

Navigating Onward: Charting the Course for Singapore's Domestic Violence Landscape

Asian Family Conference

7 November 2024

Director, Adult Protective Service

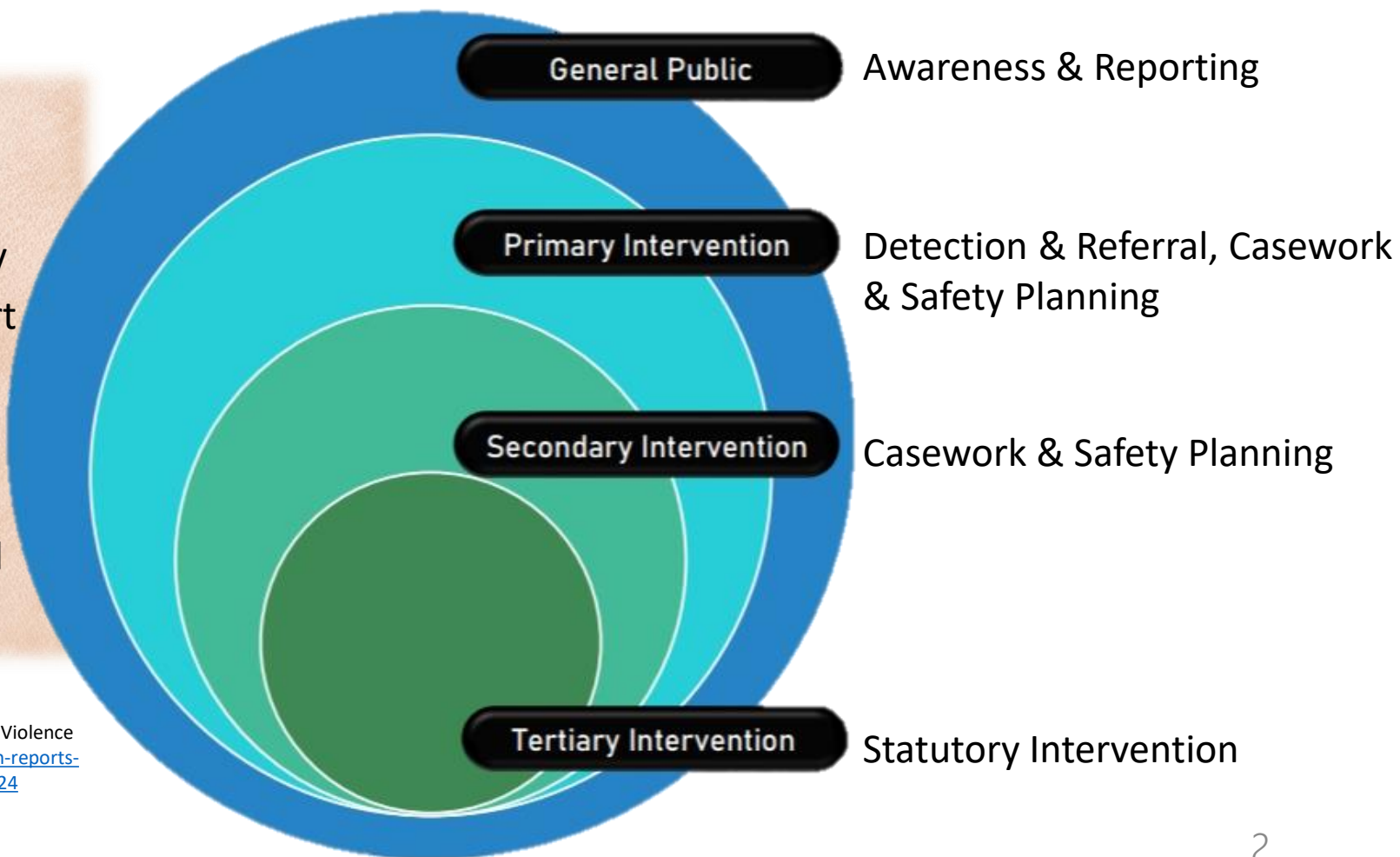
Ms Tabitha Ong



Singapore's Domestic Violence Landscape

Ecosystem of Support

“**Domestic violence** refers to violent, threatening, abusive or controlling behaviours within the context of family or intimate relationships that cause hurt or fear for one’s safety and well-being. This takes various forms including physical abuse, emotional and psychological abuse, sexual abuse, and neglect.”



