

MEDIA RELEASE

NCSS' BEYOND THE LABEL MOVEMENT TO ADDRESS IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON MENTAL HEALTH

- *New campaign short film spotlights the impact of COVID-19 on mental health and the importance of help-seeking and family support*
- *Beyond the Label Fest and new e-Escape room seek to raise awareness and improve mental health literacy*

SINGAPORE 24 SEPTEMBER 2020 – The third edition of Beyond the Label public education campaign by the National Council of Social Service (NCSS) wants to encourage Singaporeans to be open to speak to their loved ones about their mental health and seek professional help early. It was launched today by Minister for Social and Family Development Masagos Zulkifli, with the screening of a new short film. Parliamentary Secretary for Social and Family Development Eric Chua participated in the panel discussion that followed the film screening, alongside the film's director Mr Alvin Lee, a senior social worker from Viriya Community Services Ms Gayathri d/o Sandrasegaran and a person with lived experiences of a mental health condition Mr Jeremy Chan.

2 Minister Masagos said, "It is timely against the backdrop of the ongoing crisis, that we launch this year's edition of the Beyond the Label campaign We will focus this year's campaign on Singaporeans who may be facing socio-economic uncertainties and are under mental distress. We want to encourage people to be open to seeking and accepting help early, in order to develop mental fortitude to face life's stressors and challenges. Friends, families and co-workers must play a part to look out for each other and not shy away from reaching out to those people who may need emotional support."

Encouraging help-seeking behaviour amidst COVID-19

3 Coping with the COVID-19 pandemic, job insecurities and economic uncertainties has put a strain on the mental health and well-being of Singaporeans. A poll conducted by NCSS in May 2020 with more than 900 respondents from the general public and vulnerable groups found that Singaporeans were experiencing more psychological distress during the circuit breaker period, especially among those with a pre-existing mental health condition. During the circuit breaker period, NCSS saw a fourfold increase in the number of users of Belle, the Beyond the Label Helpbot (<https://go.gov.sg/belle-helpbot>), which provides customised access to mental health resources and services according to the users' needs.

4 Responding to these concerns, NCSS launched a short film for the campaign, *The Clock*, directed by local filmmaker Alvin Lee, which follows the story of a father struggling with

loss of income as a result of the pandemic, and juggling responsibilities of caring for his elderly parents and teenage child. It documents the father's help-seeking journey for his mental health with the support of his family.

Leveraging technology for Beyond the Label Fest

5 The campaign's signature outreach event, Beyond the Label Fest (BTL Fest), will be held virtually on 26 and 27 September on [Beyond the Label Facebook page](#) and [YouTube channel](#). As part of BTL Fest, a virtual concert hosted by Benjamin Kheng and Inch Chua will be held on 27 September at 8pm. The concert will feature performances by Stefanie Sun, Kit Chan, Tosh Zhang, Taufik Batisah, The Freshman, NEKO Highway, Ramli Sarip, and musicians from 3am Music Collective like Beverly Morata Grafton, Eugene Yip, Jack & Rai and many more. The BTL Fest aims to help youths understand the issue of stigma towards mental health conditions, and draw hope and inspiration from the courage and resilience of persons in recovery. 3am Music Collective also wants to raise awareness and acceptance of mental health conditions such as anxiety and depression, in the hope of removing stigma to promote help-seeking behaviours.

6 BTL Fest's line-up includes an array of workshops, such as Tabata workout, chocolate making, creative journaling, cultivating mindfulness etc., to provide an avenue for participants to express and overcome any negative feelings. There will also be dialogue sessions that explore a diverse range of mental health-related topics.

Supporting Youth Mental Health

7 BTL Fest will also offer the public a glimpse into the lives of persons with mental health conditions through a new e-Escape room. Created in partnership with the Youth Alliance, the immersive experience is a single-player web-based game, which aims to enhance mental health literacy and motivate youths to provide peer support through better understanding of different mental health conditions and the challenges faced by persons with mental health conditions. The Youth Alliance is a network of agencies that came together in partnership with Beyond the Label, to promote mental wellness among youths by encouraging them to seek help early, provide peer support and be the catalyst for change in the movement to reduce stigma towards persons with mental health conditions. Co-led by Campus PSY and TOUCH Community Services, and supported by NCSS, the Youth Alliance comprises representatives from government agencies, healthcare agencies, social service agencies and Institutes of Higher Learning.

8 Ms Tan Li San, Chief Executive Officer, NCSS, said, "It is so important for us to engage youths on mental health issues to encourage positive attitudes at critical life stages. Belle, the Beyond the Label Helpbot is available to connect youths, adults and seniors to mental health

resources and helplines, and we have made it more easily accessible with a web-based version. I hope the short film will nudge people to realise that they are not alone in feeling anxious and stressed during this time, and to seek help early for their mental well-being.”

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National Council of Social Service (NCSS)

NCSS is the umbrella body for over 450-member social service organisations in Singapore. Its mission is to provide leadership and direction in enhancing the capabilities and capacity of our members, advocating for social service needs and strengthening strategic partnerships, for an effective social service ecosystem. Community Chest is the fundraising and engagement arm of NCSS and Social Service Institute (SSI) is the human capital development arm of NCSS.

Social Service Sector Strategic Thrusts (4ST)

The Social Service Sector Strategic Thrusts (4ST) is a 5 year roadmap for the sector, co-developed by NCSS with stakeholders in the social service ecosystem – member organisations, service users, government, community, business leaders and civic-minded individuals. It is guided by a person-centred and holistic approach towards advancing the quality of life for individuals. The 4ST calls for active participation and collaboration so that everyone in the ecosystem plays a part to achieve a shared vision, where every person is empowered to live with dignity in a caring and inclusive society.

About the NCSS “Beyond the Label” Campaign

The “Beyond the Label” campaign is a five-year public education effort funded by the Tote Board Mental Health Strategic initiative. It also contributes to two of the three key thrusts of the five-year road map, the Social Service Sector Strategic Thrust (4ST), launched by NCSS to empower individuals, families and communities as well as forge a more caring, collaborative and impactful social service ecosystem.

About the Beyond the Label Fest

Launched in 2019, the signature event will be brought online this year to continue the fight against stigma towards persons with mental health conditions. Being a signature event that

allows for more meaningful interactions and understanding on the topic of mental health, activities have been curated and include collaborations with social enterprises, enthusiasts and educators. The multi-faceted line-up includes workshops on yoga, mindfulness and dialogue sessions that explores a diverse range of mental health-related topics.

About the Youth Alliance

The Youth Alliance is a network of agencies that came together in partnership with “Beyond the Label”, to promote mental wellness among youths by encouraging them to seek help early, provide peer support and be the catalyst for change in the movement to reduce stigma towards mental health conditions.

Co-led by Campus PSY and TOUCH Community Services, and supported by the National Council of Social Service, the Youth Alliance comprises representatives from government agencies such as the Health Promotion Board, healthcare agencies like the Community Health Assessment Team, social service agencies such as AMKFSC Community Services Ltd. and Institutes of Higher Learning (IHLs) like Temasek Polytechnic, Singapore Polytechnic and the Singapore Institute of Technology.

Youths can access the Youth Mental Health Initiatives Map via <http://bit.ly/2ksvGT2>.