



YOUTH COURTS THERAPEUTIC JUSTICE MODEL

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INTRODUCTION

1. The Youth Courts Therapeutic Justice Model (the “**YC TJ Model**”) complements the Family Justice Courts (“**FJC**”) Therapeutic Justice Model (“**TJ Model**”) and provides for the application of Therapeutic Justice (“**TJ**”) to matters in the Youth Courts (“**YC**”). The YC TJ Model articulates existing practices in the YC that embody TJ principles and introduces new initiatives to further integrate TJ within YC processes.
2. This YC TJ Model applies TJ principles to: (a) promote the reform, rehabilitation, and reintegration into society, of a youth offender¹; and (b) help a child or young person² who is a youth offender, or is in need of care, protection or family guidance, and his or her family, to make appropriate mindset and behavioural changes with timely support and appropriate intervention. It builds on existing TJ-aligned practices, including the adoption of a multi-disciplinary approach in the discussion of YC cases by the Panel of Advisers (“**POA**”), a Court Family Specialist (“**CFS**”) from the Counselling and Psychological Services (“**CAPS**”) in FJC, and the YC Judicial Officer (“**YC JO**”), the customisation of the solutions and interventions to target offending behaviours in youth offenders based on the recommendations of the investigating probation officers, and the use of family conferences in care and protection proceedings.
3. The YC TJ Model is to be read in conjunction with the FJC TJ Model.

PART 1 – DEFINITION OF TJ IN THE YC CONTEXT

4. TJ in the YC is about helping a child or young person who needs guidance, protection and/or rehabilitation move towards his or her best possible future through appropriate interventions. It involves a judge-led process where the Court, the POA, the child or young person, the parents or guardian of the child or young person, and stakeholders in the youth justice eco-system, come together to find appropriate solutions for the child or young person within the framework of the law.

PART 2 – EMPHASIS ON A “WHOLE OF COMMUNITY” APPROACH

5. A “whole of community” approach, involving multiple stakeholders working in concert, is required to support a child or young person involved in YC proceedings and his or her family. As the saying goes, “it takes a village to raise a child”. The needs of the child or young person and his or her family are complex, and those needs should be effectively addressed through collaborative solutions.

¹ In this YC TJ Model, the term “youth offender” refers to a child or young person who is the subject of proceedings under the criminal jurisdiction of the Youth Courts.

² The terms “child” or “young person” are defined in section 2 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1993.

6. All participants in the youth justice eco-system have an essential role to play under the YC TJ Model:
- (a) *A child or young person in a case for the treatment and rehabilitation of a youth offender or in an application for a family guidance order*, is to learn to be accountable for his or her past actions and cooperate with the Court and the relevant stakeholders to move forward and, where practicable, develop a plan for sustainable change.
 - (b) *The parents or guardian* of the child or young person are to work together with the Court as well as the relevant stakeholders (such as the Protection Officers and the Family Guidance Programme officers/case workers) to find solutions and opportunities to promote the welfare of the child or young person, within the framework of the law.
 - (c) *School teachers and Student Welfare Officers* are encouraged to actively guide the development of the child or young person, as they have the most frequent contact with the child or young person, apart from the parents or guardian of the child or young person. They are also urged to help strengthen, for the child or young person, connections within the school environment that promote stability and positive behaviour.
 - (d) *Lawyers* assist in explaining the aims and objectives of TJ to their clients, and facilitating respectful and constructive communication between their clients and the relevant stakeholders to promote understanding and exploring of holistic solutions for the family.
 - (e) *Prosecutors* should approach cases through the lens of rehabilitative justice, whilst ensuring that the public interest is upheld, and should consider how their recommendations and/or submissions may support the positive development of the youth offender.
 - (f) *The members of the POA* are to assist the YC JO in determining the appropriate orders for the child or young person, bringing their expertise and community perspective to each case where social, review or progress reports have been directed.
 - (g) *The different family court professionals* such as the YC JO, CFS and Court Administrators each facilitate the arrival at solutions for the child or young person, the parents or guardian of the child or young person, and other parties to the YC proceedings. The YC JO sets the tone for the problem-solving approach at the outset. The CFS's role is to manage specialised interventions designed to facilitate

transformative dialogue, mediate complex relational dynamics and ensure effective multilateral communication with the Court and relevant external partners (where applicable). Finally, the Court Administrators are tasked with carrying out their duties with a “spirit of care” as they interact with the child or young person and family through the court process.

