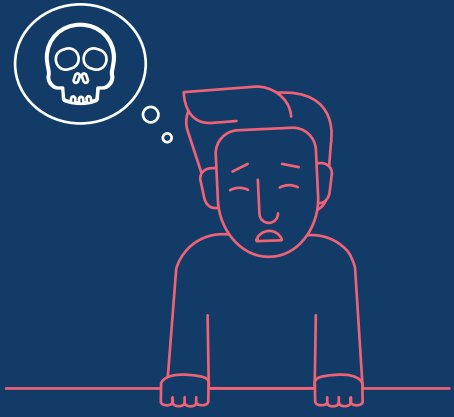


## SUICIDE AMONG CHILDREN AND YOUTH



**27**  
**teenagers**  
committed suicide in 2015  
a 15-year high among  
those aged 10-19.

Among those aged 13-21:

**1/50**  
have suicidal thoughts and  
**1/200**  
have attempted suicide before.  
(Agape survey, 2016)

### Why Should You Care?

Samaritans of Singapore cited mental health issues, academic pressure and relationship problems either at home or school as challenges among Singaporean youth aged 10-19.

#### EXISTING GAPS

**High levels of stigma hinder those who need help from seeking it**

There is a lack of openness in addressing mental health issues, which often stems from ignorance, fear and misunderstanding.

**Low mental health literacy leads to suicidal behaviour being ignored**

Public education to help parents and peers to detect suicidal tendencies is needed.

### Support Community Efforts

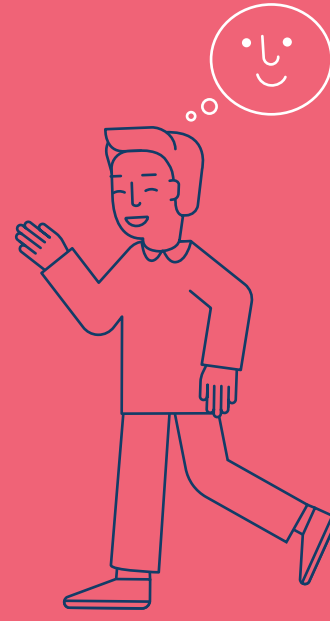
#### INCREASING MENTAL HEALTH LITERACY

The National University Health System (NUHS) and KK Women's and Children's Hospital (KKWCH) look into providing mental health care for all students. Silver Ribbon Singapore also acts to combat mental health stigma through providing counselling and workshops.

#### SUPPORT & SERVICES

Other agencies that support distressed youth include Care Corner, Counselling and Care Centre, Singapore's Children Society which operates the Tinkle Friend hotline, SAGE Counselling Centre and Singapore Association for Mental Health's (SAMH) YouthReach Centre.

## MENTAL HEALTH & SOCIO-EMOTIONAL RESILIENCE



More than **10%** of Singaporeans will experience mental illness in their lifetime.  
(2010 Singapore Mental Health Study)

Between 2013 and 2014, self-harm cases increased by

**14%** for those aged 14 and below.  
(Singapore Children's Society, 2015)

### Why Should You Care?

**Risk factors** that increase the likelihood of youth developing a mental illness include divorce or incarceration of a parent, bullying or a romantic break up and academic stress.

**Protective factors** that can mitigate risks include high self-esteem, feelings of competency, healthy attachment to parents, peers and supportive role models.

#### EXISTING GAPS

**Common mental disorders are most apparent in the parental age bracket**

Greater recognition of common mental disorders that affects this age group, including major depressive disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder and schizophrenia, is needed.

**Societal stigma labels those who are mentally ill as dangerous**

Such public attitudes and perceptions towards mental illness remain a significant gap in preventive action.

**High-pressure Singapore raises levels of self-criticalness in children**

Well-intentioned parents inadvertently raise young children's levels of self-criticalness and risk of depression.

### Support Community Efforts

#### HOTLINES

Singapore Children's Society's Tinkle Friend, Samaritans of Singapore and SAGE Counselling Centre.

