

MEDIA RELEASE

30 January 2026

MWS Launches Volunteer Initiative to Strengthen Early Intervention for Couples in Marital Conflict

Methodist Welfare Services (MWS) today launched a new initiative to equip volunteers to provide early intervention for couples experiencing marital conflict, aiming to strengthen support before challenges escalate.

The initiative features the release of MWS' *Befriender's Toolkit: Engaging Couples in Marital Conflict*, which equips volunteers with practical guidance to journey with couples in marital conflict. The Toolkit helps volunteers understand sources of marital tension, recognise common interaction and stress-response patterns, and guide conversations towards timely intervention and positive conflict resolution.

A distinctive focus of the Toolkit is the impact of marital conflict on children. In addition to helping volunteers better understand what couples may be going through, the Toolkit highlights how ongoing conflict affects children and offers practical ways to protect children who may be caught in the crossfire.



MWS' newest Befriender's Toolkit aims to equip volunteers with practical guidance to journey with couples in marital conflict.

Methodist Welfare Services

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IPC Registration No.: IPC000360 • Charity Registration No: 00166 • UEN: S81SS0088H

Developed by a team of experienced MWS social workers and counsellors, the Toolkit is intentionally designed to be self-explanatory, practical, and easy to use. With a clear and jargon-free approach, it enables volunteers to be equipped quickly and confidently, strengthening a wider circle of community support around couples.

Volunteers may also sign up for specialised training conducted by counsellors and social workers from MWS' Strengthening Families Programme (FAM). The training builds on the Toolkit and focuses on practical relational skills such as managing interpersonal dynamics, navigating sensitive conversations, and knowing when professional help may be needed.

Together, the Toolkit and training are designed to enable volunteers to offer an empathetic and informed presence – complementing existing professional services – and strengthen the overall ecosystem of support for couples and families.

According to the *2025 Family Trends Report* published by the Ministry of Social and Family Development, the proportion of dissolved marriages is highest between the fifth and tenth wedding anniversaries. About 7 per cent of couples married in 2003 dissolved their marriages within the first five years, with a further 9 per cent doing so before their tenth anniversary. After this period, increases in dissolution rates were smaller. These findings underscore the importance of timely intervention, as well as supporting couples in the early years of their marriage.

“When couples face challenges, the first people they often turn to are friends or family members, rather than social service agencies like ours,” said Yeow Ming Zhen, Associate Director (Strategic Development), MWS Family Services Group. “This initiative equips volunteers and the community with the skills and confidence to step in early – like first responders within a circle of support – to listen without judgment and offer practical help when it can make the greatest difference. Essentially, we hope to strengthen early support and help couples navigate challenges before they escalate.”

The initiative was officially launched at the MWS Empowering Life Awards on 30 January 2026 at HomeTeamNS Khatib, where physical copies of the *Befriender's Toolkit: Engaging Couples in Marital Conflict* were made available.

This initiative forms part of MWS' wider Volunteer Equipping Programme, which includes training and practical toolkits for volunteers befriending individuals with chronic illness, engaging those with mental health challenges, supporting persons living with dementia, and connecting with children and youth. Through this Programme, MWS seeks to educate, equip, and empower the community to form a circle of support around individuals and families facing life's challenges.

The MWS Empowering Life Awards is a biennial volunteer appreciation event that honours volunteers who have made meaningful contributions to MWS' beneficiaries and clients over the preceding two years. Now in its third edition since 2021, the Awards recognise volunteers who embody MWS' values of care, hope, positivity, strength, and warmth. This year's theme, “Flourishing Together,” celebrates how both volunteers and beneficiaries grow and thrive through service.

Mr Eric Chua, Senior Parliamentary Secretary (SPS), Ministry of Law & Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF), graced the occasion as Guest-of-Honour and delivered the opening address. The full transcript of SPS Chua's speech is available on the MSF website: <https://www.msf.gov.sg/media-room>.



Mr Eric Chua, Senior Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Social and Family Development, delivering the opening address as Guest-of-Honour at the MWS Empowering Life Awards 2026.

A total of 201 awardees were recognised at the MWS Empowering Life Awards, including three Lifetime Award recipients and 134 volunteers honoured for service ranging from five to 20 years.

The *MWS Befriender's Toolkit: Engaging Couples in Marital Conflict* can be downloaded from <https://www.mws.sg/volunteer/>

High-resolution photos found in the press release may be downloaded from [here](#).



ABOUT METHODIST WELFARE SERVICES

Methodist Welfare Services (MWS) is all about empowering people to have life to the full.

Our story began out of Christian love in 1981 with a simple desire to help those in need. From a humble starter project of a small nursing home for 24 sick elderly, we have grown to 24 centres and programmes island-wide, serving over 22,000 families and individuals who may experience different struggles in life, such as poor health, strained relationships, financial distress, or simply feeling alone.

The MWS network of services enables cross-referrals and multi-disciplinary interventions from a range of social and healthcare services. These include casework, counselling and therapy; parenting support; medical and rehabilitative care; pastoral care; home-based, community-based and residential care; a debt clearance and asset building scheme; and others.

We are an Institution of a Public Character and a member of the National Council of Social Service, and serve across all age groups, ethnicities and religions.

Please visit www.mws.sg for more information.

MWS MEDIA CONTACTS

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