



FACTSHEET

19 MARCH 2017

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## **PSYCHOLOGICAL FIRST AID TO SUPPORT RESIDENTS POST-ATTACK**

Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong announced the formation of the 'Human Emergency Assistance and Response Team' (HEART) at the Emergency Preparedness (EP) Day held at Teck Ghee constituency this morning. The HEART initiative will complement efforts by the Community Emergency and Engagement (C2E) Committee and Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) within each constituency to train and prepare residents to respond to terror attacks, especially in the aftermath of an incident.

2. Each HEART team consists of psychologists and counsellors from the Home Team, the Ministry of Social and Family Development, and the Institute of Mental Health. The role of the HEART team is to reach out to the community before, during and after a terror incident, together with the C2E Committee and CERT, to support and develop communities' psychological resilience. Besides working with the affected individuals and groups in the community, the HEART team will also link them with various agencies (e.g. schools, medical facilities and social service agencies) within the constituency for support.

### Psychological First Aid Training

3. The psychological effects experienced by individuals and communities following terror incidents can surpass the pain and trauma of the physical injuries they sustain. Understanding and preparing for the impact of these psychological effects are critical for developing psychological resilience in the community and to limit the adverse psychological consequences of a terrorist attack.

4. With the implementation of the HEART initiative, psychological first aid (PFA) training<sup>1</sup> at the grassroots level will take on a formalised and structured approach. Working with the C2E Committee and CERT, HEART Teams led by Home Team psychologists will train community responders, such as grassroots leaders and volunteers, in PFA knowledge and skills.

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<sup>11</sup> PFA is a World Health Organisation (WHO) certified structured approach to provide immediate psychological and practical support to affected persons with the intention to reduce initial post-incident distress and facilitate the short and long-term adaptive functioning.

5. Equipped with PFA skills, these community responders would be able to promptly identify individuals in the community who exhibit post-terror stress reactions or require practical assistance during or after a terrorist attack. They would also engage in empathetic listening and responding skills to address specific concerns of affected individuals. Together with the HEART Teams, the community responders will link affected persons to the necessary support resources and agencies within the community.

6. In peacetime, the HEART Teams will work with the C2E Committees on community resilience building initiatives through joint discussions and exercises.

**Ang Mo Kio GRC among first to be trained by HEART Team**

7. Community responders from Ang Mo Kio GRC, which Teck Ghee is a part of, are among the first to be trained by the HEART Teams in psychological first aid. The community responders comprising C2E Committee and CERT members as well as grassroots volunteers from Ang Mo Kio GRC were trained on 12 March 2017. Through role play and discussions, the community responders learnt how to recognise signs of distress among residents, stabilise situations post-attack as well as identify the avenues and agencies within the community that affected residents and families can be referred to for help and support. They were also taught how to deal with vulnerable groups in the community, e.g. children, senior citizens as well as grieving families.

8. Community responders from all 89 constituencies will be trained and undergo annual refresher courses on PFA to ensure that every constituency is equipped to support affected residents and their families post-attack.

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**About SGSecure**

SGSecure is a national movement to sensitise, train and mobilise Singaporeans to play a part to prevent and deal with a terrorist attack. It is the community's response to safeguard our way of life against terrorism and community strife. Government's response alone is not enough.

Every member of the community must do his part by staying alert to ever-present security threats, staying united as one people during peacetime and in crisis, and staying strong to be resilient and bounce back quickly in a crisis. For more information, visit [www.sgsecure.sg](http://www.sgsecure.sg).