Key developments spurring action

Prevalence

**3% based on admin data.
Ranges from 3-20% based on self-
reported data (2019).**

Key developments spurring action

Upward trends between 2021 -2023 show greater readiness to report violence & seek help

- Child abuse
- Spousal abuse
- Elder abuse

Tier 1: Cases overseen by community agencies that present with **low to moderate safety and risk concerns** for the vulnerable person.

Tier 2: Cases overseen by MSF that present with **high safety and risk concerns** for the vulnerable person, which may warrant more intrusive statutory intervention to keep the individual safe.

- Child abuse
- Elder abuse
- Non-elderly Vulnerable Adult abuse
- Self-neglect

Key developments spurring action

COVID-19

Family violence cases on the rise in S'pore amid Covid-19 pandemic




Social workers say victims are under more duress if the couple both work from home, given the continual threat of abuse. PHOTO: ST FILE.

Theresa Tan
Senior Social Affairs Correspondent

PUBLISHED OCT 11, 2021, 05:00 AM

SINGAPORE - She was a professional in her 30s and, for more than five years, endured in silence brutal abuse from her violent husband.

Coronavirus: More cases of family violence during circuit breaker; police to proactively help victims



A posed photo to illustrate family violence. PHOTO ILLUSTRATION: ST FILE

Jean Iau
Correspondent

UPDATED DEC 08, 2021, 04:37 PM

SINGAPORE - Family violence has been on the rise since circuit breaker measures kicked in on April 7, according to latest police figures, and this has prompted the authorities to take a more proactive approach to help high-risk victims.

Many families experiencing additional stress and conflicts amidst uncertainty

Formation of the Taskforce on Family Violence 2021

- Reviewed domestic violence landscape & proposed recommendations to strengthen it
 - Thrust 1 – Increase awareness, strengthen societal attitudes against family violence, and enhance preventive efforts for persons at risk.
 - Thrust 2 – Make it easier for survivors and the community to report family violence, and get immediate help.
 - Thrust 3 – Strengthen protection and support for survivors to reduce their risk of being harmed again.
 - Thrust 4 – Increase the accountability of perpetrators and strengthen their rehabilitation.



SPOT

THE SIGNAL FOR HELP



1 Palm to witness/camera and tuck thumb



2 Trap thumb



PHYSICAL ABUSE
Beating, kicking or slapping, resulting in physical pain and injury



NEGLECT
Not providing essential care such as food, clothing and medical care



PSYCHOLOGICAL/



SEXUAL ABUSE

Thrust 1 – Increase awareness, strengthen societal attitudes against family violence, and enhance preventive efforts for persons at risk.

Break the Silence Campaign to ignite community action and reduce bystander syndrome

Help is readily available.

