



Media Release

MANDATORY PARENTING PROGRAMME EXTENDED TO DIVORCING PARENTS WITH OLDER CHILDREN

From 21 Jan 2018, those with children below 21 years old are required to attend the programme

The Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF) announced today that it is extending the Mandatory Parenting Programme (MPP) to include divorcing parents with children below 21 years old. This will be applicable to all parties who wish to file for divorce on or after 21 January 2018.

2 The aim of the MPP is to help parties understand the importance of co-parenting and the practical issues arising from a divorce, which would have an impact on their children. They will learn how to prioritise their children's needs, make informed decisions about the divorce and ancillary matters, and make greater efforts to reduce the level of acrimony between them. The MPP is conducted by three MSF-appointed Divorce Support Specialist Agencies, namely, i) HELP FSC, ii) Care Corner Centre for Co-Parenting and iii) Thye Hua Kwan Centre for Family Harmony @ Commonwealth.

3 The MPP was introduced when the Women's Charter (Cap. 353) was amended in 2016. One of the amendments was to require divorcing parents with children below 21 years old to attend the MPP before they file for a divorce, unless the parties were able to agree on the divorce and all ancillary matters.

4 The first phase of the MPP was implemented on 1 December 2016, and required divorcing parents with children below 14 years to attend the programme. Since its launch, about 2,500 applicants have completed the MPP.

Ministry of Social and Family Development
9 January 2018

About the Mandatory Parenting Programme

1 The MPP is a 2-hour one-time session with DSSA counsellors at these locations.

Care Corner Centre for Co-Parenting Blk 21 Eunos Crescent #01-2983 ☎: 6258 0020 💻: www.carecorner.org.sg/ccp.html ccp@carecorner.org.sg	Thye Hua Kwan Centre for Family Harmony @ Commonwealth Blk 54 Commonwealth Drive #01-566 ☎: 6357 9188 💻: www.thkmc.org.sg/services/detail/thk-centre-for-family-harmony-commonwealth/cfh_dssa@thkmc.org.sg	HELP Family Service Centre Blk 570 Ang Mo Kio Avenue 3 #01-3317 ☎: 6457 5188 💻: www.helpfsc.org.sg e-counsel@helpfsc.org.sg
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2 Applications for the programme may be submitted through an online self-service portal at www.msf.gov.sg/MandatoryParentingProgramme. A list of FAQs is attached in **Annex B**.

3 A 'Certificate of Completion' will be issued upon satisfactory completion of the MPP at the DSSAs. The initiating party to a divorce will need to produce this certificate when e-filing for divorce at the Family Justice Courts (FJC). The defendant will also have to submit the MPP Certificate of Completion in order to make a counterclaim during the divorce.

4 Exclusion from MPP is based on mental incapacity only. Applicants can apply for exclusion on the online portal and must produce valid supporting documents to support the exclusion criteria.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE MANDATORY PARENTING PROGRAMME (MPP)

1. How many will benefit from the extension to divorcing parents with children under 21 years old?

We are expecting at least 300 more MPP participants annually, based on our programme projections.

2. What is the Mandatory Parenting Programme (MPP)?

The programme consists of a one-time 2-hour session that aims to help parents understand the importance of co-parenting and practical issues arising from a divorce that impact their children.

Through this programme, it is envisaged that divorcing parents would be better able to make more informed decisions on the divorce, prioritise their child's needs over their own, and generally make greater efforts to reduce the level of acrimony between them.

3. Will the MPP be required for all divorcing parents?

With effect from 21 January 2018, the Mandatory Parenting Programme (MPP) will be extended to divorcing parents who have children below 21 years of age, *and* are unable to agree on divorce and ancillary matters. Currently, divorcing parents with children aged below 14 years and are unable to agree on divorce and ancillary matters, are required to attend MPP. MPP exclusion applies only to parents who are medically certified as having mental incapacity.