#### COUNSELLING SERVICES

SAMH's YouthReach Centre, the Counselling and Care Centre and Care Corner.

## SLOW LEARNERS



Between 2006 and 2015, **approximately 1,000-1,500**

students a year did not pass their PSLE, or

**2-3%** of each cohort  
(Ministry of Education, 2016)

### Why Should You Care?

#### EXISTING GAPS

**Need for better focus on the socio-emotional needs of students**

There is a lack of initiatives to motivate and encourage students in addressing their socio-emotional needs.

**Lack of publicly available research on those who fall out of the system**

Little is known about the students who either fall out of the system after PSLE or who do not go into ITE or employment after graduating.

### Support Community Efforts

#### PROVIDING MENTORSHIP & PATHWAYS

Foundations such as Temasek Foundation Cares and CapitaLand Hope Foundation partner with specialised schools to provide mentorship and improve self-confidence of the students.

EQUAL-ARK Singapore has worked with vulnerable youth from Crest Secondary School to promote cognitive-behavioral change.

## IMPACT OF PARENTAL INCARCERATION



Between 2004 and 2015,

**39,000**  
**families**

with an incarcerated family member were helped by the Yellow Ribbon Fund.

(Yellow Ribbon Fund, 2016)

### Why Should You Care?

Separation from parents brings stress and trauma to their children, with major social adjustments to be made. In many cases, children become co-parents by taking up caregiving and even financial responsibilities.

#### EXISTING GAPS

**Non-financial aid is as important as monetary help**

While there are provisions for reintegration and reunification, few programmes look into non-financial aid while a parent is incarcerated.

**Foster parents are not always the best gap solution**

Foster parents spend less quality time and tend less to the psycho-emotional needs of their charges.

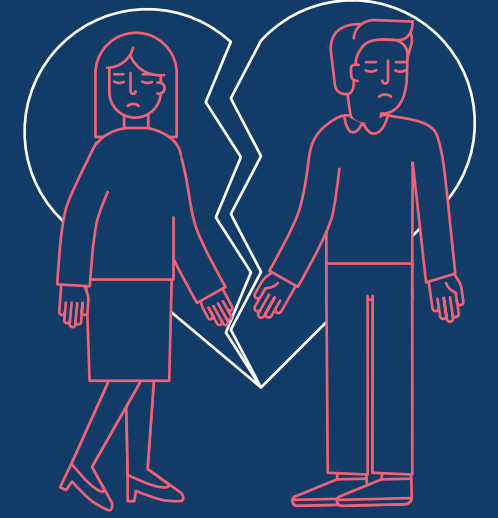
### Support Community Efforts

#### FAMILY STRENGTHENING

Yellow Ribbon Fund aids family reconciliation during and post incarceration, and also links affected families with community and state resources.

Other agencies like MENDAKI, Family Service Centres, Life Community Services Society, The Salvation Army and Focus on the Family offer financial, employment assistance and family strengthening programmes. New Life Stories also improves the reading and pro-social skills of pre-school children.

## IMPACT OF DIVORCE



There was a **45% increase** in divorce cases between 2000 and 2014.  
(Department of Statistics, 2015)

**4,728**  
**children under 21**

lived in divorced households in 2014.  
(Department of Statistics, 2015)

### Why Should You Care?

Parental presence is vital in any child's development and the loss of parental affection and care can have long-lasting negative impact.

#### EXISTING GAPS

**More help needed for post-divorced families**

Families in the transition stage need sustained support, be it for their financial or socio-emotional health. Reconstituted families may have additional challenges and difficulties.

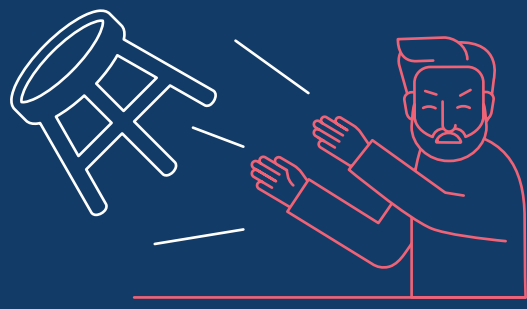
### Support Community Efforts

#### COUNSELLING & OTHER SERVICES

Focus on the Family, REACH Community Services Society, Fai Yue Community Services and Morning Star Community Services provide single parent family-based programmes and services, as well as counselling for parent-child and marital relations.