Call the National Anti-Violence Helpline (NAVH) at

1800-777-0000

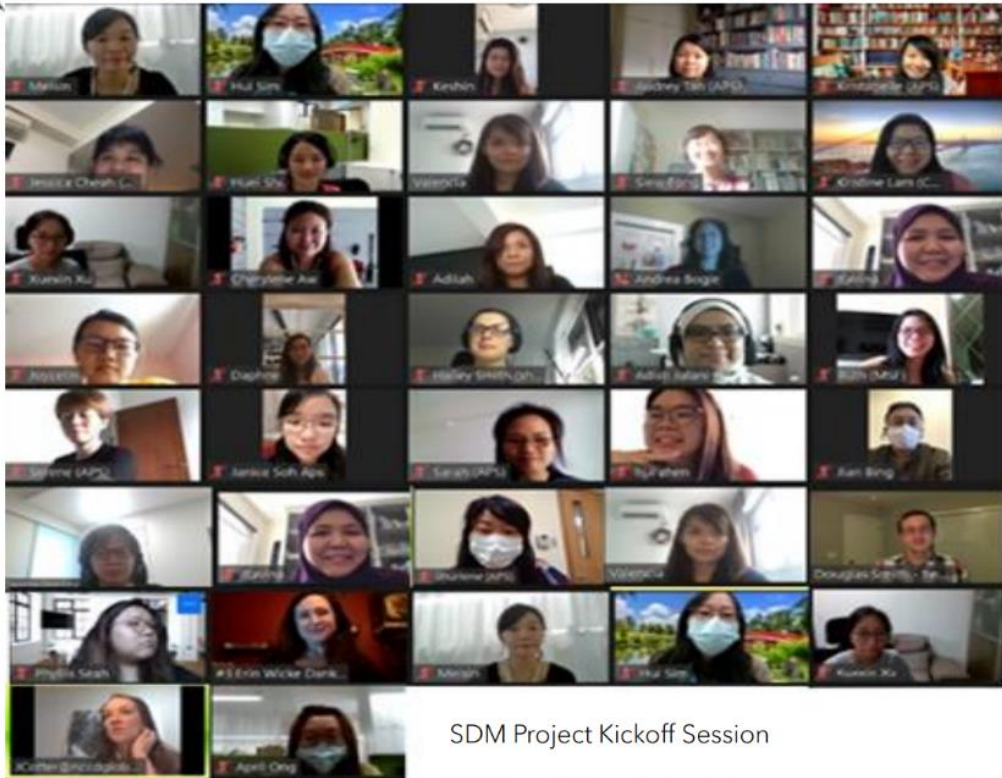
If you are or know someone in a life-threatening situation due to abuse, call the police at **999** or send a text message to the police at **71999**.



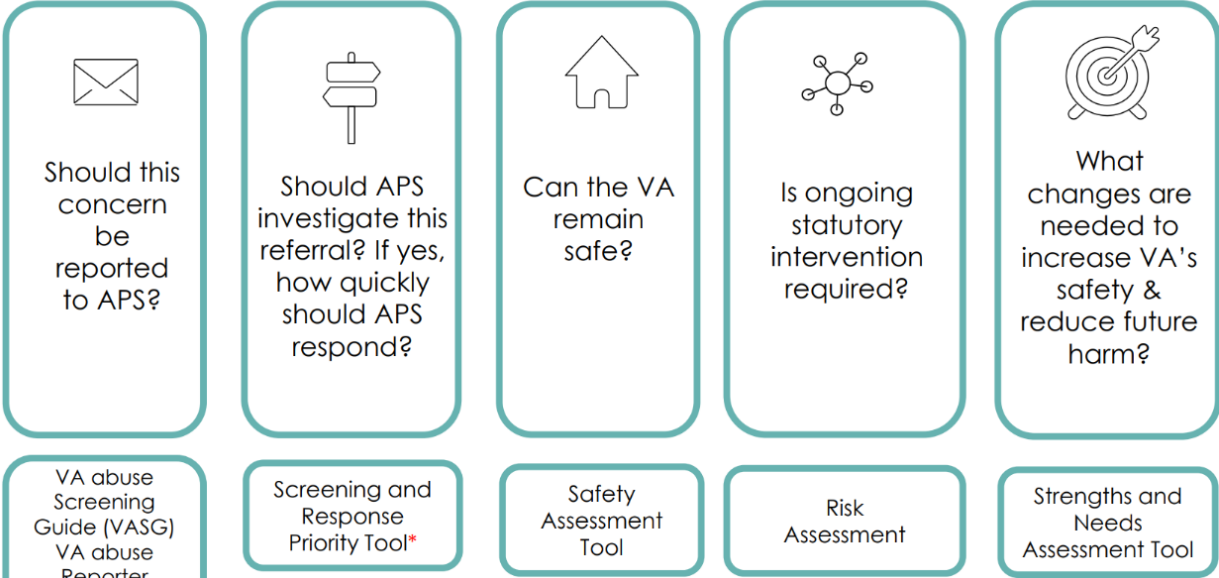
Thrust 2 – Make it easier for survivors and the community to report family violence, and get immediate help.