For more information, please refer to

www.msf.gov.sg/MandatoryParentingProgramme

4. Why is there a need to extend the MPP to parents with children below 21 years old?

This is in alignment with the changes made to the Women's Charter in 2016 which mandated all parents with minor children below 21 years old to attend the MPP.

Parents who completed the programme during the first phase of implementation gave positive feedback on its beneficial outcomes. The current extension will enable more divorcing parents to benefit from the programme. In all, MSF intends for child centricity to be the key focus in divorce by enhancing the MPP content with relevant information to meet the co-parenting needs of parents with older children.

5. How many parents have benefited from the MPP since it was first introduced in 2016? Has the programme achieved what it set out to do?

Since its implementation in December 2016, about 2,500¹ applicants have attended the MPP. More than 95% of the participants reported that they were more aware of the impact of divorce on their children in terms of financial, housing and practical needs post-separation. Similarly, more than 95% of the participants agreed on the need to prioritise their children's interest over their own.

6. How does the programme reduce acrimony between divorcing parties, especially in matters on co-parenting?

The MPP covers 4 main areas, namely,

- i. the impact of divorce on children;
- ii. practical considerations on financial budget, housing options and living arrangements;
- iii. responses of children to their parents' divorce, and,
- iv. co-parenting and its benefits.

¹ Figure correct as at December 2017

These are evidence-informed content to help parents reduce acrimony when they are considering divorce and to encourage cooperative co-parenting in the long term.

7. Will MPP help to dissuade parents from divorcing?

MSF recognises that the decision to divorce is a personal one. The MPP is meant to be an *informative* session that empowers parents to make informed decisions in the best interests of their children. It is not angled to dissuade parents from divorcing. However, when a parent is ambivalent in their decision to divorce and voluntarily seeks counselling support or marital recovery, the DSSA staff will make a professional assessment based on their presenting needs and offer support accordingly.

8. With the recent extension of MPP to include parents with minor children below 21 years old, is there any change in the application process for applying for MPP?

No, parents can apply for the programme through the MPP application portal at www.msf.gov.sg/MandatoryParentingProgramme.

9. Are there any penalties involved if divorcing parents with minor children below 21 years old decide not to attend MPP?

Under the Women's Charter rule Section 94A, divorcing parents who have children below 21 years old and disagree on divorce and ancillary matters will not be able to file for divorce if they are the plaintiffs or make any counter-claims if they are the defendant.

10. Why is counselling for children in divorce optional when they are often the most affected?

We recognise that children are often the most affected in their parents' divorce. For a start, the MPP aims to help divorcing parents understand the impact of divorce on children and the importance of co-parenting to mitigate stressors for the children during the divorce.

For children who may require more support, the courts can direct these children to attend counselling and/or attend the *Children-in-Between* programme, an evidence-based programme developed by child experts for children and their parents to manage conflict and help them build resilience in a divorce.

Divorcing or divorced parents who feel that their child may need more support may approach any of the 4 DSSAs below for more information:

SN	DSSA	ADDRESS	TEL
1	Care Corner Centre for Co-Parenting	Blk 21 Eunos Crescent, #01-2983, Singapore 40021 Email: ccp@carecorner.org.sg	6258 0020
2	Thye Hua Kwan Centre for Family Harmony @ Commonwealth	Blk 54 Commonwealth Drive, #01-566, Singapore 142054 Email: cfh_dssa@thkmc.org.sg	6357 9188
3	HELP Family Service Centre	Blk 570 Ang Mo Kio Avenue 3, #01-3317, Singapore 560570 Email: e-counsel@helpfsc.org.sg	6457 5188
4	PPIS As-Salaam Family Support Centre <i>*PPIS is currently the only DSSA that caters to divorced/divorcing Muslim couples.</i>	Blk 322 Ubi Ave 1, #01-591, Singapore 400322 Email: as-salaam@ppis.sg	6745 5862