

DIRECTIONS OF JUVENILE JUSTICE REFORMS IN SINGAPORE

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. Children and Young Persons Act Chapter 38

The Children and Young Persons Act (CYPA) Chapter 38 is the key legislation governing the administration of juvenile justice in Singapore. Though enacted as early as 23 September 1946, the spirit, intents and purposes of the CYPA remain progressive and very much relevant in our present Singapore society. Welfare of the juvenile is a guiding principle of this Act. Juveniles in conflict with the law are not excused of responsibility or accountability for their misconduct. The Act determines the jurisdiction of the Juvenile Court for persons aged 7 to under 16 year olds and spells out clear principles for care and protection orders, fit person orders, social work and supervised treatment, approved home and young offender in custody. The CYPA balances parental authority and State intervention.

As a nation, Singapore's response to youth offending has been to pursue a fine equilibrium in the management of juvenile offenders such that the justice and restorative models are not opposing paradigms but that they actually compliment each other as mutually supportive elements of the juvenile justice system. The Government's endorsement of the recommendations of the Inter-Ministry Committee on

Dysfunctional Families, Juvenile Delinquency and Drug Abuse (1995) which was chaired by the Minister for Community Development, signaled an intensified effort to put in place a series of initiatives to combat juvenile delinquency in a systematic and coordinated manner. Among other things, it led to the setting up of an Inter-Ministry and Agency Committee in that same year. The Inter-Ministry Committee on Juvenile Delinquency (IMJD) which has now been expanded and re-named Inter-Ministry Committee on Youth Crime (IMYC), was tasked to stimulate and coordinate efforts to keep youths from crime and promote their effective rehabilitation. The IMYC takes a proactive stance towards dealing with concerns over world-wide phenomenon of rising juvenile delinquency. Several studies on our youth were done and what ensued were numerous direct and beneficial programmes for targeted groups of youth at risk as well as youth in conflict with the law. 1995 also marked the Singapore Judiciary's introduction of the restorative justice model for disposition of juvenile cases. No amendment was necessary as in essence, the CYPA is firmly grounded on the philosophy of rehabilitation and reintegration of children and young persons.

Section 28 of the CYPA thus became a vital consideration in the assessment of every juvenile brought before the Court:

“Every court in dealing with a child or young person who is brought before it, either as being in need of

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care or protection, or as an offender or otherwise, shall have regard to the welfare of the child or young person and shall in a proper case take steps for removing him from undesirable surroundings' and for securing that proper provision is made for his education and training".

B. Children and Young Persons (Amendment) Act of 2001

The CYPA has just been amended to give the Juvenile Court a wider range of non-custodial options and enhance community orders to meet the varied rehabilitative needs pre-delinquents and young offenders.

The amendment of the CYPA will increase the momentum for juvenile justice reforms in Singapore. We will press on with the stance we have been taking and continue to refine our restorative approach to dealing with juvenile offenders. In his keynote address before an international audience at the Youth Justice 2000 Conference (13–15 September 2000 in Singapore) co-convened by the Ministry of Community Development and Sports and the Subordinate Courts of Singapore, the Honourable the Chief Justice commented:

"The values and philosophy expressed in these conventions, like the UN Guidelines for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency (which are known as the Riyadh Guidelines), the UN Rules for The Protection of Juveniles Deprived of Their Liberty, the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice (commonly known as the Beijing Rules), the International Convention on the Rights of The Child, have already transformed practice and

procedures in some parts of the world. Their promotion of diversion and restorative measures, as well as their insistence on rights and safeguards, signals a new approach to the treatment of young people that has been increasingly influential. We have kept faith with these international standards. On 7 September 2000, Singapore was among the first countries in the world to sign the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child".

Expectedly, juvenile justice reforms that have taken place have increasingly centred around:

- a. maximising diversion from the court system;
- b. minimising penetration into the system;
- c. proactively addressing offending behaviour; and
- d. engendering public support and confidence.

C. Probation of Offenders Act

The Probation of Offenders Act Chapter 252 requires the Courts to take into account all the circumstances of the case, including the nature of the offence and the character of the offender. Yet the legislation is clear in that while it recognises young offenders can and should be rehabilitated, it is never granted as a right. Restorative justice is predicated on helping the juvenile offender to gain full cognisance of his/her offending and its impact on self, family, others and society in general. It seeks to deal with underlying causes of offending and to integrate offenders and their families into society by involving all significant parties in the offence and the life of the juvenile offender.

