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MEDIA RELEASE

MORE SUPPORT FOR LOWER- TO MIDDLE-INCOME SINGAPOREANS AFFECTED BY COVID-19 SITUATION

1. On 26 Mar 2020, the Government introduced the Resilience Budget to provide strong support to workers, stabilise businesses and build resilience for those affected by COVID-19. As part of this larger effort, the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF) is rolling out the following measures to better support lower- to middle-income Singaporeans who are financially impacted by the COVID-19 situation.

More flexible and accessible ComCare

2. Since the onset of COVID-19, we have stepped up support for low-income households. MSF's Social Service Offices (SSOs) have proactively reached out to more than 6,400 Singaporeans who may be in need of ComCare assistance or other forms of support, as a result of being quarantined or directed to stay at home. Our outreach includes checking in with over 360 current or former ComCare clients who are under quarantine or Stay-Home Notice, to see if they require any assistance.

3. For those under quarantine or Stay-Home Notice who require ComCare assistance, we have **simplified the application processes** so that they need not apply for ComCare in person. **ComCare applicants need only submit supporting documents through email or via mobile phone** (e.g. WhatsApp). We also work with community partners to support their other needs. For instance, SSOs coordinate with grassroots volunteers to help purchase and deliver groceries to Persons Under

Quarantine and Stay-Home Notice who do not have family, friends or neighbours to turn to.

4. From April 2020, households newly placed¹ on ComCare Short-to-Medium Term Assistance will **receive the assistance over a duration of at least six months², which would be longer for most households.** The longer ComCare duration will provide greater peace of mind to families and individuals whose livelihoods have been affected by COVID-19, as they seek out job or retraining opportunities.

New measures to support lower- to middle-income Singaporeans

5. With the proposed Resilience Budget, MSF will also put in place two schemes to support **lower- to middle-income Singaporeans who are financially impacted by the COVID-19 situation, and who are not on ComCare assistance.** As announced by DPM Heng Swee Keat on 26 March 2020, they are the **(i) Temporary Relief Fund** and **(ii) COVID-19 Support Grant.**

Temporary Relief Fund to provide immediate financial assistance

6. The Temporary Relief Fund provides **immediate financial assistance to lower- to middle-income Singapore Citizens and Permanent Residents who have lost their jobs or faced an income loss of at least 30% due to COVID-19, and require urgent help with basic living expenses.** Eligible applicants will receive **one-off cash assistance of \$500.**

7. The Temporary Relief Fund will be open for applications at all SSOs and Community Centres (CCs) **from 1 to 30 April 2020.**

¹ This includes first-time ComCare SMTA recipients and those who renew their SMTA from Apr 2020.

² Some households may receive assistance for a shorter duration, if it is ascertained that within the next six months, they would be receiving other sources of income which they could tap on for their basic living expenses.

COVID-19 Support Grant to provide longer-term assistance and job support for the unemployed

8. From 1 May 2020, **lower- to middle-income Singaporean Citizens and Permanent Residents who have lost their jobs due to COVID-19 and continue to face challenges securing employment** can receive help from COVID-19 Support Grant. With the aim of helping them get back on their feet and achieve stability, the Grant will provide eligible Singaporeans **\$800 a month for three months, if they also commit to receive employment and training support** from Workforce Singapore (WSG) and Employment and Employability Institute (e2i).

9. Recipients of the COVID-19 Support Grant who continue to need support in the longer term will be assessed for ComCare assistance.

Community stepping up support for fellow Singaporeans through the Courage Fund

10. Beyond the measures introduced by the Resilience Budget, Singaporeans and corporations have also rallied around those impacted by COVID-19 through their generous giving to The Courage Fund. The Courage Fund is a central donation platform for Singaporeans to contribute to the fight against COVID-19. To date, over \$5.6 million has been raised for this purpose.