Singapore Council of Women's Organisation (SCWO) also runs a one-stop centre to help women with problems accessing their court-ordered maintenance fee.

## PROTECTION OF CHILDREN IN ABUSIVE SITUATIONS



Child abuse investigations **rose 45%** between 2014 and 2015, reaching 551 cases.

(Ministry of Social and Family Development, 2016)

### Why Should You Care?

Child abuse is defined under the Children and Young Persons Act (CYPA) as any form of physical, sexual, neglect, emotional or psychological mistreatment.

Reasons for the spike in statistics include the public being more inclined towards reporting cases of abuse and greater awareness of neglect and emotional maltreatment as forms of abuse.

#### EXISTING GAPS

##### Minors need help in understanding the grey areas

Abuse comes in various forms, some of which can be more insidious and therefore difficult for young people to identify.

##### Parents and educators must pick up warning signs

Adults, particularly parents and educators, also need to be more cognizant of the warning signs of abuse.

##### Need for confidence and sensitivity while protecting a child

Despite the stigma and potential ruptures to the family situation, adults also need to have confidence to act to protect the child.

### Support Community Efforts

#### FAMILY RE-UNIFICATION SERVICES

Children who have been placed in foster care are reunited with their natural families through this service offered by NPOs e.g. Singapore Children's Society, Chen Su Lan Methodist Children's Home, Boys' Town, The Salvation Army and Muhammadiyah Welfare Home.

#### REINTEGRATION EFFORTS

Big Love, HEART@Fai Yue and PAVE help manage cases and also work towards the re-integration of a child back into his/her family through counselling.

#### RESIDENTIAL CARE

Chen Su Lan Methodist Children's Home and Melrose Home-Children's Aid Society provide residential care for vulnerable and affected children.

## JUVENILE DELINQUENCY



**3,121**

youth aged 7 to 19 were arrested in 2015

### Top 3 offences in 2015:

- Shop theft
- Wilful trespass
- Other forms of theft

(Ministry of Social and Family Development, 2016)

### Why Should You Care?

Individual cases are becoming increasingly complex. Youth violence, online and offline, is on the rise. Factors contributing to juvenile delinquency include antisocial behavior, lack of attachment to school, poverty, gang influence or substance abuse.

#### EXISTING GAPS

##### Need for more upstream and holistic approaches in addressing youth needs

There are varied reasons for youth crime e.g. public acts of violence can be rooted in issues of stress or the lack of anger management, which require more holistic interventions.

##### Gaps in services for post-rehab youth offenders

These include the lack of awareness of alternative pathways to success and opportunities that can increase youth work capabilities.

### Support Community Efforts

#### ENGAGEMENT

Youth education consultancies Kingmaker and Agape Group Holdings conduct programmes addressing online aggression and antisocial behaviour.

#### TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Youth Employment & Advancement Hub is a social enterprise that provides employment and training opportunities for at-risk youth.

#### RESIDENTIAL CARE

Homes such as Boys' Town, The Ramakrishna Mission Boys' Home and Pertapis Education and Welfare Centre provide residential care for a total of 300 new admissions each year.

## TEENAGE PREGNANCY AND UNDERAGE SEX



In 2015:

**359** babies were born to girls under the age of 19 (Immigration and Checkpoints Authority, 2016)

**347** abortions were performed on teenagers under the age of 20. (Ministry of Health, 2016)

### Why Should You Care?

Teenage pregnancies are often unplanned and may mean the premature ending of education for the parents and early entry into the workforce to support their new family. A significant number of pregnant teenagers are prone to parental neglect or parental absence due to incarceration or work.

