



11 February 2009

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **ASSURANCE AND HOPE FOR NEEDY:**

#### **MORE HELP FOR THE VULNERABLE IN SOCIETY**

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

- (i) Enhancement to the Public Assistance Scheme;
- (ii) Increased flexibility and duration of support under the Work Support Programme to help those affected by the downturn;
- (iii) More help for children from vulnerable families;
- (iv) More resources for grassroots organisations

2 In total, MCYS expects to spend about \$77 million in FY09 on ComCare programmes. This is an increase of 54 percent from the \$50 million the Ministry projects to spend on ComCare programmes in FY08. Social assistance through ComCare will be administered flexibly to best cushion the impact of the economic recession on the most vulnerable members of our society.

#### **(A) ENHANCEMENT TO THE PUBLIC ASSISTANCE SCHEME**

3 With effect from 1 April 2009, the ComCare Public Assistance rates will be increased. Recipients can expect an increase of between \$30 and \$120 a month, depending on their household type. An elderly Public Assistance recipient living alone will see the PA rates increased from \$330 to \$360 a month while a family with four persons will see their assistance increased from \$830 to \$950 a month.

4 The Public Assistance allowance is calibrated to provide for the basic living needs of PA recipients. It is one of four sources of help PA recipients receive. The other three sources of help are:

- (i) Government subsidies for rental, utilities and education, service and conservancy charges rebates and free medical treatment;

- (ii) Government payouts for low income and elderly citizens in terms of GST Offset package, Senior Citizens' Bonus as well as Growth Dividends;
- (iii) Voluntary Welfare Organisations' provision of financial assistance, home help, free food and other community support.

5 To ensure that children from Public Assistance families continue to receive care and education during the tough times ahead so that they may break out of the poverty cycle, the Ministry will also be providing them with additional assistance over and above the revised Public Assistance rates based on household size. This additional assistance will be up to a maximum of \$130 per child per month. (See Annex A for details).

6 These changes to the Public Assistance Scheme will benefit 2,900 households.

## **(B) INCREASED FLEXIBILITY AND DURATION OF WORK SUPPORT**

7 To help families whose breadwinners may have been retrenched, the Ministry will enhance the flexibility of the ComCare Work Support Programme. The length of assistance rendered under the Work Support scheme will be extended from six months to up to 12 months for those who need a longer period of help while they upgrade their skills and find a job. Families who currently fall just outside the eligibility criteria for Work Support will also be helped if they have genuine problems coping with basic living expenses. The financial assistance under the Work Support Programme will be calibrated according to the needs of the family. (See Annex B for details)

8 The Work Support Programme is a workfare based programme to help workers upgrade their skills and find jobs. Beneficiaries receive temporary financial, medical and educational assistance and vouchers to pay for rental, utilities and service and conservancy charges. There are currently about 2,400 cases on Work Support.

## **(C) MORE HELP FOR CHILDREN FROM VULNERABLE FAMILIES**

9 Kindergarten and childcare will be made even more affordable for low-income families from July 2009 so that no child will miss out on getting an education just because his/her parents cannot afford to send him to pre-school during the downturn.

10 MCYS will further increase subsidies under the ComCare Centre-based Financial Assistance Scheme for Childcare (CFAC) and the Kindergarten Financial Assistance Scheme (KiFAS). Low-income families with monthly income of \$1,500 or less will receive at least 95 percent in subsidies for childcare and kindergarten fees, subject to a dollar cap.

11 Currently, families with an income of \$1,500 per month currently pay about \$40 per month for a child attending childcare and \$18 per month for a child in kindergarten. With the increased subsidy, such families will only need to pay about \$10 for childcare and \$5 for kindergarten per month. Together with the universal government childcare subsidy, which was recently raised from \$150 to \$300, the savings to low-income families will be substantial. The CFAC and KiFAS enhancements are expected to benefit about 12,600 children. Details on the enhanced subsidies for CFAC and KiFAS are in Annex C and Annex D respectively.

