

Translation

COMMUNITY JUSTICE CENTRE OFFERED HELP TO NEARLY 6000 LAST YEAR

Photo Caption: Singapore Management University (SMU) Law Faculty student Weng Xinru (20 years) is a Court Facilitator. She spends one day a week working as a volunteer at Family Court. (Photography by He Jiajun)

The Community Justice Centre (CJC) has set up reception areas at Level 1 of the Subordinate Courts and Family Court. Its precursor was the HELP Centre. Apart from continuing to provide free legal advice through legal clinics, assisting litigants in completing application procedures, filling up forms and making preparations for Court matters, the Centre will also refer litigants facing financial or other problems to partnering or related government agencies, so as to offer an array of integrated one-stop services to litigants.

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After one year in service, the charity organization, Community Justice Centre (CJC) has served 5500 to 6000 members of public thus far.

A taxi driver Mr Teo was one of the litigants who stepped into the CJC last year. He is the sole breadwinner of the family, driving his taxi to support his family of six. Yet he had a brush with the law after an accident and lost his job. During the process, he was worried that he would go to prison; he was even more worried about what his wife and four school going children were to do should he go to prison.

Even though CJC had no right to give him legal advice, it nonetheless arranged for him to get free advice from the "legal clinic". At the same time, the Centre referred him proactively to the Family Service Centre (FSC), which applied for Pocket Money Fund for his children and offered him moral support, enabling him to focus on the case before him without having to worry about the trouble at home.

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CJC Assistant Director Oey Ying Erh (40 years) pointed out: "Some people don't only need someone to explain the legal procedure to them. They may also be facing some potential problems. For gambling addicts, for instance, we can refer them to the National Council on Problem Gambling (NCPG) for counseling."

Translation

Family cases account for 60%, criminal cases account for 30% and civil cases account for 10% of the cases accepted by CJC.

A survey by the National University of Singapore (NUS) commissioned by the Centre reveals that amongst the Centre's 85 clients, 57% with primary/secondary school education and below, 15.5% are Institute of Technical Education (ITE) graduates and the rest are polytechnic or university graduates. Malays account for 41%, Chinese account for 26% and Indians account for 24% of the litigants.

CJC Executive Director Leonard Lee (43 years) disclosed that looking forward, the Centre will extend its outreach into the community, such as cooperating with the Community Development Council (CDC), training the staff of CDC to give them an understanding of the entire Court process and Pro Bono Service system, learn to review individual cases, so that when they encounter needy residents, they can refer them to CJC. Leonard Lee described such bilateral cooperation as a "marriage" between the community and law.

He stated: "Many people may not be aware of the resources out there which are of help to them. Lay persons also do not understand the entire justice system. CJC closes this gap through the integration of social services and law to help the needy in society."

At present, CJC has accepted seed funding from the Tan Chin Tuan Foundation for the first three years at \$250,000 per year.

LAW FACULTY STUDENT BECOMES FACILITATOR SERVING NON-ENGLISH SPEAKING PUBLIC

When many people come to Court, they are confounded by the voluminous English jargon. At this juncture, CJC offers a service by getting a group of trained Court facilitators to provide them the explanation in Court. These legal facilitators are Law Faculty students from NUS and SMU. At present, they are stationed within Subordinate Courts No 23 and Family Court.

SMU Law Faculty student Weng Xinru (20 years) is one of the Court Facilitators. She spends one day a week working as a volunteer at Family Court.

Speaking of her job scope, Weng Xinru cited an example that some parties in divorce cases would break down emotionally, while others would stand helplessly in the Courtroom, at a loss what to do. When they encounter such circumstances, they would step forward proactively to assist.

In addition, CJC has also launched the "Guidance for Plea Scheme" for accused who intend to plead guilty.

Under the said scheme, the Association of Muslim Lawyers would assess the cases for accused who are held in custody on a pro bono basis, in order to apprise them of their chances in winning the case and make an informed decision to enter a plea of guilt. This scheme is currently limited to Subordinate Courts Nos 17 and 24. The service is aimed at accused who are referred by the Court.

Zaobao, Sunday, 9 February 2014

Translation

Last November, the Centre also launched the “Friends for Litigants-in-Person” pilot programme in cooperation with lawyers, law students and Zurich Insurance legal counsel team. The Centre hopes to recruit more volunteers with this programme. Without providing legal advice, these volunteers can accompany litigants during the proceedings, assist them in tendering documents, take notes etc and enable litigants to face the trial process calmly.

Even though CJC has served nearly 6000 within a year, it only has 9 staff on its payroll, including its two Directors. Currently, the Centre’s assistance programmes are mainly run by more than 100 volunteers, 70% of them are law students. Thus the Centre hopes to increase the number of volunteers within this year, around 150 to 200. Apart from students, volunteers from all walks of life are also welcome.

Members of public who are keen to find out about CJC may access the CJC website <http://www.cjc.org.sg> or dial 65574100.

