

**OPENING REMARKS BY JUSTICE DEBBIE ONG, PRESIDING JUDGE FAMILY
JUSTICE COURTS POTS MoU SIGNING CEREMONY ON 5 JANUARY 2022**

1. My warmest welcome to our friends from the College of Psychiatrists, Academy of Medicine, Singapore (“COPsych”); the Singapore Association for Counselling (“SAC”) and the Singapore Psychological Society (“SPS”).
2. I am happy to meet and greet my co-signatories A/Prof Daniel Fung, President CoPysch, A/Prof Frederick Low, President SAC and Dr Cherie Chan, President SPS on this special day today.
3. I am grateful that we are able to organize the signing of this MOU virtually despite the current continuing pandemic restrictions.
4. I would like to thank the COPsych, SAC and SPS for collaborating with us at FJC on this very important project – the Panel of Therapeutic Specialists which we affectionately refer to as “POTS”.
5. Since announcing at FJC’s Workplan in 2020 that our renewed vision for family justice in Singapore is to be guided by the philosophy of Therapeutic Justice (TJ), much has been done to build up awareness and capacity amongst members of the family justice community to better support the needs of families who are facing breakdown.
6. The POTS initiative is another significant piece in our big tapestry which will strengthen our family justice support system.
7. Families who are involved in our court proceedings often come with complex needs and issues underlying the legal disputes. Whilst the Divorce Support Specialist Agencies, which we refer to as “DSSAs”, have been set up to support divorcing families, there is a need for specialist therapeutic assistance for families with special or specific needs and issues. These include parties with developmental or physical impairment, serious mental health issues, families with high conflict and so much more. These parties may require more specialized and targeted multi-disciplinary therapeutic interventions that may fall outside the scope of the current support schemes available.
8. In addition, not all cases qualify for the DSSA services and other public support schemes, and there may be no clear alternative pathways for such cases to access relevant private sector therapeutic services.
9. I would like to thank you, immensely, for coming on board to help us set up a referral framework and the establishment of a panel of therapeutic experts from amongst the professional bodies.

10. POTS will comprise qualified private sector mental health professionals and their services will be accessed through the directions of a Judge or under a voluntary referral process, according to the needs of the parties.
11. After we have executed this MoU today, we will set in motion the next steps. We will work on the formation of the Therapeutic Advisory Council (TAC) made up of volunteer senior mental health professionals to develop the criteria and professional requirements for POTS. TAC will also oversee the recruitment and selection of POTS. We aim to launch a pilot initiative for POTS later this year in 2022. We hope that through POTS, litigants will have an additional avenue through which they can seek therapeutic assistance in their journey of healing.
12. I must record my deep thanks to the Steering Committee headed by the Registrar of FJC Mr Kenneth Yap, and the Presidents of SAC (A/Prof Frederick Low), SPS (Dr Cherie Chan) and a Past President of the COPsych (Dr John Wong) as well as the FJC team for putting in place the platform and pathway to create and manage this panel of experts.
13. There is of course still much work to be done, and I am confident that this project is in great hands. I am delighted to be able to sign this MOU today with all the signatories to officially launch the POTS project.
14. Thank you very much.