#### **(D) MORE RESOURCES FOR GRASSROOTS ORGANISATIONS**

12 Community-based organisations play a key role in providing assistance to Singaporeans in need. The Citizens' Consultative Committee (CCC) ComCare Fund will therefore be topped up with an additional \$0.75 million per year over the next two years. The additional funds will enable the grassroots organisations to continue to render interim assistance to needy residents in this difficult economic climate.

13 The CCC ComCare Fund (CCF) was established in 2005 to give grassroots organisations the flexibility to provide immediate assistance to Singaporeans with urgent, temporary needs. Being closer to the ground, grassroots organisations are best placed to understand and meet the needs of residents. The CCC ComCare Fund is only one part of the entire ComCare framework, which includes the national schemes such as Work Support, Public Assistance, and kindergarten and childcare financial assistance.

#### **(E) PROVIDING HOPE AND ASSURANCE TO THE VULNERABLE**

14 The above enhancements will ensure that the more vulnerable members of our society continue to receive the necessary assistance during this economic downturn. Singapore has a unique "Many Helping Hands" social safety net in which the Government, the grassroots organisations, the Family Service Centres (FSCs) and other VWOs and charities all play a part in making sure that no one falls through the cracks. Low-income needy families and those who know of vulnerable individuals who need help can approach the Community Development Councils (CDC), Grassroots Organisations, or call the 24/7 toll-free ComCare Call at 1800-222-0000.

#### **ISSUED BY**

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**MINISTRY OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, YOUTH AND SPORTS**

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## **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, or have little or no family support.

### **Eligibility for Public Assistance**

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

### **Increase in Public Assistance rates**

Depending on household size, the new rate ranges from \$360 for a one person household to \$1,150 for a household with 5 persons or more.

| <b>Household Type</b>        | <b>Current PA Rates</b> | <b>Revised PA Rates</b> |
|------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>1-Person</b>              | \$330                   | \$360                   |
| <b>2-Person</b>              | \$570                   | \$630                   |
| <b>3-Person</b>              | \$700                   | \$790                   |
| <b>4-Person</b>              | \$830                   | \$950                   |
| <b>5 Persons &amp; Above</b> | \$1,100                 | \$1,150                 |

### **Additional Assistance for Children from PA families**

To provide further support to children from PA families, so that they may break out of the poverty cycle, we will also be providing additional assistance over and above the stipulated PA rates based on household size. This additional assistance will be up to a maximum of \$130 per child per month and would help provide for a school-going child's incidental expenses or a toddler/infant's additional nutritional and hygiene needs.

### **Applications for Public Assistance**

Applications for Public Assistance can be made at the Community Development Councils (CDCs):

| <b>CDC</b>            | <b>Address</b>   | <b>Telephone Number</b>              |
|-----------------------|--|--------------------------------------|
| Central-Singapore CDC | HDB Hub Bizthree<br>490, Lorong 6 Toa Payoh<br># 04-10<br>S (310490)         | Tel: 6370 9901<br><br>Fax: 6370 9928 |
| North East CDC        | 3 Tampines Grande # 01-02<br>AIA Tampines<br>S (528799)                      | Tel: 6424 4000<br><br>Fax: 6424 4077 |
| North West CDC        | 900 South Woodlands Drive<br>Woodlands Civic Centre<br># 01-04<br>S (730900) | Tel: 6767 2288<br><br>Fax: 6219 1176 |
| South East CDC        | 10 Eunos Road 8<br>Singapore Post Centre # 02-01<br>S (408600)               | Tel: 6243 8753<br><br>Fax: 6243 3130 |
| South West CDC        | The JTC Summit<br>8 Jurong Town Hall Road<br>#03-11<br>S (609434)            | Tel: 6316 1616<br><br>Fax: 6316 7250 |

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## **Work Support Scheme**

### **Purpose**

The Work Support Programme is a workfare based programme, which seeks to help workers upgrade their skills and find a job.

### **Eligibility for Work Support**

The applicant must be a Singapore citizen or permanent resident (PR). If the applicant is a PR, then at least one of the immediate family members must be a Singapore citizen.