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The amended CYPA, together with the Probation of Offenders Act provides for:

- a. a continuum of graduated yet flexible sanctions to correspond to the needs of each juvenile offender while providing for community safety;
 - b. immediate and therapeutic intervention at the first sign of delinquent behaviour;
 - c. ownership and accountability of the family of the juvenile in the rehabilitation process.
- b. Release the juvenile with a warning to both the juvenile and the parents or guardians and refer them to a social service agency for assistance and counselling;
 - c. On the advice of the Attorney-General, the Police may ask the juvenile to participate in a 6-month counselling and rehabilitation programme known as the Guidance Programme (GP).

Against the backdrop of what has been said, it may be useful to give an overview of how juvenile offenders are managed.

II. OVERVIEW OF THE MANAGEMENT OF JUVENILE OFFENDERS IN SINGAPORE

A juvenile is defined as a person who is between the age of 7 years and below 16 years and by this legal definition, falls under the jurisdiction of the Juvenile Court. The management and treatment of juvenile offenders in Singapore is grounded on the belief that every juvenile has the capacity to change and that our ultimate goal is the rehabilitation and reintegration of each juvenile in conflict with the law.

III. TREATMENT OF JUVENILE OFFENDERS

A. Pre-Court Diversionary Measures

When a juvenile offender is arrested for an offence, besides charging the offender, the police may opt for any one of the following measures:

- a. Release the juvenile with a warning to both the juvenile and the parents or guardians;
- b. Discharge the case conditionally or unconditionally;
- b. Place a bond on the parent/guardian to ensure proper care and supervision of the juvenile;
- c. Place the juvenile under the care of a "fit person";
- d. Place him/her on stand alone community service order;
- e. Place him/her on stand alone weekend detention;
- f. Place him/her on probation for a period ranging from 6 month to 3 years with or without conditions (which may include requiring him/her to go for periodic training as a condition of probation) and with or without a condition of residency in a probation hostel for up to 12 months;
- g. Order the juvenile to be detained for a period not exceeding 3 months and place him/her on probation upon discharge;
- h. Order him/her to be detained for a period of not more than 6 months;

B. Juvenile Court Measures

When a juvenile is brought before the Juvenile Court, the Court in most instances would require a pre-sentence report for the purpose of determining the most appropriate order. Depending on the gravity of the offence and merits of each case, the Juvenile Court may consider one or more of the following options:

- i. Order the juvenile to be committed to an Approved School for juvenile offenders for rehabilitation for a period between 24 to 36 months;
- j. Require the juvenile and parents to participate in family conferencing;
- k. Require the parents to go for mandatory counselling.

the offences committed. Participation in the programme is voluntary. The GP spans 6-months in the first instance. Where it is deemed necessary and in the interest of the juvenile, the juvenile may be required to undergo the programme for another 6 months, subject to the concurrence of both the juvenile and his parents.

IV. GUIDING PRINCIPLES IN THE REHABILITATION OF JUVENILE OFFENDERS

The following principles and consideration underpin the rehabilitation of juvenile offenders in Singapore:

A. Diversion from Court Process where Possible and Appropriate

According to police records, the percentage of juveniles let off with warning including all bail and referral cases to other departments is between 88% and 90%.

In October 1997, the Guidance Programme (GP) was launched by the Ministry of Community Development and Sports (MCDS), to strengthen the effectiveness of let-off with police caution for selected juveniles who require more than just a warning to steer clear of future offending. This arose from observation in 1994/5 that 30% of juveniles who were let off with police caution went on to commit fresh offences within 2 years of being let off with mere police caution.

The GP, a programme funded by Government, is an inter-agency networking mechanism which involves the Police, schools and VWOs appointed by MCD to provide a counselling and rehabilitative programme for juvenile offenders. Upon successful completion of GP, a juvenile would be let off with a stern warning in lieu of prosecution for

The GP aims to get the juvenile to:

- a. recognise the offence committed as a criminal act;
- b. make a decision to help himself not to commit an offence again;
- c. commit to work on his ability to manage his vulnerability to commit future offences.

Parents in turn are helped to acquire knowledge and skills in effective parenting and supervision of the juvenile. As at the end of 2000, 1081 juvenile cases have been placed on the GP programme. Completion rate is about 90%. Only 2% re-offended.