PART 3 – TJ IN ACTION IN THE YC: OBJECTIVES

7. There are three types of proceedings that take place at the YC, namely: (a) a case for the treatment and rehabilitation of a youth offender (“**YO case**”); (b) an application for a family guidance order (“**FGO**”) in respect of a child or young person (“**family guidance application**”); and (c) an application for the care and/or protection of a child or young person (“**care and protection application**”). The YC, in its application of TJ, will consider the nature and specific circumstances of the YC proceedings before the Court.

YO cases:

8. The Youth Court, in its practice of restorative justice principles, is focused on rehabilitating, reforming and reintegrating the youth offender back to his or her family and society. TJ complements these principles through its emphasis on problem solving that identifies and resolves underlying issues in collaboration with all participants in the youth justice eco-system, and by supporting therapeutic interventions for the youth offender and his or her family, where relevant and possible. Both restorative justice and TJ seek to repair and restore relationships and provide the youth offender and society with better long-term outcomes aimed at reducing the likelihood of recidivism.

Family guidance applications:

9. The broad aim of TJ in family guidance applications is to help the parents or guardian of a child or young person, as well as the child or young person, identify and resolve underlying issues within the family and work towards an enduring solution. The Court encourages the families to participate in therapeutic interventions and be accountable for their progress.

Care and protection applications:

10. For care and protection applications, the broad aims of TJ are to prioritise the safety and care of the child or young person and promote his or her welfare, while providing the family with the opportunity to be heard and supported, and help the family to build their capacity to care for the child or young person, especially when trauma is part of the child’s or young person’s experience. The voices and rights of the parents or guardian of a child or young person must be balanced against the best interests and welfare of the child or young person. Where the child or young person is of sufficient maturity to articulate his or her wishes, the views of the child or young person are to be given due consideration.

11. Against this backdrop, the following TJ objectives have general application across all YC proceedings:
 - (a) A child or young person should be provided with opportunities to move towards a positive and meaningful future.
 - (b) Underlying issues resulting in or affecting the child's or young person's behaviour or circumstances should be identified and addressed, as far as possible, together with the issues presented before the Court.
 - (c) Where it is appropriate, and where the wellbeing of the child or young person is not compromised, family relationships should be preserved and strengthened, with the child's or young person's family being equipped with skills to better support and care for the child or young person.
 - (d) The parents or guardian of a child or young person remain primarily responsible for the care and welfare of the child or young person. The parents or guardian should thus prioritise the welfare, protection or rehabilitation of the child or young person, and engage and work together meaningfully with stakeholders to find timely and constructive solutions that help the parents or guardian and the child or young person move towards their best possible future.
12. Outcomes rooted in these TJ objectives will prioritise the long-term development and wellbeing of a child or young person. For a YO case or family guidance application, TJ outcomes should encourage the active participation and accountability of the youth offender towards building a sustainable and positive future for himself or herself.

PART 4 – TJ INITIATIVES IN THE YC

13. The YC's new TJ initiatives encompass enhancing case management, supporting youth rehabilitation, and introducing therapeutic support to children and young persons in YC proceedings and their families. These include adopting, for case management, the "One Family, One Team" approach, which assigns a dedicated multi-disciplinary team to handle all YC proceedings relating to a family as far as reasonably practicable, and the Collaborative Teams approach that seeks to coordinate concurrent YC proceedings and Family Court proceedings relating to the same family. The framework also introduces the School Reintegration Network to help at-risk children, young persons and youth offenders return to education, and Care Conferences within YC proceedings. Additionally, tools like the Visionary Map and written Promise for Change are used to promote self-reflection and positive behavioural change among children and young persons.