11. The Courage Fund will help (i) dependents of those who succumb to the virus (ii) healthcare workers, frontline workers and community volunteers who contract the virus in the course of duty, and (iii) lower-income families experiencing financial difficulties as a result of their family member(s) contracting the virus, or having to serve Quarantine Orders, Stay-Home Notices or mandatory Leave of Absence (LOA). Application details will be available on NCSS website by end-March, and eligible lower-income households can also apply at the SSOs from 6 April 2020.

12. The enhancements to ComCare, Temporary Relief Fund, COVID-19 Support Grant and The Courage Fund form part of a larger range of support schemes and initiatives to help Singaporeans affected by COVID-19. A list of these schemes with their eligibility criteria and application details are in **Annex B**.

13. Those who need help can approach SSOs, their local grassroots or call ComCare hotline (1800-222-000) or Workforce Singapore for more information on the assistance that they are eligible for. MSF will also work with our social service agencies and community partners in the SG Cares Community Networks to proactively identify families who may require such support and help them apply for assistance where needed.

ISSUED BY

MINISTRY OF SOCIAL AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**More accessible and flexible ComCare**

- 1. How many Singaporeans under Quarantine or Stay-Home Notice (SHN) have SSOs reached out to? How many of them received ComCare assistance?**

To date, we have reached out to more than 6,400 Persons under Quarantine/Persons under SHN via text, including over 360 who are current or former ComCare clients over phone, to better understand their circumstances. Of the approximately 6,400 people, 50 applied for and were placed on ComCare assistance. The rest did not require financial assistance for various reasons, such as already having family support from other employed household members, savings, and/or financial support from their employers.

- 2. MSF mentioned that Short Term to Medium Term Assistance (SMTA) duration will be at least 6 months during this COVID-19 period. What is the existing or typical duration and quantum of ComCare SMTA?**

As the needs, profile, and size of each household are different, the quantum and duration of SMTA varies across households.

In 2019, the median monthly assistance quantum that a household on SMTA received was about \$450, and the median duration of assistance per tranche of assistance was about 4 months. These figures exclude assistance on rental, utilities and services and conservancy charges, as well as other forms of government assistance and subsidies that households could be receiving, such as assistance for medical expenses, subsidised rental housing, financial assistance for school fees, or childcare subsidies.

3. How does the MSF help ComCare clients achieve stability in the long term?

Our SSOs develop a joint action plan with families receiving ComCare SMTA, and encourage them to take steps towards self-reliance. For example, if there are work-capable members in the household who are unemployed, SSOs could link them up with Workforce Singapore or the Employment and Employability Institute for employment assistance.

For families with more complex needs, such as financial difficulties compounded by family and health issues, our SSOs also work closely with Family Service Centres, other government agencies and community partners to provide holistic support, to help individuals and their families to bounce back. The assistance may include case management and counselling by social workers, and help from local community schemes.

Temporary Relief Fund

4. Why is the Temporary Relief Fund only for April 2020?

The Temporary Relief Fund is an interim measure for Singaporeans who are affected by COVID-19's economic impact and who need immediate financial help with their basic living expenses.

The COVID-19 Support Grant, which will be available starting May 2020 after system enhancements, will provide more comprehensive support to those who have lost their jobs due to COVID-19.

The Ministry of Manpower and National Trades Union Congress will also roll out the Self-employed Person Income Relief Scheme to help affected self-employed persons.

5. How is the Temporary Relief Fund different from ComCare Interim Assistance?

ComCare Interim Assistance provides support to low-income households who need urgent and immediate financial assistance. To help Singaporeans tide through the COVID-19 situation, the Temporary Relief Fund will provide one-off support to lower- and middle-income who lost their jobs or a substantial proportion of income due to the economic impact of COVID-19.

6. Will all Temporary Relief Fund beneficiaries be automatically covered under COVID-19 Support Grant on 1 May 2020? Or do they have to re-apply with MSF?