The programme has just been evaluated and the findings, shared with all relevant stakeholders of GP on 30 May 2001.

With effect from 1 Oct. 2001, the Juvenile Court will have the option of giving stand alone orders to deal with selected minor offenders deemed to be able to benefit from community orders without need for supervision orders.

B. Institutionalisation as the Last Resort

Community orders such as stand alone orders and probation offer an alternative to sending a young offender to a correctional facility. However, the challenge lies in ensuring there is adequate support services and

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interventions at the probation programme level to lend weight to the viability of community-based orders.

Probation is the conditional suspension of punishment while an offender is placed under the supervision of a Probation Officer and given guidance or treatment within the community. The period of probation ranges from 6 months to 3 years and there are 3 grades of probation; administrative, supervised and intensive probation. The level of service and supervision is matched to the level of risks and potential for rehabilitation. Relevant factors include criminal history, motivation for change, school progress and family situation. The conditions imposed as part of the probation order differ in terms of the level of supervision, frequency of contacts, the number of restrictions and the programmes the juvenile is mandated to attend. The probationers may also be subjected to combination orders. The degree of supervision and monitoring increases progressively with each grade.

Split probation may be considered for cases which are assessed to be needing more intensive supervision or intervention only during the initial period. The system of graded probation allows for optimum use of resources while providing Probation Officers with the flexibility to tailor probation supervision to meet individualised needs. Details of the graded system can be found in Annex II of the "National Standards for the Probation of Offenders as their Rehabilitation in the Community" (in the folder). A copy is attached as Appendix I for easy reference.

Singapore has put in place a continuum of services and programmes to address young offenders' risk issues while enhancing the protective factors to steer

young people from offending. Community-based supervision is strengthened when there is a continuum of supportive services and programmes to enable the offender's continued stay in the community throughout the rehabilitation period.

One of the core functions of the Probation Service is to provide the courts with pre-sentence reports on whether an offender is suitable for community-based orders. The availability of community-based programmes and support services which meet the offenders' risk issues, and his/her willingness to receive such services are vital in Probation Officer's assessment of suitability for probation and conditions to be imposed. At the pre-sentence stage, due consideration is also given to factors such as ethnic parenting perspectives of high risk cases. The aim is to draw on the strengths in the family network to support the helping process; whether to assist the offender in school placement, remain in school or be engaged in skills training. Community support and resources are also tapped to address the risk factors in the supervision of cases where probation is recommended.

Increasingly, focus has been on sharpening risks assessment and management to bring about successful rehabilitation of young offenders and their effective restoration to the community without the stigma of a conviction or committal to a juvenile correctional facility. To this end, Singapore is developing a local instrument for pre-sentencing classification of juvenile offenders. The Juvenile Offending Behaviour (JOB) criteria will enable the Juvenile Court to distinguish risk factors for categorisation into "developmental limited versus life course persistent" offenders. The components to the JOB criteria include

assessment of severity of charges, risk assessment based on static and dynamic factors and proximate factors which can affect sentencing e.g. remorse level in Court, behaviour while in remand or bail, chamber discussions, family conferencing and so forth. Studies are also being conducted by the Ministry of Community Development and Sports to identify predictive factors for success and failure on community orders. These coordinated efforts will move us into evidence-based practice in the classification and treatment of juvenile offenders.

At the programming level, several measures have been taken to enhance the effectiveness of community orders, principally probation and promote its credibility as an effective means of dealing with selected offenders.

1. Community Service Order (CSO)

CSO was introduced as a condition of probation in December 1996. CSO is an order of the court requiring an offender to perform unpaid work for a specific number of hours. It is currently meted out either as a stand alone order or as a condition of probation.

The objectives of CSO are 3-fold:

- a. As a rehabilitative measure, CSO affords an offender positive experience through community work and this in turn fosters development of empathy and consideration for others. In the process, the offender gains meaningful social experiences, develops constructive social relationship skills, and regains self-esteem and confidence;
- b. As a punishment, CSO deprives an offender of his/her leisure hours;
- c. As a form of reparation, CSO provides the offender an opportunity to make amends for the wrongs /hurt caused

by the offending behaviour through service to the community.