14. A summary of the application of these TJ initiatives to YC proceedings is provided:

Type of YC Case	One Family, One Team	Collaborative Teams	School Reintegration Network	Care Conference	Visionary Map and Promise for Change
Youth Offender cases	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Family Guidance applications	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Care and Protection applications	✓	✓	✓	N.A.	N.A.

A. “ONE FAMILY, ONE TEAM”

15. The “One Family, One Team” approach is designed to provide more customised and holistic support to families with multiple YC proceedings. Under this approach, when a family has two or more YC proceedings, a single multi-disciplinary team will be assigned to all of those YC proceedings, as far as reasonably practicable. This team would consist of (a) a YC JO who has conduct of all YC proceedings involving the same family; and (b) a CFS who will conduct and/or coordinate any necessary and appropriate therapeutic support for the family members.
16. Having a team of family court professionals with different expertise ensures key concerns in all facets relevant to all YC proceedings relating to a child or young person are managed with a consistent approach until their final resolution³, and that coordinated support can be provided to the child or young person and his or her family. This assists with the furtherance of the TJ objective of ensuring that underlying issues resulting in or affecting the child’s or young person’s behaviour or circumstances can be consistently identified and addressed, as far as possible, alongside the issues that are presented to the Court.

B. HOLISTIC CASE MANAGEMENT OF RELATED PROCEEDINGS IN YC AND FAMILY COURTS (“COLLABORATIVE TEAMS”)

17. Moving forward, when any YC proceedings involve a family with an ongoing case in the Family Court (or the Family Division of the High Court) that is under the Teams Track

³ The term “final resolution”, in relation to any YC proceedings, refers to the conclusion of those proceedings through the making of final orders determining all outstanding issues in those proceedings. It does not necessarily extend to post-order review hearings, unless those proceedings continue to involve high complexity or linked matters.

(e.g. divorce application), the YC team and the Family Court team will work together to facilitate the efficient and effective management of the related matters. This includes the sharing of any safety or risk concerns, and recommendations for the parents or guardian of the child or young person and/or the child or young person, to be referred for therapeutic support services, while ensuring that confidentiality of information is not compromised. Collaborative teamwork entails a unified understanding and handling of the family's history and needs.

18. This furthers the TJ objective of identifying and addressing underlying issues affecting the child's or young person's circumstances, with coordinated intervention that prioritises the child's or young person's long-term wellbeing.

C. SCHOOL REINTEGRATION NETWORK

19. Under the TJ aim of helping a child or young person to move towards a more positive and meaningful future, it is crucial to create opportunities, as far as possible, for the child or young person to be in an environment that facilitates his or her reintegration into society or encourages his or her personal development and formation of pro-social attitudes and connections. Students who are not engaged in school for an extended period may be more prone to improper conduct or at-risk behaviour. Students who stop schooling may also find it difficult to reintegrate into the education system, connect with pro-social friends or attain any necessary qualification to help them gain employment in adulthood.
20. To address the issues such students may face, the School Reintegration Network (“SRN”) has been introduced as a new TJ initiative of the YC, working with the Ministry of Education (“MOE”) through the activation of Student Welfare Officers (“SWOs”) or suitable school staff. The primary goal of the SRN is to facilitate the reintegration of a child or young person into a school setting, especially for those who have been continuously absent from school.
21. In YO cases, many of the youth offenders who are charged in the YC have attendance issues in their schools and do not attend school regularly. The YC JO may, at the Court mention when a youth offender is charged, with the parents' consent, make a referral to the SRN to ensure that arrangements are made to facilitate the youth offender returning to a school setting at the earliest opportunity. This helps to anchor the youth offender in a stable environment, reduce disruption and raise the likelihood of successful rehabilitation.
22. The YC's point of contact will liaise with MOE, and MOE will in turn activate the school's SWO or a suitable school staff to be present at key mentions and the final hearing (for dispositional orders to be made) to offer practical support to the youth offender and his or her family. The SWO or an appointed school staff will also be able to inform the

YC about the youth offender's school attendance and behaviour in school at future mentions while he or she is on bail.

