

Sharing on Singapore's COVID-19 Mental Wellness Taskforce

Scope

- Background of COVID-19 Mental Wellness Taskforce
- Impact of COVID-19 on the Mental Well-Being of our Population
- Work Done Thus Far
- Gaps Identified and Recommendations
- Conclusion and Next Steps

Background on COVID-19 Mental Wellness Taskforce

- The COVID-19 Mental Wellness Taskforce was convened by the Ministry of Health (MOH) and the Institute of Mental Health (IMH) in October 2020 in anticipation of an increase in the number of individuals with mental distress due to the social and mental health impact of COVID-19



- Co-led by MOH and IMH, with representatives from Ministry of Culture, Community & Youth (MCCY), Ministry of Education (MOE), Ministry of Manpower (MOM), Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF), Health Promotion Board (HPB), Agency for Integrated Care (AIC), National Council of Social Service (NCSS), and People's Association (PA).

Background on COVID-19 Mental Wellness Taskforce

Serve as a platform to:

- **Connect key Ministries and agencies involved in mental health and well-being work**, to ensure a coordinated national response to the mental health needs of the population.
- Facilitate the **stock-take** and **discussion of existing and planned initiatives** to prevent overlaps in services, **identify gaps**, and collectively **develop recommendations** to address the gaps.

How has COVID-19 impacted the mental well-being of our population?

Negative impact and implications of COVID-19 pandemic on population's mental wellbeing



- Anxiety due to unemployment and **uncertainty about job prospects** is a recurring concern amongst youths in transition and working adults



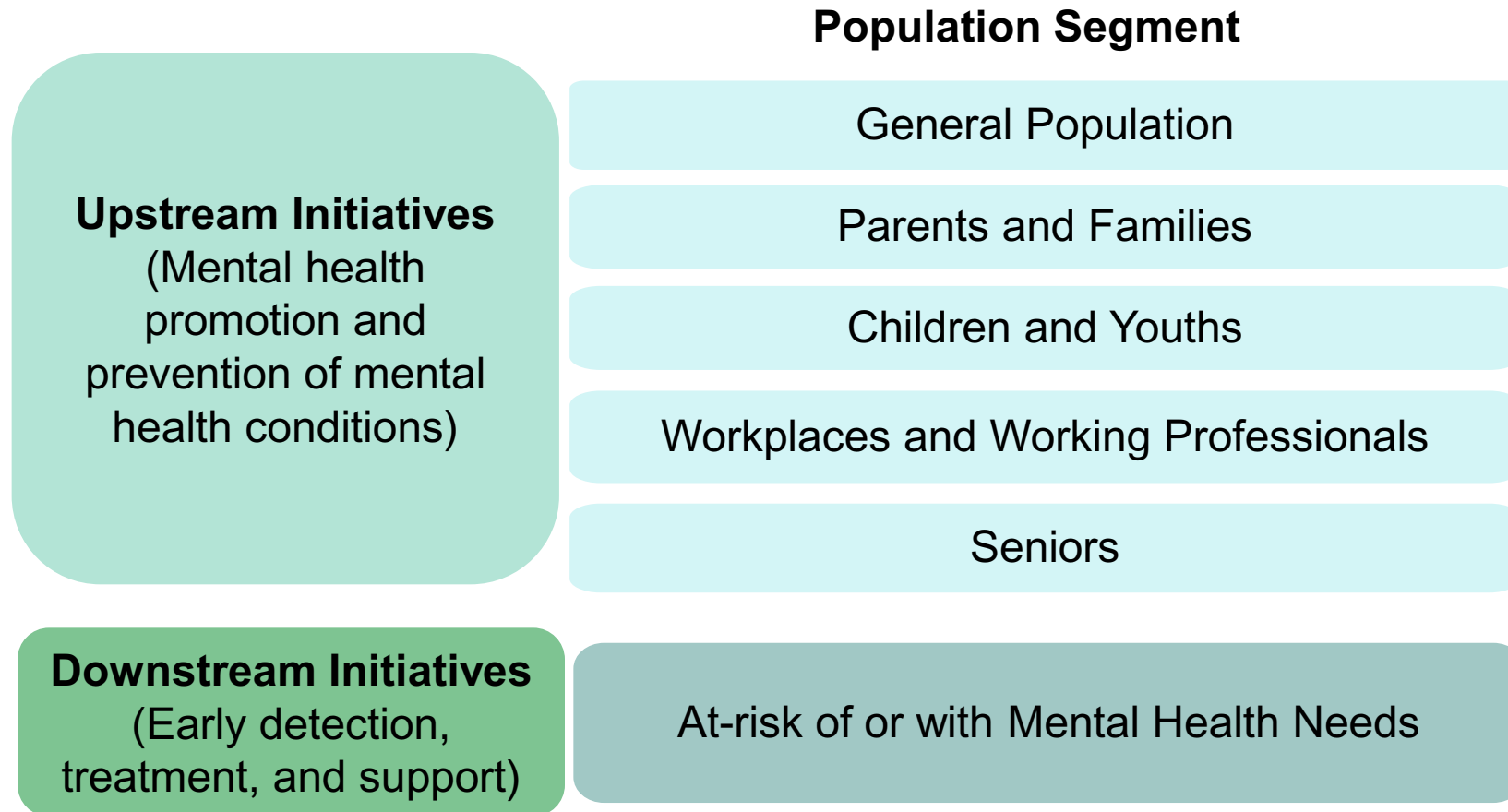
- Vulnerable groups such as **seniors who are living alone**, may be disproportionately affected and may benefit from greater support