As at December 2000, 1449 probationers have been given between 40–240 hours of CSO as a condition of probation. The rate of completion to-date is 98%. An evaluation study on the effectiveness of CSO from the viewpoints of probationers, parents and CSO work agencies (August, 1998) showed that CSO has met with the objectives of the programme. Benefits cited by probationers, parents and CSO work agencies include:

- a. Acquisition of new skills;
- b. Improved intra-family relationship through better communication;
- c. Greater respect for parents, elders in the family, and authority figures;
- d. More useful at home, more responsible;
- e. More considerate and mindful of others;
- f. Tendency for parents to inquire on what transpired at the CSO agency thus increasing parent-child contact;
- g. Parents generally pleased their children were constructively engaged;
- h. CSO agencies generally found probationers' work good or at the very least, satisfactory.

Since 1999, we have been implementing **value-added CSO** targeting selected young offenders i.e. the non-academically inclined and those assessed to be lacking support and direction in life. Given probationers' overall responsiveness to the programme, we leveraged on the CSO obligation to perform unpaid work for specified hours by choosing placement options calculated to provide experiential learning & acquisition of trade and other marketable skills. Site supervisors with special trade

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and other skills were engaged for value-added CSO projects.

More than 500 probationers have completed their CSO by participating in value-added CSO projects such as wheel-chair repairs, minor renovations and landscaping works, painting walls and murals, setting up of Visitor's Corner in children's home, overall improvement of eldercare facilities and eldercare management under the supervision of a state-registered nurse specialising in geriatric care. Two new 2 value added CSO programmes that are currently in force are the "Bizlink Project" which involves the creation of hand-made cards by probationers alongside people with physical disabilities. The cards are then sent to volunteers, schools and other keen supporters of the rehabilitation programme to sustain their motivation to support juvenile offenders.

Another programme that has come on stream is "Empowerment One" which involves the referral of youth who have difficulty benefiting from mainstream educational and vocational system to the Management Development Institute of Singapore to complete modular programmes which lead to a certification. The probationers are then channelled either to mainstream educational or vocational institution. Those who are not inclined towards either set up are placed on industry attachment to keep them economically engaged in a supportive work environment.

Besides using CSO as a platform for vocational development and skills acquisition, CSO placements are also designed to give ample opportunities for young offenders to be self-affirmed. We capitalise on self-enhancing moments to get probationers to process their

experience, celebrate success for each well-completed tasks.

Parents are well-engaged in the whole CSO process. For many probationers, the visible output of their CSO and appreciation from parents and services users create powerful "teachable" moments that can be life altering.

In implementing the CSO programme, we strive to establish a nexus between offence committed and the type of community service an offender is required to perform. For cyber offenders, CSO placement includes a stint of volunteering in projects which demand constructive use of IT savvy-ness for a worthwhile cause e.g. developing start-up screens to warn against hacking and consequences of cyber crimes, developing parent education materials on supervising children in internet time, developing IT applications for life-long learning for the elderly or for disabled to plug into the info-tech world.

In 2000, the CSO placement process was fine-tuned to render the process itself a reasoning and rehabilitation tool to promote informed decision making, goal setting, shared responsibility and child participation in his/her CSO placement decisions. This move brings us closer to the principles of respect for the views of the child and child participation in matters concerning him/her espoused in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

2. Strengthening of Probation Orders

A review of the use of probation orders in 1997 and implementation of the recommendations of the "Report on Strengthening Probation Orders" in January 1998 was a significant move in promoting probation as anything but a "soft option". The graded probation

system seeks to balance the need for punishment and deterrence and the hope for rehabilitation. We take into account the type of offences committed, severity of offences, type of offenders, circumstances of the case, likelihood of re-offending, the personal factors and type of programmes most appropriate in meeting all these considerations.

The strengthening of probation has resulted in better probation outcomes in terms of higher completion rate and lower recidivism over a 3-year post probation period.

3. Institutionalisation of core & elective programmes

Since 1998, a structured programme was devised for probationers to augment reporting and casework. Divided into core programmes i.e. those deemed essential and beneficial to every probationer or parent, and elective programmes which target specific risks and needs depending on the offender and type of offence, the programmes were intended to provide:

- a. avenues and measures to benchmark the probationer's progress;
- b. opportunities for probationers to work through lapses of bad behaviour;
- c. avenues for constructive pursuit of leisure time; and
- d. opportunities for specific problems to be addressed.

