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## Team to take mental health services into homes



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**BY SIAU MING EN - JUNE 18**

SINGAPORE — With a survey finding that most Singaporeans do not have direct access to mental health services, the Singapore Association for Mental Health (SAMH) is hoping to address this with a new programme that will see those at risk of psychiatric conditions receiving home visits.

The Mobile Support Team (MST) was one of three community mental health programmes launched at the association's Jurong East centre yesterday. SAMH president Daniel Fung said: "For some patients — especially the elderly and those who are sometimes trapped physically — they are trapped emotionally, (where) because of

their illness they are frightened of going out. We can go to their homes, providing support (to) their doorsteps.”

Findings from the Singapore Mental Health Study conducted by the Institute of Mental Health in 2011 revealed that only one in three persons with mental illness have access to services. Up to 70 per cent of those who need help are not linked to services in the community as well.

Aiming to close this gap, the programme will see a multi-disciplinary team of allied health professionals — such as case workers and peer specialists — pay home visits to those at risk of psychiatric conditions. The SAMH will work with grassroots leaders to identify at-risk persons and the public can also approach it if they need help. The association expects to serve at least 50 clients by the end of this year and double this figure by the end of next year.

Minister in the Prime Minister’s Office and Member of Parliament for Yuhua, Ms Grace Fu, noted the timeliness of the new programmes, given the rising incidence of mental illness among the area’s ageing community. She expects more collaboration between SAMH and the community, such as getting more people involved in promoting mental well-being.

Another programme launched yesterday was the Bukit Gombak Group Homes Aftercare Services, which provides follow-ups to clients who have been discharged from the group homes. Case workers will provide continued assistance and community-integration initiatives to ensure they are well-adjusted in their new homes and reduce the risk of repeated hospitalisation.

A second drop-in centre for adults recovering from psychiatric conditions has also been set up in Jurong East. Club 3R Jurong will provide rehabilitation programmes such as art, karaoke, yoga sessions that develop recreational, social and vocational skills.

Housing staff from the MST and case workers handling the aftercare programme, Club 3R Jurong was also designed to accommodate more clients. The first Club 3R centre at Toa Payoh has about 300 members and offers counselling services and assistance on employment-related matters, among other services.

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