- **Increase mental health needs** as seen in the increase in utilization of mental health services especially during Circuit Breaker period

Work Done Thus Far

Current Mental Health Initiatives Targeting Different Segments Of The Population



Gaps & Recommendations

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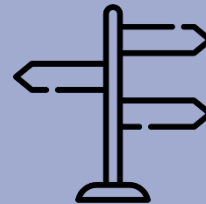
The Taskforce has reviewed the current mental health landscape including the recent initiatives implemented arising from the pandemic and identified a few gaps that will require a Whole-of-Government approach to address:

Gap A: Need for Overarching Whole-of-Government Strategy



Recommendation A: To develop an overarching strategy on mental health and well-being

Gap B: Need for better Signposting given Wealth of Resources



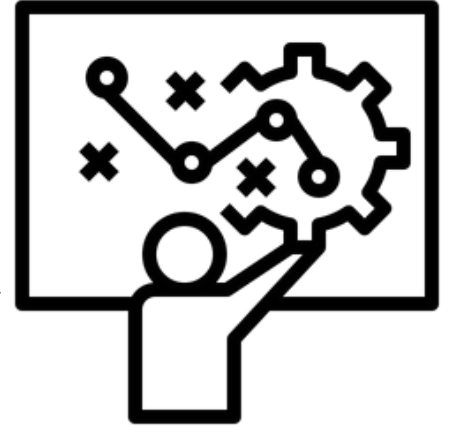
Recommendation B: To develop a One-Stop online portal for national mental health resources

Gap C: Need for Better Alignment of Mental Health Training Resources and need for more Trained Mental Health Professionals



Recommendation C: To develop a national mental health competency training framework

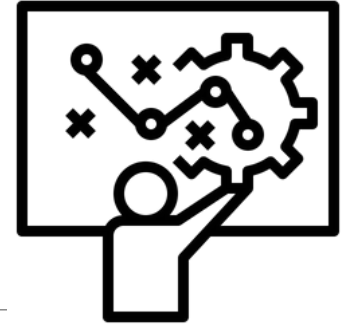
A. Overarching Strategy on Mental Health and Well-being



Gap: Need for overarching Whole-of-Government strategy

While individual ministries and agencies have implemented a slew of policies, programmes and services under their respective purview, there is currently no overarching strategy to guide the alignment and track progress of efforts across the different agencies in a coherent manner.

A. Overarching Strategy on Mental Health and Well-being



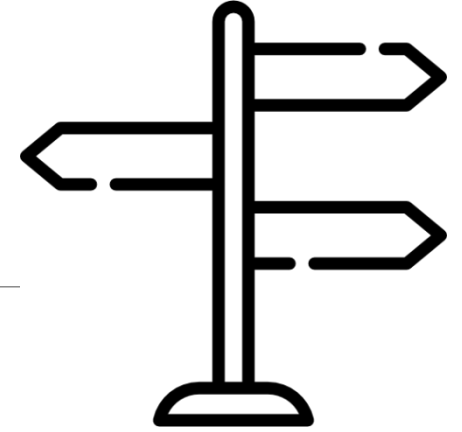
Recommendation: To develop an overarching strategy on mental health and well-being

To provide an overarching framework to align and guide the work of various agencies in promoting mental health and wellbeing.