Launch of the National Anti-Violence and Sexual Harassment Helpline (NAVH) with systemic linkage to emergency services

With changes to the Women's Charter, Emergency Orders will be introduced as time-limited protection notices issued in a high-risk family violence situation. This immediately prohibit the use of violence, while safety plans are made and PPOs are being applied for.



STRUCTURED DECISION MAKING TOOLS (SDM)



Target Implementation Timeline (Automation in 2024 and after)

Q1 2024	Q2 2023	Q3 2023	2026	Q4 2023
---------	---------	---------	------	---------

Thrust 3 – Strengthen protection and support for survivors to reduce their risk of being harmed again.

Introduction of Domestic Violence Assessment Framework and SDM Tools have sharpened decision making, with better consistency and guidance from the point of screening to referrals and intervention planning.

Introductory Video - Vulnerable Adult Screening Guide (VASG)

Mr. Tan

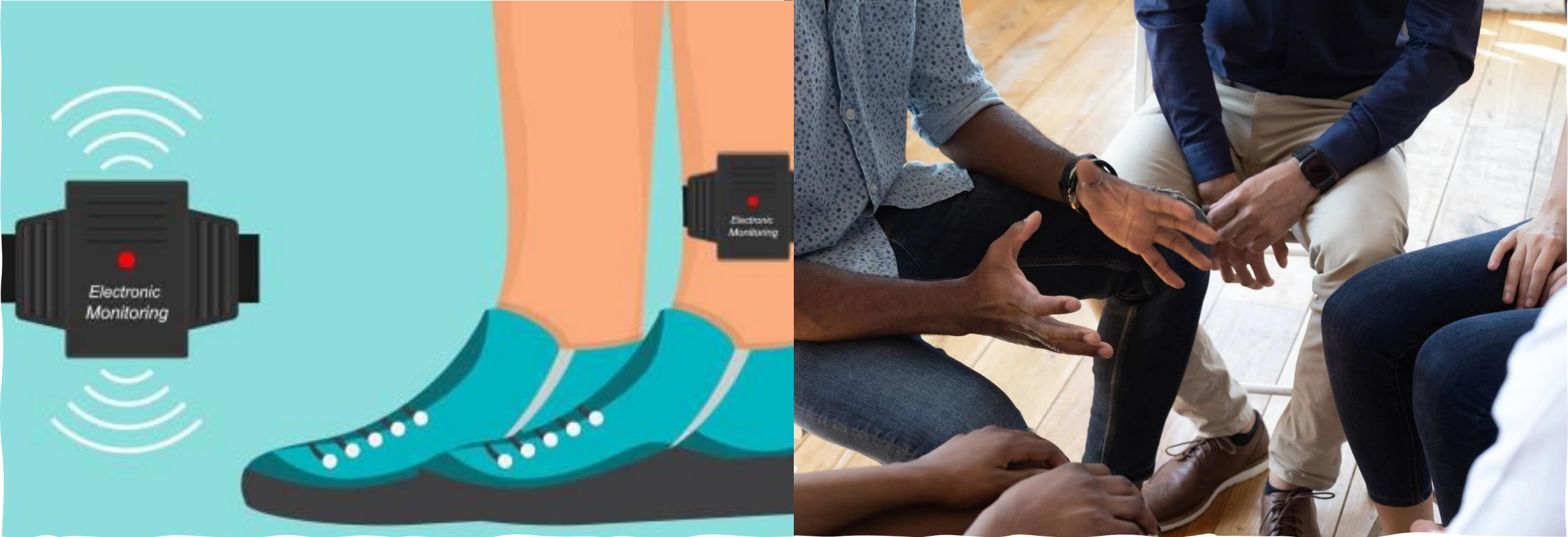
- Physical Condition
- Sexual Concerns
- Home Environment
- Emotional/ Psychological Concern

Structured Decision Making tools serve to assess and right-site Vulnerable Adults who present safety concerns.