Core programme include group-based induction for new probationer, victim impact awareness, parents induction, parenting workshops and pre-termination session. Elective programmes in turn seek to address a variety of risks factors or individual needs of probationers which may undermine progress on probation if left unattended. Programmes targeting alcohol dependency, anger and

aggression, secret society involvement, drugs misuse, and personal development programmes like making healthy life choices, study skills etc. are some examples.

4. Focused programmes to address specific risks

To minimise non-completion or re-offending for the more serious or high risk probation cases, specific programmes are put in place in collaboration with various government, non-government, people and the corporate sector:

- a. Intensive quit smoking programmes for under-aged smoking
- b. "Get it Straight — Facts on Alcohol Use and Misuse"
- c. "Anti-relapse programme for substance abusers"
- d. "Sex Offenders Treatment Programme"
- e. "Lucent-SHINE" programme — a motivational programme with strong parent involvement and service learning components for Chinese speaking cases sponsored by Lucent Technology;
- f. "POWER" programme for high risk Malay cases;
- g. "360%" programme by Rotary Family Service Centre;
- h. "Lawless to Lawplus";
- i. Empowerment-One (E1).

5. Individualised Programme for Intellectually-disabled (ID) Offenders

In June 2000, a smart_id team (special management and resource team for intellectually disabled) was formed comprising specially trained personnel supported by an inter-disciplinary resource panel (psychologist, medical social workers, experts in various types of disabilities, disability service providers, lawyers etc.) to specialise in the preparation of pre-sentence reports for

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intellectually-disabled (ID) offenders. The main objective was to have an individualised assessment and casework that would enhance community-based supervision of ID offenders. The move has resulted in the development of a protocol which requires investigating Probation Officers to exhaust all possible avenues of community-based rehabilitation of ID offenders.

6. Probation Service in Family Service Centres and Community Focal Points

Efforts to widen probation for young offenders bring in its wake, outreach of Probation Service into schools and the community and the intensification of programmes by offenders to benefit the community. To-date, several family service centres and community centres serve as venues for our individual and groupwork for offenders and their families. Many are ethnic or faith based organisations and therefore best placed to address cultural and other diversity:

- a. 4PM-Mendaki Family Service Centre (FSC)
- b. Rotary FSC
- c. Young Women Muslim Association — Mendaki FSC
- d. Pertapis Adolescent Centre (PADC)
- e. Singapore Indian Development Centre (SINDA) FSC
- f. 8 community centres

7. Employment Development Programmes

Work development programmes have been put in place to cater to out-of-school/work young offenders who face difficulty staying in school and yet unable to find work. Income generating activities through collaborations with the disability sector e.g. Bizlink Centre, Metta Welfare Association and Movement for the Intellectually Disabled, Singapore (MINDS) are ways in which probationers

help people with special needs and the elderly to remain competitive in meeting work targets to secure work contracts. The probationers in turn get the opportunity to develop positive work habits and skills within a sheltered work setting.

8. Condition of Residency

Currently 5 facilities are gazetted as probation hostels or “Approved Institutions” under the Probation of Offenders Act. They are:

For Males

- a. Singapore Boys Hostel
- b. Bukit Batok Hostel

For Females

- c. Pertapis Women’s & Girls’ Centre
- d. Muhammadiyah Home
- e. Gracehaven

The Probation of Offenders Act restricts condition of residency on a probationer to no more than 12 months. Sections 6 & 7 of the Act further require a review report be submitted to the court after the expiry of 6 month’s stay in a probation hostel for the purpose of helping the court to decide whether continued hostel stay is necessary.

Besides gazetted hostels, there are also numerous other facilities by voluntary welfare organisations which take in probationers who require a brief residential stay on a voluntary basis, to iron out family problems, work through personal or other crisis, or severe ties with negative associates. The availability of options such as these allows for wider use of probation in cases which would otherwise be assessed to be too unstable to benefit from community-based rehabilitation.

Institutionalisation of a young offender is considered only as a last resort after all else have failed and when it becomes sufficiently clear that committing a young offender to an institution is really in his/her best interest.

C. The Family as Basic Building Block of Society and Change Agent

In 2000, about 78% of the probation population were 18 years and below. Of these, a close 80% are either in the school or technical education system. 19% were from single parent.