The Strategy will articulate clear goals and action-oriented plans, that will be co-created with the public. There will also be efforts to address cross-cutting issues and identify the gaps that would require multiple agencies to collectively address.

It should also look at ways to improve data collection and data infrastructure across Whole-of-Government to measure the impact of our interventions.

B. One-Stop Online Portal For National Mental Health Resources

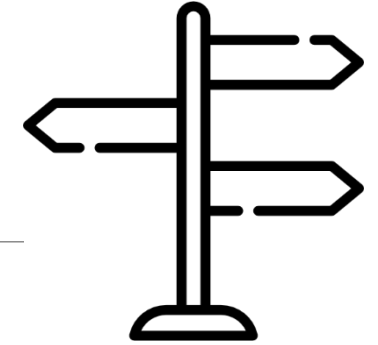


Gap: Need for better signposting given wealth of resources

Numerous online resources on mental health and well-being by government agencies and private providers – some of the information is conflicting, outdated or not informative enough.

Can be overwhelming and confusing, and concerns on the legitimacy and credibility of the information presented.

B. One-Stop Online Portal For National Mental Health Resources

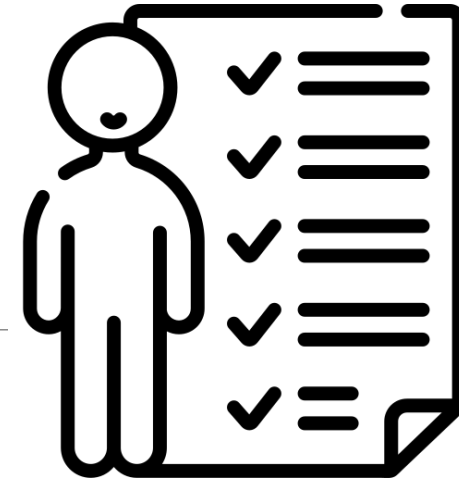


Recommendation: To develop a One-Stop online portal for national mental health resources

HPB will develop a dedicated portal for mental health and well-being on HealthHub. The webpage seeks to be the national go-to website for mental health and well-being where individuals will be able to access trusted, useful and accurate information which have been curated by experts, at their fingertips.

The website will target individuals who want to find information for themselves, and those who want information on how to support others. The information will be updated and aligned across the various resources from the respective agencies.

C. National Mental Health Competency Training Framework



Gap: Need for better alignment of mental health training resources and more trained mental health professionals

Currently, various agencies conduct mental health trainings for different target groups in the community, including the general public, frontline officers, and mental health professionals. There is a need for alignment of training standards to ensure the intended training goals and outcomes are achieved.

To improve accessibility and sustainability of mental health services, there is a need to augment the capacity to provide mental health support in the community

- Leverage, train and build a pool of informal first responders to deliver psychological first aid as part of Total Defence
- Train professionals and paraprofessionals to achieve the required competencies to support different levels of mental health needs

C. National Mental Health Competency Training Framework



Recommendation: To develop a national mental health competency training framework

To develop a national mental health competency framework which could provide a tiered approach for different degrees of support and competencies expected of professionals and paraprofessionals who support persons with mental health challenges.

Framework will align agencies' training efforts and support the development of required mental health competencies in a consistent manner.

Help to map and expand the pool of manpower for delivering a wider range of services for mild, moderate to severe conditions.

Conclusion & Next Steps

COVID-19 as a stress test

- COVID-19 has presented itself as a stress test on the nation's resilience and ability to cope with a global crisis
- Matched by an extraordinary response from the mental health team, community, agencies and organisations across various sectors
- Greater attention and focus on the importance of mental health and well-being, which has led to increased awareness of mental health and avenues for help-seeking
- Need to continue to monitor the utilisation of mental health services & assess the population's ability to cope with stressors brought about by the new norm

***New* Interagency Taskforce on Mental Health & Well-being**

- Beyond COVID-19, the COVID-19 Mental Wellness Taskforce (CoMWT) has transitioned into a new **Interagency Taskforce on Mental Health & Well-being** in July 2021 to oversee mental health and well-being efforts, focusing on cross-cutting issues that require interagency collaborations
- The new interagency platform will build on the lessons learnt and best practices of agencies to continue with efforts to build the mental resilience of the population
- The CoMWT's report and recommendations to address existing gaps will lay the foundation for the work of the new interagency platform