Vulnerable Adult Screening Guide (VASG)

The Vulnerable Adult Screening Guide.

The video frame features a blue grid background. On the left, a circular inset shows an elderly man with a sad expression. To the right, a yellow character with a white umbrella and a smile is visible. In the background, a nurse in a white uniform and cap is looking at a screen. A dark blue box in the upper right corner contains the text 'Vulnerable Adult Screening Guide (VASG)'. At the bottom, a dark blue box contains the text 'The Vulnerable Adult Screening Guide.'.



Thrust 4 – Increase the accountability of perpetrators and strengthen their rehabilitation.

New Court orders such as electronic monitoring of high-risk perpetrators; mandatory assessment and treatment for perpetrators where mental conditions contributed to violence.

Within the Domestic Violence and Intervention Framework (DVTIF), the module on working with perpetrators will better equip professionals to address the perpetrator's needs and provide different types of counselling support based on the risk and needs levels.

Learnings we have gleaned from the journey...

Implementing Singapore's

Domestic Violence Emergency Response Team (DVERT)

**Recommendation
from Thrust 2 of
FVTF**

A 24-hour emergency response team made up of social service professionals, that responds to high-risk family violence cases together with the police

Domestic Violence Emergency Response Team (DVERT)

Key Functions

Assess the situation and develop immediate safety plans while referring the survivor to help services or a crisis shelter on the spot.

When the amendments to the Women's Charter come into effect in end 2024, DVERT officers will have powers to issue an Emergency Order at the scene in high-risk situations, to immediately protect the survivor and prevent further violence.

This Emergency Order can include one or more of the following orders:

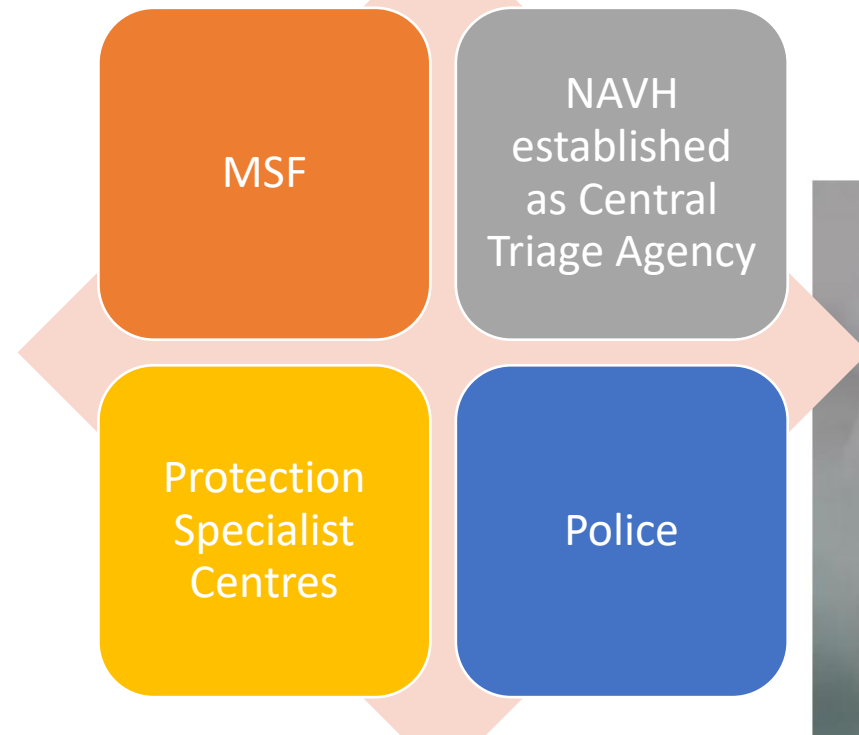
- Domestic Exclusion Order, which restricts the perpetrator from being at home to ensure the survivor's safety.
- Stay Away Order, which prohibits the perpetrator from entering or remaining in places the survivor frequents, such as the workplace or a childcare centre.
- No Contact Order, which prohibits the perpetrator from visiting or communicating with the survivor.



