

SINGAPORE

Four national awards to recognise work of social service professionals

President's Award for Social Service Professionals will be the highest accolade

Syarafana Shafeeq

The work of social workers, counsellors, psychologists, youth workers and other social service professionals will be better lauded and recognised with the launch of four new national awards in Singapore. The new President's Award for Social Service Professionals will be the highest accolade among the four, given to those who have made exceptional contributions to the sector and displayed outstanding professional qualities. Another accolade, the Excellence Team Award, will recognise outstanding cross-profession and team-based efforts, encouraging collaboration across the sector, said the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF) and National Council of Social Service (NCSS) in a joint statement on Jan 23.

There will also be Excellence Awards and Merit Awards for individual social service professionals who have made impactful contributions.

The new awards, which will be given out annually, elevate the recognition given to the sector's diverse workforce, MSF and NCSS said. Nominations for the awards open on Feb 3, and the awards will be given out in the second half of 2025.

Minister for Social and Family Development Masagos Zulkifli announced the new awards on Jan 23 at the NCSS Social Service Tribe Forum, held at Furama Riverfront. MSF has designated 2025 as the Year of Celebrating Social Service Professionals to honour their contributions. There are currently more than 20,000 social service professionals in Singapore. Mr Masagos said MSF is working



Minister for Social and Family Development Masagos Zulkifli announced the new awards at the NCSS Social Service Tribe Forum on Jan 23. The Ministry of Social and Family Development has designated 2025 as the Year of Celebrating Social Service Professionals to honour their contributions. ST PHOTOS: BRIAN TED

closely with the social service sector to reimagine the family service landscape in order to better support the needs of families in the coming years.

A committee to review the landscape is currently seeking views from social service agencies and family service practitioners.

The committee is chaired by Senior Parliamentary Secretary for Social and Family Development Eric Chua and Singapore University of Social Sciences president Tan Tai Yong.

NCSS has also been engaging various stakeholders over the past few months to expand its role beyond being a membership body, Mr Masagos said.

Aside from this, the Government has also made a move in recent



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MINDSET SHIFT

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MS CHLOE LEE, superintendent at the THK Home For Disabled @ Sembawang.

years to ensure social service workers are remunerated fairly, by releasing recommended salary guidelines for jobs in the sector.

Mr Masagos said MSF and NCSS will continue to work with social service agencies to improve adherence to the guidelines, and share salary adherence rates with these agencies so that they can benchmark their performance.

Salary progression was one concern for Mr Daniel Lopez, when he compared social workers with other professions he was considering in the civil service and private sector. Though being a social worker naturally crossed the mind of the 28-year-old who grew up watching his mother do good, he was initially conflicted.

He was worried that it might not meet his goal of providing for his family comfortably, something he did not have in the past, and was concerned that his peers thought social work was not as prestigious as other professions.

Nevertheless, following many conversations with family and friends who reminded him of his values and goals, he chose to do social work anyway.

Mr Lopez is currently a social worker at Methodist Welfare Services, where he works with individuals struggling with abusive relationships, income and food insecurity, homelessness and mental health struggles.

"As I look back, I am extremely grateful to be confronted with these perspectives and reflections because it became clear to me that my choice to be a social worker is not for profit or prestige, but a deep commitment to alleviate human suffering and honour the dignity of life through practical and dedicated support," he said.

Things have changed plenty though, said Ms Chloe Lee, superintendent at the THK Home For Disabled @ Sembawang, who has been in the social work sector since 2008.

Back when she first joined, the recognition for the sector was not that great, she said. But there has since been a large improvement and mindset shift regarding social service professionals.

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Summary of news coverage

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cross-profession and team-based efforts, encouraging collaboration across the sector, said the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF) and National Council of Social Service (NCSS).

There will also be Excellence Awards and Merit Awards for individual social service professionals who have made impactful contributions. On 23 Jan, Minister for Social and Family Development Masagos Zulkifli announced the new awards at the NCSS Social Service Tribe Forum, held at Furama Riverfront. MSF has designated 2025 as the Year of Celebrating Social Service Professionals to honour their contributions. There are currently more than 20,000 social service professionals in Singapore.

MSF is working closely with the social service sector to reimagine the family service landscape in order to better support the needs of families in the coming years. There will be a committee to review the landscape is currently seeking views from social service agencies and family service practitioners. Aside from this, the Government has also made a move in recent years to ensure social service workers are remunerated fairly, by releasing recommended salary guidelines for jobs in the sector.

Chloe Lee, superintendent at the **THK** Home For Disabled @ Sembawang, has been in the social work sector since 2008. Back when she first joined, the recognition for the sector was not that great, she said. But there has since been a large improvement and mindset shift regarding social service professionals. “People are more aware of how diverse social service professionals are – there are roles that are not directly working with clients or the community,” she said. “People no longer think of social work as volunteer work, like they did in the past.”