

MEDIA FACT SHEET ON SAMH PARENTS CONNECT 2025

Event Name: SAMH Parents Connect 2025
Date: 8 November 2025
Venue: Trio Building, 11 Sam Leong Road, Level 4, The Inspire Space Auditorium, Singapore 207903
Time: 10:00am – 12:00pm

About SAMH Parents Connect 2025

1. SAMH Parents Connect 2025¹ is SAMH's inaugural panel forum designed to bring together a diverse group of speakers to discuss and explore vital topics related to the mental well-being of both children and their parents and caregivers. This year, the panel focuses on ways to support parents and caregivers of young children in managing their own mental health while being the first line of support for their children's emotional well-being.
2. With an emphasis on early intervention and understanding mental health, this panel brings together diverse perspectives from **Dr. Wan Rizal**, Member of Parliament for Jalan Besar GRC; **Dr. Ong Say How**, Child Psychiatrist and Chair of SAMH Creative & Youth Services; **Ms. Iris Pek**, Parent of a SAMH Client; and **Ms. Esther Leng**, Educator, and moderated by **Ms. Joyce Teo**, Senior Correspondent for *The Straits Times*. Together, they address practical ways to safeguard mental well-being and manage stress of parents and caregivers, as well as empower parents to support their children's mental health effectively.

Why Focus on Parents and Caregivers of Young Children

Supporting parents and caregivers is crucial to the well-being of our community for several reasons:

- **Early Onset of Mental Health Conditions:** Mental health conditions continue to significantly affect youth aged 10-14².
- **Parents as First Responders:** Parents often notice early behavioral changes in their children, but many lack the mental health knowledge to act appropriately.
- **Caregiver Burnout:** Studies show that 65%³ of parents experience psychosocial challenges that require formal support, leading to burnout if not properly addressed.

Purpose and Goals of the Event

SAMH aims to create a community of informed and resilient parents and caregivers who are better equipped to support their children's mental health while safeguarding their own well-being. By creating an open and supportive space for dialogue, the event highlights the importance of:

¹This community forum is part of a two-days festival held across two Saturdays on 8 and 15 November 2025. 15 November will be a family day with art activities, drama experiences and refreshments gathering to foster connection and support among families.

² [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpub/article/PIIS2468-2667\(25\)00098-2/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpub/article/PIIS2468-2667(25)00098-2/fulltext)

³ <https://www.kkh.com.sg/news/patient-care/65-of-parents-of-kids-with-development-needs-require-professional-mental-health-support-study>

- **Supporting Parents' and Caregivers' Mental Health:** Strategies to prevent caregiver burnout and maintain mental well-being while caring for their children.
- **Early Intervention for Children:** How to care and support the emotions of children by spotting early signs of mental health needs in children and how parents can act as the first responders to address these challenges.
- **Building Emotional Resilience in Families:** Practical advice for parents on fostering emotional resilience in both themselves and their children to handle parenting challenges.
- **Creating a supportive ecosystem** where families and children are empowered to thrive, emotionally and mentally.

Continued Support

At SAMH, we are committed to supporting parents, caregivers, and children on their mental health journey. We welcome parents and caregivers to join our range of programmes and activities to provide ongoing support, including creative programmes such as art and dance which are open to the public and accessible from our integrated wellness centre, SAMH Space2Connect. We also have resources such as toll-free helpline, online mental health toolkits and chatbot, and referral services that can help guide you towards the right support for your family. We encourage families to stay connected with us, utilise these resources, and reach out for support whenever needed.

Speakers' and Moderator's Profiles

1) Dr Wan Rizal Bin Wan Zakariah

Dr Wan Rizal is passionate about education and sports and champions the upholding of social mobility. He was a PhD candidate at Nanyang Technological University and specialises in Human Behaviour. Dr Wan Rizal obtained the Gold Medal Award from Rotary International in 2005 and was a NTU PhD scholar. Prior to that he was a P.E. teacher for 12 years where his passion for teaching and in the area of Physical Education and sports began. He is currently a Senior Conexus Manager where he oversees research in Health and Wellness related projects. Concurrently, he is also a Senior Lecturer at Republic Polytechnic, School of Sports, Health and Leisure where he teaches Health & Wellness, Human Motor Control & Learning as well as Sports Coaching. He is active in community work as he strongly believes in giving back to the community. Previously, he was a member of the Citizen Consultative Committee for Pasir Ris East and Punggol East constituencies. Dr Wan Rizal is the Member of Parliament (Elect) for Jalan Besar GRC.

