

TRAINING SESSION FOR STATE COURT VOLUNTEER MEDIATORS (CVMs)

WEDNESDAY, 21 NOVEMBER 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 second training session this year organised by the State Courts Centre for Dispute Resolution for Court Volunteer Mediators. I am very glad to see such a good turnout of volunteer mediators from both the SCCDR and the Small Claims Tribunals today.

2 Before we get into the nuts and bolts of today's session, I would like to take this opportunity to update you on an important development in the management framework of CVMs with the State Courts. Since SCCDR took over the central management of all State Courts' volunteer mediators in April this year, together with the Community Justice and Tribunals Division, SCCDR undertook a comprehensive review of the framework for the recruitment, appointment and management of all our CVMs to ensure that the quality of the court mediation service is maintained and the work that you do in the administration of justice continues to be recognised as a mark of distinction. The revised and enhanced eligibility criteria for appointment as a CVM has been put up on the State Courts website. The revised criteria pertaining to professional qualifications, post-qualification legal experience (where relevant), mediation accreditation and mediation experience will apply only to new applicants seeking to be appointed to the panel of Court Volunteer Mediators for the first time. I

should also add that the new criteria do not apply to all of you who are already on our panel.

3 The current term of appointment for all CVMs ends in January 2019. For our current CVMs, those who have chalked up the relevant quota of mediation sessions will be invited to join the panel of Court Volunteer Mediators for a new 3-year term, which will take effect in February 2019. Do look out for the email from us regarding your re-appointment.

4 Back to today's programme, which deals with the relationship and dynamics between the mediator and the lawyers representing their clients in the mediation process. Most of the parties who appear before us for mediation are represented by lawyers. You would have observed that depending on their understanding of the mediation process, their experience in mediation advocacy, level of preparation, mindset and attitudes towards mediation, lawyers can either help or hinder a mediation. My colleague, District Judge David Lim, who really needs no introduction, will share his views on how mediators, whether legally or non-legally trained, can find ways to build alliances with and collaborate constructively with the lawyers representing the disputants for the mediation. After the tea break, we will have a discussion with our panel of experienced judge-mediators and CVMs on this important aspect of the mediation dynamic.

5 Those of you who attended our training session in June will recall that we sought your views on whether you would be interested in cross-divisional work. This means that SCCDR mediators can mediate in CJTD and vice versa. I am delighted

to report that we had an overwhelmingly positive response, with 91% of the respondents indicating that they were interested in cross-divisional work. Given this encouraging response, we are pleased to announce that during the new term of appointment from February 2019, CVMs who wish to engage in cross-divisional work may apply to mediate cases in a “secondary” division if they satisfy the eligibility criteria set by the “secondary” division. I am confident that by mediating a broader range of cases, your experience as a mediator with the judiciary will be enriched in every way. More details will follow in due course.

6 Finally, as this year draws to a close, on behalf of the senior management and my colleagues, I would like to thank each and every one of you for all your hard work this year, devoting your time to mediate cases in the State Courts, and for your passion and commitment to the cause of amicably resolving disputes which are before the courts, without having to go to trial. We look forward to continuing our partnership in this.

7 Thank you, and very best wishes for the season.