The family is the basic building block of society. It is also one of the most important change agents for juvenile delinquents and young offenders. In our rehabilitative work with a young offender, we strive to build on the strengths of each family and its networks to effect positive changes in the young offender if not the whole family unit. Probation is used as an instrument of change to re-shape attitudes, values and behaviour. We work on amending flaws within the individual and family system to empower the probationer and family to sustain changes and build up resiliency.

The strengthening families framework used in community-based rehabilitation of offenders begin from the pre-sentence stage right to the end of probation. Family engagement and empowerment include:

- a. negotiated action plan where probation is recommended or for resistant cases, the plan of action would have been discussed with the parents;
- b. parental bond to exercise proper care and supervision;
- c. attendance at core and elective programmes for parents e.g. parents

induction, experiential parenting workshops (“Raising troubled Teens Without Raising Blood Pressure”), parents support groups, educational talks on gangs, substance abuse, prison visits (with their offender child);

- d. other specialised services e.g. special sessions for parents of young sex offenders;
- e. progress review with the parents and providing feedback on outcome of court reviews;
- f. family conference, solution or problem-focused counselling and other sessions;
- g. pre-termination programme for both probationer and parents.

Parents sessions factor in language the parents are most comfortable in. Ethnic dimensions, single parent status and the availability of a special needs child in the family unit are given due consideration in designing activities and programmes to fully engage parents in the rehabilitation process.

At each stage of the probation process, the roles and responsibilities of parents and what is expected of them are made clear. Disadvantaged families are given additional help to enhance their functioning. Casework in such instances may include sponsorship of a divorced or widowed parent to a computer course or back-to-work programmes.

D. The Many Helping Hands Approach to Community Rehabilitation

The effectiveness of probation, as a community-based rehabilitation programme, is enhanced only if there is community support and involvement. Community acceptance of offenders and their potential for change, understanding of the goals, principles and methods of

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probation, and their commitment to support reintegration efforts cannot be overly emphasised.

Thus Probation Service has, since the 70s, and more so in recent years, actively engaged and involve the community in a variety of ways:

1. Volunteer Probation Officers:
Community Probation Service

The Community Probation Service (CPS), introduced in June 1971, will be marking its 30th anniversary in October 2001. It is 350-member strong and has evolved into a well-developed volunteer programme. Volunteer Probation Officers (VPOs), complement the work of Probation Officers. By befriending and guiding probationers, VPOs help to steer young people back to the straight and constructive path. For many of our successful cases, VPOs make a real difference in re-shaping the lives of young offenders.

Sustaining, supporting and providing on-going training to keep volunteers continually challenged and motivated poses a grave challenge especially in this line of work where staff burn-out is a very real issue. To appeal to the diversity of interests, skills, talents and volunteer aspirations, CPS offers a wide scope of involvement to cater to VPOs' interests, skills and training received as well as the various stages of their volunteer life cycle. These include:

- a. casework;
- b. projects e.g. prepare pre-sentence reports, organise activities for probationers & parents individual or group basis;
- c. time restriction checks;
- d. committee & volunteer coordination; and
- e. groupwork.

VPOs are currently involved in formulating annual work plans relating to activities for and by volunteers, organising VPO Skills Training Seminars aimed at sharpening skills in working with today's youth, and recently, even developing a guidebook to support VPOs in rehabilitation work with young offenders.

CPS is being positioned to accommodate group volunteering as well as corporate volunteerism.

2. School-Probation Service-Court Link
(SPC) Link

The Schools-Probation Service-Court (SPC) Link was established in April 2000 to provide a school-focus to the probation programme given 80% of probationers 18 years of age and below are either in schools or the institute of technical education (ITE) centres. The SPC Link has been expanded to cover private schools and tuition centres attended by probation cases. The SPC Link has resulted in more streamlined information gathering processes, more opportunities for dialogue between the agencies before, during and after probation, and an integrated management of young offenders through close partnership with Operations Managers or other authorised persons from participating schools.

3. Community Links

Besides collaboration with schools, the Probation Service, has linked up with several voluntary welfare agencies, religious-based organisations, civic and self-help as well as theatre groups, sports bodies, grassroots organisation and the corporate sector to actively engage the "many helping hands" at the local and community level to enhance prospects of rehabilitation and reintegration of young offenders through engagement in

meaningful pursuits for physical, material and spiritual well being.

4. National Standards for the Probation of Offenders & their Rehabilitation in the Community

To reap maximum benefits of partnerships with families and the community, it is important that the probation investigation and supervision process be made transparent to all parties including the probationer and family. Transparency and accountability are twin goals that are especially relevant in the probation context where the balance of power is somewhat tilted against the offender.