社区司法中心 去年为近6000人伸援



新大法律系学生翁欣茹(20岁)是一名法庭协调员,她每周会抽一天到家事法庭当志工。(何家俊摄)

社区司法中心目前在初级法庭一楼和家事法庭设有接待处,它的前身是初庭的援助中心(HELP Centre)。除了继续透过法律诊所免费提供法律咨询,协助诉讼人完成申请程序、填写表格和准备法庭事项,中心也会把面对经济或其他问题的诉讼人,转介给伙伴机构或相关政府机构,给诉讼人提供综合式的一站式服务。

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投入服务一年,慈善组织社区司法中心(Community Justice Centre)至今已服务了5500到6000名公众。

张姓德士司机就是去年走入社区司法中心的诉讼人之一。他是家中唯一的经济支柱,开德士养活一家六口,却因一次车祸惹上官司,丢了饭碗。过程中,他担心自己会坐牢,更担心自己万一坐牢,妻子和四个在求学的孩子要怎么办。

尽管社区司法中心无权给他法律咨询,但中心安排他接受“法律诊所”的免费咨询,同时也主动把他转介到家庭服务中心,由家服中心替他的孩子申请零用钱基金,并给予他精神支持,让他在无后顾之忧下,专注于眼前的案件。

社区司法中心目前在初级法庭一楼和家事法庭设有接待处,它的前身是初庭的援助中心(HELP Centre)。除了继续透过法律诊所免费提供法律咨询,协助诉讼人完成申请程序、填写表格和准备法庭事项,中心也会把面对经济或其他问题的诉讼人,

转介给伙伴机构或相关政府机构,给诉讼人提供综合式的一站式服务。

社区司法中心副主任黄莺儿(40岁)指出:“有些人不止需要有人为他们解释法律程序,他们可能也面对一些潜在问题,譬如赌博成瘾的人,我们可以把他们引介到国立成瘾治疗服务接受辅导。”

社区司法中心接获的案件中,家事案占了六成、刑事案占三成、民事案则占一成。

中心委托国大学生所做的一项调查显示,中心的85名客户当中,有57%的学历在中小学以下,15.5%从工艺教育学院毕业,其余则是理工学院或大学学历。诉讼人当中马来族占41%、华族26%、印度族24%。

社区司法中心主任李炳耀(43岁)透露,接下来,中心将把触角伸到社区内,譬如跟社区发展理事会合作,训练社理会的工作人员,让他们了解整个法庭程序和义务律师制度,学会评估个案,当遇到有需要的居民时,可以转介给社区司法中心。李炳耀把这种双向合作形容成社会和法律的“联姻”。

他说:“许多人可能不知道

外面有什么资源能帮助他们,一般人也不了解整个司法体制,社区司法中心补足这个缺口,以社会服务和法律的结合,帮助社会上这群需要的人。”

社区司法中心目前接受陈振传基金会提供的首三年“种子基金”,每年获25万元拨款。

法律系学生任协调员 为不懂英语者服务

很多人上到法庭时,被庭上的许多英文术语搞得一头雾水时,社区司法中心于是提供了一项服务,让一群受过训练的法庭协调员在法庭上为他们做解释。这些法律协调员是国大和新加坡管理大学法律系的学生,他们目前驻守在初庭第23庭以及家事法庭庭内。

新大法律系学生翁欣茹(20岁)就是法庭协调员之一,她每周抽出一天到家事法庭当志工。

在谈到工作范围时,翁欣茹举例说,一些离婚案的当事人会情绪崩溃,一些则会无助地站在庭室内不知所措,遇到这些情况,他们都会主动上前协助。

此外,社区司法中心也为有意认罪被告推出“知情认罪计划”(Guidance for Plea Scheme)。

在该计划下,穆斯林律师公会协会的律师,义务为那些已遭还押的被告评估他们的案件,让被告清楚他们在案件中的胜算,在知情的情况下做出认罪的决定。这项计划目前只限于初庭第17和24庭,服务的对象是由法庭转介的

被告。

中心去年11月也与律师、法律系学生、瑞士苏黎世保险的律师团队合作,推出一项“诉讼人之友”(Friends for Litigants-In-Person)试验计划。中心希望借此计划招揽更多志工。在不提供法律意见的情况下,这些志工可以在审讯过程中陪伴诉讼人,协助诉讼人提呈文件、做笔记等,让诉讼人从容面对审讯过程。

社区司法中心虽然一年内服务近6000人,但包括两名主任在内,支薪员工只有九人,中心目前的援助项目策划主要由100多名义工负责,当中七成是法律系学生,因此中心希望能在今年内增加义工人数,大约150人至200人,除了学生之外,也欢迎来自各行各业的志工。

有兴趣了解社区司法中心的公众可上中心的网站<http://www.cjc.org.sg>或拨打65574100。

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