The applicant's household should:

- Have a household income which is below \$1,500 per month
- Satisfy a needs test
- Have little or no savings
- Have inadequate family and community support
- Demonstrate the willingness to take steps to become self-reliant

### **Benefits under Work Support**

The Work Support Programme is a workfare based programme, which seeks to help beneficiaries upgrade their skills and find a job. In the interim, beneficiaries receive temporary financial assistance, rental, utilities and service and conservancy charges vouchers and medical and educational assistance.

### **Enhancements to the Work Support Scheme**

To help families whose breadwinners have been retrenched, MCYS will enhance the flexibility of the Work Support Programme, to provide assistance especially to families on the margins. The length of assistance rendered under the Work Support scheme will also be extended for families who need a longer period of assistance. The quantum of assistance will be calibrated according to the needs of the family.

### **Applications for Work Support**

Applications for Work Support can be made at the CDCs.

## **Centre-Based Financial Assistance Scheme for Childcare (CFAC)**

### **Purpose**

The CFAC provides a monthly fee subsidy, over and above the \$300 Government child care subsidy given to working mothers, for low-income Singaporean families who place their children in child care centres. This allows the mothers to 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's family monthly income is \$1,800 and below; and
- The child's mother is working.

### **Extension of equal CFAC subsidies and Start-Up Grant to all Birth Orders**

From January 2009, MCYS has extended CFAC subsidies beyond the fourth child for eligible low-income families. All eligible children now receive the same CFAC subsidy that was previously provided to the first and second child.

### **Increase in CFAC subsidies with effect from July 2009**

From July 2009, MCYS will further increase the amount of CFAC subsidies. Low-income families with monthly household incomes of up to \$1,500 will receive at least 95% in subsidies for childcare, subject to a dollar cap. Actual CFAC subsidies given will vary depending on the family's income levels and the actual childcare fees charged, as follows:



| Current           |  | WEF Jul 2009      |  |
|-------------------|--|-------------------|--|
| Monthly HH Income | Maximum CFAC subsidy per month per child | Monthly HH Income | Maximum CFAC subsidy per month per child |
| ≤\$500            | Up to \$340                              | ≤ \$1,000         | Up to \$340                              |
| \$501-\$1,000     | Up to \$300                              |                   |  |
| \$1,001 - \$1,500 | Up to \$250                              | \$1,001 - \$1,500 | Up to \$300                              |
| \$1,501 - \$1,800 | Up to \$200                              | \$1,501 - \$1,800 | Up to \$200                              |

### Applications for CFAC

Applications for CFAC may be made directly at your child's child care centre. You can also approach your CDC for more information on CFAC.

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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;
- For kindergarten: The child is in a K1 or K2 programme, which is at least 3 hours long, and conducted in an eligible, non-profit kindergarten;
- For nursery: The child is in a nursery programme, which is at least 2 hours long, and conducted in an eligible, non-profit kindergarten.; and
- The family's monthly household income is \$1,800 or below.

**Increase in KiFAS subsidies with effect from July 2009**

From July 2009, low-income families with monthly household incomes of up to \$1,500 will receive at least 95% in subsidies, subject to a dollar cap. Actual KiFAS subsidies given will vary depending on the family's income levels and the actual kindergarten or nursery fees charged, as follows:

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| Current           |   |            | WEF July 2009     |   |            |
|-------------------|---|------------|-------------------|---|------------|
| Monthly HH Income | Maximum KiFAS subsidy per month per child |            | Monthly HH Income | Maximum KiFAS subsidy per month per child |            |
| ≤ \$1,500         | Kindergarten                              | Up to \$82 | ≤ \$1,000         | Kindergarten                              | Up to \$98 |
|                   |   |            |                   | Nursery                                   | Up to \$75 |
|                   | Nursery                                   | Up to \$65 | \$1,001 - \$1,500 | Kindergarten                              | Up to \$95 |
|                   |   |            |                   | Nursery                                   | Up to \$75 |
| \$1,501 - \$1,800 | Kindergarten                              | Up to \$65 | \$1,501 - \$1,800 | Kindergarten                              | Up to \$90 |
|                   | Nursery                                   | Up to \$51 |                   | Nursery                                   | Up to \$70 |

### Applications for KiFAS

Applications for KiFAS can be made at eligible kindergartens and you can check with your child's kindergarten. You can also approach your CDC for more information on KiFAS.