As a stamp of commitment to service standards and best practice in probation work, Singapore launched the “National Standards for the Probation of Offenders and their Rehabilitation in the Community” in August 2000. The publication, put together jointly by MCDS and the Subordinate Courts, is a significant milestone in the development of the probation system in Singapore. The standards have been translated into Mandarin, Malay and Tamil to cater to persons more conversant in the vernacular languages.

When community-based orders is either just not viable whether from the viewpoint of a juvenile offender’s needs or public safety, institutional orders are meted out. Even so, preference is on placing the juvenile in an open institution to allow him/her to continue on with mainstream education or employment. It is only when all else fail, that we go for a committal order in a secured facility.

Since July 1999, we have introduced a post-sentencing classification system to assess risk of violence, abscondence, self-harm and victimization among newly

committed juvenile cases. The risk assessment forms a basis for caseworkers in the juvenile homes to conduct the needs assessments and formulate an individual care plan for the period of the boy’s residence and during aftercare supervision. A detailed write-up on the treatment of juvenile in custody can be found in the folder.

V. CHALLENGES FOR THE FUTURE

As we transit into the new knowledge-based economy, and confront all that comes with it, the challenge is for us to continuously strive for a probation system which is cogent and transparent, structured in process and procedures, yet flexible and responsive to changing needs.

One of the strategic thrusts would be to continue to leverage on our national policy of continuous learning and ease of access to info-technology to better prepare probationers to carve job niches for themselves and reduce re-offending due to economic reasons.

Focus will also be on identifying partners for collaborative research, exchange of executive programmes and other partnerships both with local partners and overseas counterparts to continue to inject dynamism in our management, implementation and evaluation of the service both at the programmes as well as system level.

Identification of risk assessment and management tools and data management system that will help us to achieve better outcomes with less manpower, will be vital in Singapore’s manpower scenario. No less important are managerial issues; of attracting and retaining suitably qualified staff, providing staff training and career development, and capacity

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building of all the constituents of the juvenile justice system.

Widening the use of probation will invariably mean the challenge of having to meet and deal with more complex needs of individuals and families, prioritising responses to target “what works” and providing support and technical expertise to the many helping hands we engage in the rehabilitation of offenders. These issues have to be adequately dealt with at appropriate levels if we are to continue in our drive towards a more progressive, more humane and progressive treatment of young offenders in Singapore.

Appendix 1

Conditions and Duration of the 3 Grades of Probation

Item	Grades And Period of Probation		
	Administrative Probation (6 months to 1 year)	Supervised Probation (1 to 2 years)	Intensive Probation (2 to 3 years)
Conditions		In addition to the conditions which may be imposed for Administrative Probation, the following may be imposed:	In addition to the conditions which may be imposed for Administrative Probation and Supervised Probation, the following may be imposed:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To comply with time restrictions • To work faithfully at a suitable employment or faithfully pursue a course of study or vocational training that will equip the offender for employment • To make a good faith effort towards completion of his/her course of study or vocational training • To participate in or comply with the rehabilitation programme specified by either the court or the probation officer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To maintain regular contact with the probation officer • To allow the probation officer to visit the offender at reasonable times at his home or workplace or any other place • Not to smoke • Not to consume alcohol • Not to associate with or be in the company of secret society members • Not to associate with or be in the company of persons who are engaged in criminal activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To reside for a specified period in an approved institution or home or hostel • To be electronically tagged

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Item	Grades And Period of Probation		
	Administrative Probation (6 months to 1 year)	Supervised Probation (1 to 2 years)	Intensive Probation (2 to 3 years)
Conditions (continued)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To attend and participate in anti-secret society talks or prison visits • To attend healthy lifestyle awareness programmes • To participate in community projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not to patronise or visit pubs, discotheques, night-clubs, karaoke lounges, billiards saloons or video game arcades • To maintain a neat and proper appearance • If so ordered, to have secret society related tattoos removed by a medical practitioner within a specified period from the commencement date of the probation order • To refrain from any contact, direct or indirect, with the victim or any other person connected to the case • To submit to regular drug and/or alcohol tests 	
Recommended Hours of CSO	Not less than 40 hours	Not more than 120 hours	Between 120 to 240 hours