23. Where a child or young person was not attending school regularly before the family guidance application was filed, the YC may, through the SRN, activate the school's SWO or a suitable school staff to work with the Family Guidance Programme officers/case workers to arrange for the child or young person to be reintegrated in a school setting. The YC may also make referrals to the SRN to ensure that the child or young person is attending school regularly, before permission is granted to the parents or guardian to withdraw the family guidance application.
24. For care and protection applications, the YC JO may make a referral to the SRN if the Protection Officer discloses (at the intake report stage) that the child or young person has been absent from school for an extended period of time (e.g. truancy or absence from school due to health reasons or psychological issues), or that the parents or guardian have not been sending the child or young person to school.

D. FAMILY CONFERENCES AND CARE CONFERENCES

25. Family Conferences and Care Conferences facilitate the "whole of community"⁴ approach by bringing together the various stakeholders into a court-facilitated discussion.

Family Conferences in care and protection applications

26. Family Conferences will continue to be conducted for care and protection applications and take place after the Social Report is presented to and reviewed by the Court. A Family Conference serves as a platform for a safe, confidential and without-prejudice conversation facilitated by a CFS, between the parents or guardian of the child or young person and the Protection Officer.
27. The primary objective of the Family Conference is to intervene systemically to resolve disputes and re-establish constructive dialogue between the parents or guardian and the Protection Officer. It serves as a neutral setting where parties can resolve any concerns regarding the recommendations made by the Protection Officer, as well as any issues raised by the parents or guardian in relation to the child or young person. This therapeutic, neutral and non-adversarial environment protects the child's or young person's welfare and safety, thereby advancing the Court's objective of permanent and safe outcomes. If involving the child or young person would be helpful and appropriate, the child or young person may be invited to participate in the Family Conference so that his or her views can be considered.

⁴ A "whole of community" approach to YC proceedings acknowledges that supporting a child or young person and his or her family requires multiple stakeholders to work together. The roles of key stakeholders are elaborated upon in Part 2 of this YC TJ Model.

Care Conferences in YO cases and Family guidance applications

28. Care Conferencing is a new initiative under the YC TJ Model for suitable YO cases and family guidance applications. The rationale is grounded in TJ, aiming to maximise wellbeing outcomes within the judicial process. Generally, Care Conferences will be held where the CFS and the YC JO are of the view that additional engagement with the child or young person, his or her parents or guardian, and relevant stakeholders, will benefit the child or young person by recognising the crucial role of family support in the child's or young person's rehabilitation journey. This family-centred approach is designed to empower the parents or guardian, enabling them to fully comprehend and assume responsibility for their role in the child's or young person's restoration. This process ensures they are better equipped to function as active, informed partners with probation officers, case workers and other professionals, thereby strengthening the efficacy of the rehabilitation plan. The Care Conference is generally facilitated by the CFS.

In family guidance applications:

29. At the first Court session, the child or young person may experience anger, confusion and distress upon learning that his or her parents or guardian have applied for an FGO. Following the Court's review of the application by parents or guardian at the initial session, a CFS may facilitate a Care Conference as part of the therapeutic intervention process. This structured dialogue provides a safe space for family members to openly discuss their concerns and work towards addressing strained relationships as far as possible, and aims to establish a constructive foundation for the family programme(s) that the child or young person and his or her parents or guardian are to embark upon. Additionally, the Care Conference enables family members to develop a deeper understanding of the child's or young person's perspective and needs, thereby enhancing their capacity to support the child or young person going forward.
30. When progress in the family programme ordered by the YC JO is poor, yet the parents or guardian express their intention to withdraw the family guidance application, the CFS may conduct a Care Conference at this critical juncture. The CFS will guide the parents or guardian through a thorough evaluation of the implications of withdrawing the family guidance application, helping them understand the potential consequences from the perspective of a neutral and informed party. This process aims to minimise the prospect of a hasty withdrawal that could result in an at-risk child or young person not receiving the necessary support and intervention, potentially placing him or her in more precarious situations and increasing the likelihood of his or her return to Court in more serious circumstances, such as youth offender proceedings in a criminal case. If involving the child or the young person would be helpful or appropriate, he or she may be invited to the Care Conference so that his or her views can be considered. This comprehensive

