$65 every month, and parents pay the remaining \$15.

New subsidy tier for KiFAS assistance

From July 2008, a new subsidy tier will be added for families earning between \$1,501 - \$1,800 monthly. These families would be given a 70 percent subsidy for KiFAS, up to a cap of \$65 a month (if the child is attending a K1 or K2 programme), or \$51 a month (if the child is attending a nursery programme). This new subsidy tier will be implemented in July 2008.

New subsidy rates for KiFAS

<u>Household income</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>Dollar Cap</u>
≤ \$1,500	90%	\$82 (for kindergarten) \$65 (for nursery)
\$1,501 - \$1,800 (New tier)	70%	\$65 (for kindergarten) \$51 (for nursery)

For example,

- For families that earn a monthly income of \$1,501-\$1,800, if the child's **kindergarten** fee is \$90 per month, the KiFAS subsidy is \$63 (70 percent of \$90) and parents pay the remaining \$27.
- For families that earn a monthly income of \$1,501-\$1,800, if the child's **kindergarten** fee is \$100 per month, the maximum KIFAS subsidy for kindergarten is \$65 every month, and parents pay the remaining \$35.
- For families that earn a monthly income of \$1,501-\$1,800, if the child's **nursery** fee is \$70 per month, the KiFAS subsidy is \$49 (70 percent of \$70), and parents pay the remaining \$21.
- For families that earn a monthly income of \$1,501-\$1,800, if the child's **nursery** fee is \$80 per month, the the maximum KIFAS subsidy for nursery is \$51 every month, and parents pay the remaining \$29.
- **Applications for KiFAS**

You can either approach the kindergarten where KiFAS is available, or your nearest Community Development Council (CDC) for more information on KiFAS.

CDC	Address	Telephone Number
Central Singapore CDC	HDB Hub Bizthree 490, Lorong 6 Toa Payoh # 04-10 S (310490)	Tel: 6370 9901 Fax: 6370 9928
North East CDC	3 Tampines Grande # 01-02, AIA Tampines S (528799)	Tel: 6424 4000 Fax: 6424 4077
North West CDC	900 South Woodlands Drive Woodlands Civic Centre # 01-04 S (730900)	Tel: 6767 2288 Fax: 6219 1176
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Centre-Based Financial Assistance Scheme for Childcare (CFAC)

Purpose

The scheme is meant to provide a monthly fee subsidy, over and above the \$150 Government child care subsidy given to working mothers, for low-income Singaporean families who need to place their child in child care centres. This is so that the mothers can take on full-time employment.

Eligibility for CFAC

The mother and the child attending child care must meet the following eligibility criteria:

- The child is a Singapore citizen. If the child is a permanent resident of Singapore (PR), at least one member of his immediate family must be a Singapore citizen;
- The child is below 7 years old and is attending a licensed child care centre;
- The child is of the first, second, third or fourth birth order;
- The child's family's monthly income is \$1,800 and below; and
- The child's mother is working.

Increase in CFAC subsidies and new subsidy tier for CFAC assistance

A monthly fee subsidy is provided on a sliding scale based on household income, and the child's birth order. From July 2008, MCYS will be increasing the subsidies provided under the CFAC. Depending on the family's income and number of children, the family will get an increase in monthly subsidies of up to \$20 a month.

From July 2008, a new subsidy tier will also be added for families earning between \$1,501 - \$1,800 monthly. Such families will get a monthly CFAC subsidy of up to \$200, depending on the birth order of the child. The new range of CFAC subsidy is as follows:

Monthly Household Income	Maximum CFAC subsidy per month for 1st / 2nd child	Maximum CFAC subsidy per month for 3rd / 4th child
≤\$500	Up to \$340	Up to \$275
\$501-\$1,000	Up to \$300	Up to \$200
\$1,001 - \$1,500	Up to \$250	Up to \$150
\$1,501 - \$1,800 (New tier)	Up to \$200	Up to \$100

Applications for CFAC

You can either approach the child care centre where your child is enrolled or your nearest Community Development Council (CDC) for more information on CFAC.

CDC	Address	Telephone Number
Central Singapore CDC	HDB Hub Bizthree 490, Lorong 6 Toa Payoh # 04-10 S (310490)	Tel: 6370 9901 Fax: 6370 9928
North East CDC	3 Tampines Grande # 01-02 AIA Tampines S (528799)	Tel: 6424 4000 Fax: 6424 4077
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Impact of KiFAS/CFAC Enhancements

This illustrates how a family of four, earning a monthly household income of \$1,700, and with two children aged 3 (in nursery) and 6 (in childcare), would benefit from the enhancements in KiFAS and CFAC.

Before enhancements

	Nursery (3 year-old)	Childcare (6 year-old)
Average fee / month	\$72	\$500
Subsidy	\$0	\$150 (Universal childcare subsidy)
Total parents pay / month	\$72	\$350
	\$422	

After enhancements

	Nursery (3 year-old)	Childcare (6 year-old)
Average fee / month	\$72	\$500
Subsidy	\$51	\$150 (Universal childcare subsidy) \$200 (CFAC)
Total parents pay / month	\$21	\$150
	\$171	

- **Total savings for the family = \$251**

Enhancements to the CCC ComCare Funds

Purpose

1 The CCC ComCare Funds were established in June 2005, in order to give Citizens' Consultative Committees (CCCs) the flexibility to help genuinely needy residents who require urgent, temporary assistance.

2 The CCC ComCare Funds are intended to better help Singaporean families. Between July 2005 and December 2007, the CCCs have distributed about \$4.1 million to help about 25,000 residents.

More funds

3 This year, the Government will be setting aside another \$5 million over four years for the CCC ComCare Funds, to help these families.

4. The \$5 million is on top of the Government's contribution last year, of \$5 million over five years for the CCC ComCare Funds to help the needy and vulnerable families cope with the GST increase.

5 With the top-up, the CCC ComCare Funds will have a total of \$6.25 million² for FY 2008. This represents a 25 percent increase in the CCC ComCare Funds.

Applications for CCC ComCare Funds

6 Families that need additional help should approach their Community Clubs or Citizens' Consultative Committees.

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² \$4 million from the ComCare Fund, \$1 million from Budget 2007, and \$1.25 million from Budget 2008.