2) Adj Assoc Prof Ong Say How

Adj Assoc Prof Ong Say How was the former Vice-President of the Singapore Association for Mental Health. He is also a senior consultant child psychiatrist and Chief of the Department of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry in the Institute of Mental Health. Dr Ong obtained his Masters in Medicine (Psychiatry) in 1999 and Graduate Diploma in Psychotherapy in 2001 from the National University of Singapore. Since his return from a fellowship in New York in 2005, he has been deeply engaged in outpatient services for children and adolescents with psychological problems and has conducted research work in mood disorders, schizophrenia

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and ADHD. In Child Guidance Clinic, he uses art and other creative-expressive therapies to help children and young teenagers who suffer from anxiety, depression and trauma. He is a frequent speaker in public forums and media interviews on child mental health issues. His authorship also spans various relevant topics on children and adolescent mental health.

3) Ms Iris Pek

Iris Pek, 56, is a two-time cancer survivor and the dedicated mother of a SAMH youth client. She has made many sacrifices for her daughter and along the way, also learnt the importance of self-care and nourishing her own life and perspectives through work socials, so that she can better sustain herself through this journey. Iris continues to plan for her daughter, thinking about how to assure her daughter's well-being when she passes on. She has overcome many challenges in life that make her someone we can learn from and be encouraged by.

4) Ms Esther Leng

Esther Leng, 45, is an educator with more than 20 years of experience in an MOE secondary school, tertiary education and private tuition for young children. She believes that education should empower students' minds and hearts. A lover of the English language and inspired by her own teachers during her student years, Esther is an advocate of the growth mindset and believes that learning a language is an adventure that requires patience and creativity. She has been through her own journey with mental health and has also supported one of SAMH counselling clients in her journey, and is a meaningful voice to speak on behalf of the children themselves.

5) Ms Joyce Teo

Joyce is senior health correspondent at The Straits Times. She has been on the health beat for more than a decade, covering everything from mental health and population health to health policies and palliative care. She is also host of the ST Health Check podcast. Having written extensively about mental health, she believes that talking openly about it can help reduce stigma. She is a member of Singapore's Bioethics Advisory Committee and a fellow of the Temasek Foundation-IPS Asia Journalism Fellowship.

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About Singapore Association for Mental Health (SAMH)

Established in 1968, the Singapore Association for Mental Health (SAMH) is Singapore's first mental health social service agency that provides a comprehensive range of mental health services, which include rehabilitative, outreach and creative services, to the community. SAMH aims to reintegrate persons with mental health issues back into society through community-based mental health programmes and services that provide rehabilitative care for these individuals, and support for their families and caregivers. With a vision to promote mental wellness for all, SAMH is committed to improve the lives of, and promote acceptance and respect for, persons with mental health issues and improve the mental resilience of the community. In 2023, SAMH celebrated its 55th anniversary and pledged its commitment to step up efforts and address the growing challenge of mental health issues among the people, young and old.

For more information, please visit: www.samhealth.org.sg

About SAMH Space2Connect

SAMH Space2Connect is a newly established premise by the Singapore Association for Mental Health (SAMH) in 2023 that provides integrated mental health services to individuals, families, and communities. Our services include creative programmes, case management, counselling and therapy, and community education, all with the goal of promoting mental wellness through lifestyle changes that lead to wellbeing, recovery, and empowerment. SAMH Space2Connect also serves as a collaborative space for like-minded partners to deliver meaningful engagements that strengthen community mental health and resilience. We firmly believe that cultivating healthy connections is essential for achieving holistic wellbeing.

For more information, please visit: <https://www.samhealth.org.sg/our-services/samh-space2connect/>

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