

TRAINING SESSION FOR STATE COURT VOLUNTEER MEDIATORS (CVMs)

WEDNESDAY, 6 JUNE 2018

2:30 – 5:00 PM

WELCOME REMARKS BY PRINCIPAL DISTRICT JUDGE THIAN YEE SZE

Good afternoon!

It is my pleasure to welcome all of you to the first of two training sessions this year conducted by the State Courts Centre for Dispute Resolution for Court Volunteer Mediators. It is also the first time we have gathered together as a group since the SCCDR took over the central management of all the State Courts' volunteer mediators two months ago on 1 April 2018. This has allowed us to bring together the collective experience and expertise of all our volunteer mediators. It will also allow us to broaden the experience of our mediators as we explore the possibility of our volunteer mediators dealing with cases in a wider spectrum of work, from civil disputes to criminal matters to relational and community conflict.

2 I myself am new to the world of court mediation. I was last in the State Courts for a number of years till 2012, during which time I was in the Civil Trial Courts. After a hiatus of almost six years, I came back to the State Courts in February 2018. So in that sense, while I have never mediated in my life before my latest stint, this landscape is not entirely alien to me. I look forward to working with you in developing the ADR eco-system in the State Courts, or Appropriate Dispute Resolution, as our Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon more aptly described it, and to take it to greater heights.

3 We have about 150 attendees today. On behalf of the State Courts, I would like to thank all of you for this strong turnout. This is a testament to your commitment to honing your mediation craft. This also speaks to your strong belief in mediation as an important method of resolving court disputes.

4 All of you help the State Courts to mediate many cases across the spectrum. In the last 3 years, about 11,500 State Courts cases were mediated annually. Many were mediated by you, our volunteer mediators. You have helped us to maintain an overall settlement rate of above 80%. This is, no mean feat. The State Courts would be very hard pressed to manage our phenomenal caseload in a timely manner without your contribution.

5 As mediators, you publish no judgments and your successes are confidential. You are unsung heroes, spending your time and effort in assisting disputants to find a mutually acceptable solution out of their legal troubles. But rest assured that the State Courts appreciates the work that you do and is constantly seeking ways to support you better. As before, we welcome any feedback or any suggestion you may have on how the State Courts and, in particular, the Centre for Dispute Resolution, can assist you in your mediation efforts, whether administratively or through training.

6 This brings me to today's training session. Today's session on dealing with persons with personality disorders and psychological issues has been put together in response to your feedback on your training needs. It will focus on effective communication with disputants who may present signs of psychological or personality disorders, anger, paranoia or anti-social issues.

7 Such individuals are generally not best served by the formal judicial process. However, they do present the mediator and the court with a formidable challenge. Our two speakers today, Ms Sylvia Tan and Ms Leong Shengyu, who are both psychologists with the Family Justice Courts and who have strong social service backgrounds, will share with you the commonly encountered psychological manifestations, the common tell-tale signs to look for and some recommendations on what the mediator should and should not do when you encounter such individuals. They will also give you some ideas as to how you can assist these individuals to see reason.

8 Finally, I would like to thank my colleague, District Judge David Lim and his team for organising this training session.

9 Thank you and I wish you a fruitful session.