The SSOs will make the application for COVID-19 Support Grant more seamless for recipients of the Temporary Relief Fund, so that they do not have to submit the same supporting documents multiple times. Applicants for the COVID-19 Support Grant will need to undertake that they will participate actively in job search and / or retraining programmes under WSG or e2i. SSOs will also link them up with WSG or e2i.

COVID-19 Support Grant

7. How does the Government help COVID-19 Support Grant beneficiaries achieve stability in the long term?

Recipients of the Support Grant must agree to actively participate in job search and / or attend training programme under WSG or e2i.

SSOs will coordinate with WSG and e2i to provide grant recipients with support in job search or retraining.

8. Are applicants assessed as a household or individual? Can more than one family member in a household get help from the COVID-19 Support Grant?

While we consider household income as part of the eligibility criteria, each individual who fulfills the eligibility criteria can receive support under the COVID-19 Support Grant.

9. Why are ComCare clients not eligible for the Temporary Relief Fund or COVID-19 Support Grant?

ComCare clients currently receive comprehensive support for their basic living expenses, including cash assistance, assistance with household bills, and assistance with medical bills. If ComCare clients require more assistance due to changes in financial circumstances, SSO will work with them to review their assistance package.

LIST OF COVID-19 SUPPORT SCHEMES

Scheme/initiative	Target Beneficiary and Eligibility criteria	Assistance provided
Temporary Relief Fund Applications open from 1 Apr – 30 Apr 2020 at all 24 SSOs and 108 Community Centres	Lower- and middle-income Singaporeans affected by the economic impact of COVID-19 who need immediate financial help with basic living expenses. These are Singapore Citizens or Permanent Residents who: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have lost their jobs or faced a personal income loss of at least 30% due to COVID-19 • Have a household income of ≤\$10,000, or per capita household income of ≤\$3,100, before their employment or income was affected. • Not currently receiving ComCare assistance 	One-off \$500 cash assistance in April.
COVID-19 Support Grant	Singapore Citizens or Permanent Residents, aged 16 years and above, who are presently unemployed due to retrenchment or contract termination as a result of the economic impact of COVID-19. They should:	A monthly cash grant of \$800, for 3 months. Job and training support by Workforce Singapore or the

<p>Applications open from 1 May 2020 at all 24 SSOs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have had a household income of ≤\$10,000, or per capita household income of ≤\$3,100, prior to unemployment; • Live in a property with annual value of ≤\$21,000; and • Not currently receiving ComCare assistance <p>Recipients of the support grant must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have been employed as a full-time or part-time permanent or contract staff prior to unemployment; and • Agree to actively participate in job search or attend a training programme under Workforce Singapore or the Employment and Employability Institute. 	<p>Employment and Employability Institute.</p>
<p>The Courage Fund</p>	<p>The Courage Fund will help affected lower-income households whose family member(s) have contracted COVID-19 or are on Stay-Home Notice, Leave of Absence or Home Quarantine Order³. They should have:</p>	<p>One-time lump sum of up to \$1,000</p>

³ Besides lower-income households whose family member(s) have contracted COVID-19 or are on Stay-Home Notice, Leave of Absence or Home Quarantine Order, the Courage Fund will also support (i) dependents of those who succumb to the virus (ii) healthcare workers, frontline workers and community volunteers who contract the virus in the course of duty. More details on eligibility criteria, application details and the quantum of assistance for these groups will be released.

<p>Applications open from 6 April 2020 at all 24 SSOs.</p> <p>More details on eligibility criteria and application will be made available on NCSS website.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experienced a complete or partial (of at least 10%) loss of household income due to COVID-19; and • A household income of ≤\$3,900, or per capita household income of ≤\$1,350, prior to being affected by COVID-19. <p>ComCare clients can apply.</p>	
<p>Self-employed Person Income Relief Scheme</p> <p>(by Ministry of Manpower and the National Trades Union Congress)</p>	<p>For eligible self-employed persons, including self-employed drivers.</p> <p>More details will be released by MOM.</p>	<p>\$1,000 per month for 9 months</p>