approach ensures that any decision to withdraw the family guidance application serves the genuine long-term interests and welfare of the child or young person.

31. In all Care Conferences for family guidance applications, if involving other adults in the life of the child or young person (e.g. school teachers, sports coach, discipline master, school counsellor, godparent, etc.) is helpful or necessary, these adults may also be invited to the Care Conference to work together in finding ways to support the child or young person in his or her growth.

In YO cases:

32. Care Conferences may be conducted for selected cases where it is assessed that the youth offender and/or his or her family may have higher therapeutic needs, or for complex cases which require a coordinated intervention plan to support the youth offender and his or her family.
33. A Care Conference may be facilitated by the CFS to assist the parents or guardian of a youth offender come to terms with the proceedings against the youth offender and/or gain insight on how to improve parental supervision while the youth offender is on bail. Care Conferences can also provide an opportunity to help the parents or guardian of a youth offender process issues and emotions after the youth offender is found guilty of an offence, and promote a supportive relationship with the youth offender. The CFS may also triage and refer the parents or guardian for social services if further follow up is needed.
34. Where probation is being considered and ordered, the Care Conference is an opportunity for the YC to help the youth offender and his or her parents or guardian better recognise how they can work towards a restorative future and help the youth offender complete probation successfully. The YC may propose steps that the parents or guardian can take to ensure that the youth offender continues to attend school, and may facilitate the family's access to student welfare support from the school. Care Conferences may also provide a platform for the YC to work with the probation officer to bring in other significant adults involved in the youth offender's life (e.g. a psychologist, school teachers / principal, a sports coach, or a respected relative of the youth offender) to attend the Care Conference and to support the successful completion of probation. If involving the youth offender is helpful and appropriate, the youth offender may be invited to participate in the Care Conference so that his or her views can be considered.

E. VISIONARY MAP AND WRITTEN PROMISE FOR CHANGE

35. The Visionary Map and the written Promise for Change are TJ-oriented tools aimed at supporting appropriate behavioural and mindset changes in the child, young person, youth offender and/or their parents or guardian, by addressing underlying issues as far as possible, promoting problem-solving, providing a youth offender with the opportunity to

visualise and move towards a positive future, and reducing the risk (as far as possible) of an at-risk child or young person who is the subject of a family guidance application re-entering the court system in a subsequent application or as a youth offender. “These reflective and forward-looking tools will over time and with the benefit of experience be refined, so that we can ensure that they are responsive to the needs of our troubled youth and strengthen their rehabilitative impact”.⁵ The ultimate aim is to promote positive outcomes for the child, young person or youth offender involved.

In YO cases:

Visionary Map

36. The Visionary Map presents a youth offender and/or his or her parents or guardian with a series of guided questions to encourage deeper reflection on the youth offender’s past doings and, more significantly, insights for the youth offender’s future after the YO case. It is designed by CAPS in consultation with YC JOs to allow both the youth offender and his or her parents or guardian to share their stories and collaborate on a forward-looking narrative and the youth offender’s rehabilitation journey. Some of the areas covered by the Visionary Map include questions to prompt reconsideration of pro-criminal attitudes, peers, views on substance use, the significance of family relationships and future education or employment.
37. The Visionary Map may be used by the YC JO after the probation order or Juvenile Rehabilitation Centre (“**JRC**”) Order is made, and/or as part of the subsequent Court review or the Progress Presentation Review (“**PPR**”). Specifically, during the PPR when the youth offender makes a presentation before the Court on his or her personal progress, the Visionary Map and the written Promise for Change (stated below) increase the youth offender’s opportunities for reflection and contrition for past wrongdoings and enhance his or her rehabilitation journey.

