

# KidStart practitioners to get multi-disciplinary training under new tie-up



KidStart is a government initiative that helps children up to six from low-income families. PHOTO: MSF



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SINGAPORE - A scheme to help young children from low-income homes is getting a boost with a new tie-up among several partners to provide multi-disciplinary training for practitioners.

The Early Childhood Development Agency (ECDA) and Temasek Foundation (TF), in partnership with Nanyang Polytechnic (NYP) and Singapore University of Social Sciences (SUSS), on Tuesday (Nov 24) launched a multi-disciplinary training programme for practitioners who support the development of children from less well-off families.

In a joint media release, ECDA and TF said the programme, which is the first of its kind here, aims to better support KidStart practitioners in the areas of child development, health and social work, which are necessary for early childhood intervention.

KidStart is a government initiative that helps children up to six from low-income families.

The new Multi-Disciplinary Programme for Enhancing Child Development announced on Tuesday comprises two parts: a foundational training programme conducted by NYP, and an in-service training programme by SUSS.

TF has committed \$1.15 million to support the training of 300 practitioners over three years.

The foundational training conducted by NYP in collaboration with KK Women's and Children's Hospital and National Institute of Early Childhood Development, provides practitioners with limited or no prior experience working with young children from low-income families, with a better understanding of the challenges they face.

Basic concepts and theories around child development, health and nutrition and social work domains will also be covered.

Experienced practitioners may take a step further by taking one or more of seven continuing education and training modules conducted by SUSS. Topics range from how children think and

learn to child health, growth and well-being as well as skills needed for interviews and home visits and family issues.

Those who complete all seven modules will receive a Certificate in Child and Family Intervention. Other social service or early childhood practitioners working with young children from low-income families may also sign up for the programme.

KidStart, which began in 2016 and supports families through areas like nutrition, child development and parent-child interaction, plans to scale up its reach to 5,000 more children in the next three years.

In a statement on Tuesday, Minister of State for Social and Family Development Sun Xueling, who participated in one of the foundational training sessions over Zoom said: "The early years of a child are very important in setting a strong foundation for their later years. A child's development is contingent on many factors such as health and nutrition, family support and opportunities for learning.

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"As we expand KidStart to help more low-income families, we will have to ensure that those working with young children have the right knowledge and skills to support KidStart children and their families holistically."

Ms Jasmine Low, a medical social worker from National University Hospital (NUH) who took part in the foundational training, said she has gained a deeper understanding and appreciation of how the KidStart model works with multiple community partners, and how NUH can contribute by providing health and nutrition support for vulnerable families through home visits.

Ms Cindy Loh, assistant director of KidStart's home visitation programme, said the various SUSS modules she has taken help practitioners carry out their roles more effectively.

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Citing the module on the Abecedarian Approach, which emphasises language development and quality one-to-one adult-child interactions, as an example, she said the strategies helped parents to bond more meaningfully with their children while helping them to learn at the same time.

"With the multiple needs and different situations our families are in, modules such as child health, growth and well-being were also helpful in providing additional insights to what practitioners should look out for to ensure a child's well-being," she added.