The number of babies born to girls aged 19 and under in 2016 was the lowest in 25 years. However, there has been an increase in the number of sexually active teenagers.

The message of abstinence before marriage in current sex education may be ineffective as teenagers today perceive losing their virginity as a gain.

#### EXISTING GAPS

##### Pregnant teenagers are unaware of where to seek help

Less than 2% of teenagers surveyed in 2014 were aware of the avenues to seek professional help.

##### Teenage fathers have few avenues for support

Most services currently focus on teenage mothers, and little support is extended to teenage fathers, particularly in terms of financial assistance or vocational programmes.

### Support Community Efforts

#### HOLISTIC SUPPORT

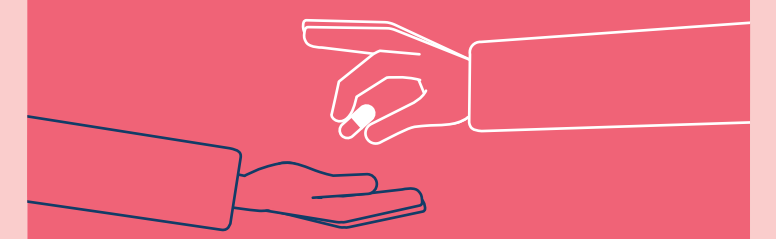
Babes is the only VVO dedicated to supporting pregnant teenagers. Their services include case management, post-natal confinement nanny assistance, a befriender service, financial and employment assistance, and a helpline.

Family Life Society runs a 24-hour helpline called Pregnancy Crisis Service (PCS) and collaborates with schools to assist pregnant teenagers in their studies.

#### SHELTERS

These include Pertapis, Good Shepherd Centre-Rose Villa and DaySpring NewLife Centre. DaySpring NewLife Centre also provides counselling, post-abortion therapy, and links residents with adoptive parents should they decide to give up the baby.

## SUBSTANCE ABUSE AMONG YOUTH



In 2016:

**277** drug abusers aged under 20 were reported. **1,334** or 40% of those arrested for abuse in Singapore were less than 30 years old.

Between 2014 and 2016, the number of students caught for drug offences almost **doubled from 83 to 151.**

(Central Narcotics Bureau, 2016)

### Why Should You Care?

There is an increase in the number of drug-takers among the well-educated and affluent young Singaporeans. In part, this is due to easier access. Online channels have increased, with 201 people arrested for buying drugs and drug-related paraphernalia online in 2016 compared to 30 in 2015.

#### EXISTING GAPS

##### There is a lack of peer support for younger drug users

The need to strengthen anti-drug education in schools remains paramount, including raising awareness among our youth of new forms of illicit synthetic drugs.

##### Greater community support and longer-term rehabilitative services are needed

Facilitating greater community support and access to long-term rehabilitative services will enhance the recovery process for drug abusers and their family members.

### Support Community Efforts

#### INTERVENTION PROGRAMMES

Singapore Anti-Narcotics Association (SANA) runs the SANA Badge Scheme, a half-day drug awareness workshop for secondary school students. The Yellow Ribbon Community Project is an upstream intervention programme driven by grassroots volunteers who reach out to families of incarcerated drug abusers.

#### REHABILITATION EFFORTS

##### Gainful Employment

SANA collaborates with Luxasia to help female ex-offenders gain jobs in the beauty industry and with Brother's Barber Holdings to help male ex-offenders obtain employment in hairstyling. SANA has also partnered with Barclays Bank to assist ex-youth offenders aged 17-25 years to gain financial and employability skills.

##### Peer Support Groups

There are various peer support groups for drug abusers like Narcotics Anonymous and the Women in Recovery Association. WE CARE Community Services is an addiction recovery centre that also offers counselling and preventive education for drug users and their family members.

Breakthrough Missions and the Association of Muslim Professionals are exploring long-term approaches to help former abusers reconnect with their families and society.

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For more details and a full list of references, please visit [www.nppc.org.sg](http://www.nppc.org.sg)