Written Promise for Change

38. The youth offender will be encouraged to make specific, measurable commitments in the form of a written Promise for Change, and to translate his or her insights from the Visionary Map into a concrete action plan for change. The written Promise for Change is a voluntary, post-order statement made by the youth offender to affirm his or her commitment to positive change and rehabilitation. It serves as a source of moral suasion, expressed in the youth offender’s own words, to take responsibility and follow through with concrete action towards expressed goals. It may be read out by the youth offender before the YC JO, the CFS and/or the youth offender’s parents or guardian, teachers, or family members. This written Promise for Change should generally be introduced only

⁵ The Honourable the Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon, in his speech at the opening of the Family Justice Courts on 23 July 2025, at [11].

after the Court has made its orders, to make clear that it does not have any mitigatory effect on the dispositional orders.

39. The written Promise for Change also has a therapeutic purpose: it serves to anchor the youth offender to his or her intended vision and pave milestones that can be reinforced through future Court reviews (if directed), as the youth offender progresses with his or her action plan for change. This approach fosters personal accountability and problem-solving skills, whilst providing the youth offender with a tangible commitment to guide him or her towards rehabilitation, reform and reintegration into society.
40. For a youth offender who has successfully completed his or her Probation Order and/or JRC Order, the YC may grant a written commendation to recognise and acknowledge the youth offender who has made significant progress and transformation while serving his or her probation and/or JRC order.

In family guidance applications:

41. The child or young person and his or her parents or guardian may be asked to complete the Visionary Map, alongside a written Promise for Change, before the family guidance application is permitted to be withdrawn. This is aligned with the YC's TJ objectives of helping the child or young person and his or her parents or guardian identify underlying issues that could be affecting the behaviour of the child or young person, and work towards addressing these concerns, as far as possible, in a manner that encourages the long-term development and wellbeing of the child or young person.
42. This structured reflection process is intended to prevent hasty withdrawals by the parents or guardian, through encouraging a deeper reflection of the consequences of withdrawing the family guidance application. The Visionary Map also serves as a reminder of the vital role that the parents or guardian of a child or young person play in influencing the child or young person positively and providing the necessary support and guidance for positive change. It is hoped that this guided process may reduce the risk of an at-risk child or young person prematurely exiting the court system, and minimise the incidence of withdrawn cases re-entering the court system as new family guidance applications or YO cases.

PART 5 – SPECIALISED AREAS OF KNOWLEDGE

43. Court actors involved in the work of the YC should be versed in several specialised areas of knowledge that enhance their work with children and young persons and families. By sharing and developing this understanding among judges, lawyers, and other professionals, they can better connect with and respond to the needs of children and young persons and families who appear before the YC:
- (a) **Lifespan development**: The understanding of a person’s physical, cognitive, emotional, social, and moral development and how the person’s needs can be met.
 - (b) **Family systems**: The understanding of family members' inter-connection and how their patterns of interaction shape thoughts, behaviours, values and roles.
 - (c) **Mental health conditions**: The understanding of the causes and impact of mental health conditions, and how trauma-informed practice can be employed to promote mental well-being.
 - (d) **Behavioural issues**: The understanding of the cause and impact of at-risk behaviours and addiction, and how these can be addressed.
 - (e) **Therapeutic and restorative interventions**: The understanding of approaches to safety, rehabilitation and holistic restoration that support lasting changes, relationship repair and reintegration of families.

CONCLUSION

44. The YC TJ Model reflects a step toward fostering a more therapeutic approach in youth justice. This is a forward-looking initiative to support at-risk children and young persons through interventions that seek to disrupt cycles of offending and harm. The YC envisions a youth justice system that goes beyond law enforcement to cultivate personal accountability and create meaningful positive change for children and young persons.