

Media Release

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WEEKEND RESPITE CARE SERVICES LAUNCHED TO SUPPORT CAREGIVERS OF ELDERLY

1. Caregivers of adult or elderly persons with physical or mental health conditions have more respite care options to turn to following the official launch of the Centre-Based Weekend Respite Care (CBWRC) programme. This was announced by Minister for Health, Mr Gan Kim Yong at the official opening of the Silver Circle Senior Care Centre (SCC) at Serangoon Central today.
2. Administered by the Agency for Integrated Care (AIC), the CBWRC programme supports caregivers should they need to take time off during the weekends for urgent work commitments, to run errands or simply for a short break.
3. To date, AIC has partnered six service providers to introduce this new respite care service. It is currently available at seven centres located in various parts of Singapore including Sembawang, Bukit Batok, Tampines and Toa Payoh. Over the next year, this number will increase to 10 centres and is expected to benefit more than 200 caregivers and their loved ones. Eligible caregivers who tap on this respite care service can also receive government funding.
4. Among the first to roll out the CBWRC programme is the NTUC Health Co-operative's Silver Circle SCC at Serangoon Central which offers weekend respite care services on Saturdays. It intends to roll this service out progressively to its eight other day care centres and to extend the service to Sundays as well. Since it was introduced in April 2014, some 40 elderly and their caregivers have benefitted from the service.

5. With CBWRC, caregivers can leave their loved ones at an eldercare day centre such as Silver Circle Serangoon Central SCC where they will be assisted with their Activities of Daily Living including eating and mobility, be reminded to take their medications, and also get to meet new friends and interact with them through exercise and social activities. Taken together, the well-being and care needs of the loved ones will be addressed for the whole day or even for just a few hours.

6. 84 year-old Mr Tam is a happy client of the CBWRC service at the Silver Circle SCC at Serangoon Central. He suffers from diabetes, high blood pressure, and vascular dementia. Last year, he had a fall which landed him in hospital for a few weeks. His three children who were all working full time engaged a domestic helper to care for him. However, the domestic helper has days off every two weekends and the children were concerned that no one was around to keep an eye on Mr Tam then. Mr Tam's daughter subsequently chanced upon the SCC when she was passing by one day and walked in to inquire about the CBWRC services. His children have shared that their father is very happy with the centre facilities and enjoy spending time with the company. They also notice that since visiting the centre on weekends, Mr Tam has become more alert and his mental capacity has improved.

7. Chief Executive Officer of AIC, Dr Jason Cheah said, "For a caregiver to perform his role well, he needs not only the skills for it, but also a supportive environment and a range of services that he can use. The launch of the Centre-Based Weekend Respite Care programme marks a milestone in our care integration efforts and bears testimony to our resolve to equip families with the support to care not only for their loved ones but also themselves. We are thankful for the strong support of service providers such as NTUC Health and SASCO¹ in partnering AIC to roll out the programme at their eldercare centres. Their network of eldercare centres in the heartlands makes their services much more accessible to caregivers, many of whom have loved ones who prefer to age at home in the care and company of their families. Such fruitful partnerships bring us another step closer to creating a vibrant care community that enables people to live well and age gracefully."

¹ SASCO - Singapore Amalgamated Services Co-operative Organisation

Silver Circle Serangoon Central Senior Care Centre

8. The new Serangoon Central SCC is a one stop integrated day care facility for the elderly. Apart from the social day care services already available at NTUC Health's eight other day care centres, the new Senior Care Centre also offers community nursing, active rehabilitation, and community dementia care services. The added services give elderly the convenience of staying within the premises of the centre instead of having to make additional trips to get their nursing, rehabilitation and dementia needs met. This is also part of the government's long term plan to enhance care for frail elderly and to help them age in place within the community.

9. Operational since January 2014, the new Centre currently serves close to 100 elderly. It is situated at the site of the old Serangoon bus interchange, and its retro-style interior décor includes photos of old Singapore and furnishings from the 50s and 60s to rekindle fond memories among the elderly of their early days in Singapore. The Centre is also co-located with a My First Skool childcare and pre-school facility, and a Unity Family Medicine Clinic.

10. Speaking of the new SCC, NTUC Health's CEO Mr Chua Song Khim said, "We want families to be assured that they are entrusting their elderly loved ones to caring professionals who are trained to look after their social and health needs. At the same time, we want the elderly to feel that this is a home away from home."

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