Converge among partners on achieving clients' best interests.

- Prior to the setting up of DVERT, there was no after-office- hours emergency social response to DV cases, except for cases involving child or vulnerable adult abuse concerns.
- Without the DVERT, the police would have referred the cases to a Protection Specialist Centre specializing in tackling family violence, taking one or two days before interventions.
- With the DVERT assessing situations on the spot and referring survivors for services or crisis shelter placement immediately, there is a vast improvement in serving our survivors efficiently.

24-hour emergency response team for family violence cases to be rolled out nationwide



Ms Tessa Tay, 30, is a Domestic Violence Emergency Response Team officer who is trained in psychology. ST PHOTO: GIN TAY

Coordinate by building linkages between systems.

- MSF established the NAVH as a central triaging agency to receive enquiries and referrals from the community.
- Worked together with the Singapore Police Force to work out the referral and response protocols, trialling implementation in a phased manner.

Communicate well by keeping channels open.

- Started DVERT service in one regional area to stress test and improve the system before scaling up operations nation-wide.
- Based on the team's experience of attending to 119 households from April to December 2023, the team was better able to tweak processes and advance training.
 - Tighten checklist
 - Develop new modality (phone support)
- From April 2023 to July 2024, the DVERT responded to 307 cases referred by the Police. DVERT has been successfully rolled out nationwide as of 23 September 2024.

POLICE LAND DIVISIONS



Navigating Onward



What trends further shape the service landscape?

Patterns of abuse across the life course

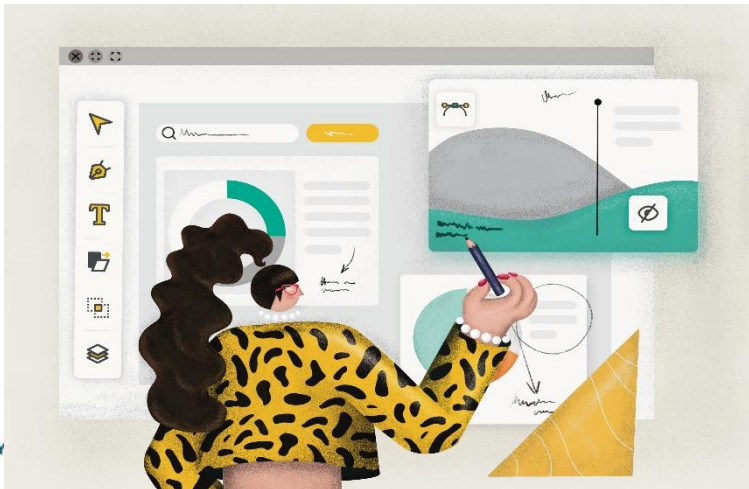
Persons who had previous contact with the child protection and welfare system were 1.75 times as likely to apply for a Personal Protection Order.

Co-occurrence of child protection concerns and domestic violence

MSF's data reveals about 1 in 3 children and young persons subject to child protection and welfare investigation by MSF experienced some form of family violence earlier in their lives.

Using technology to make meaningful use of data is key.

MSF is developing the Domestic Violence Database -- a platform to consolidate insights on Domestic Violence trends, research findings and track key outcomes.



MSF has begun taking a **whole-of-Family** approach to intervention

- **ComLink+'s family-centric intervention model:**

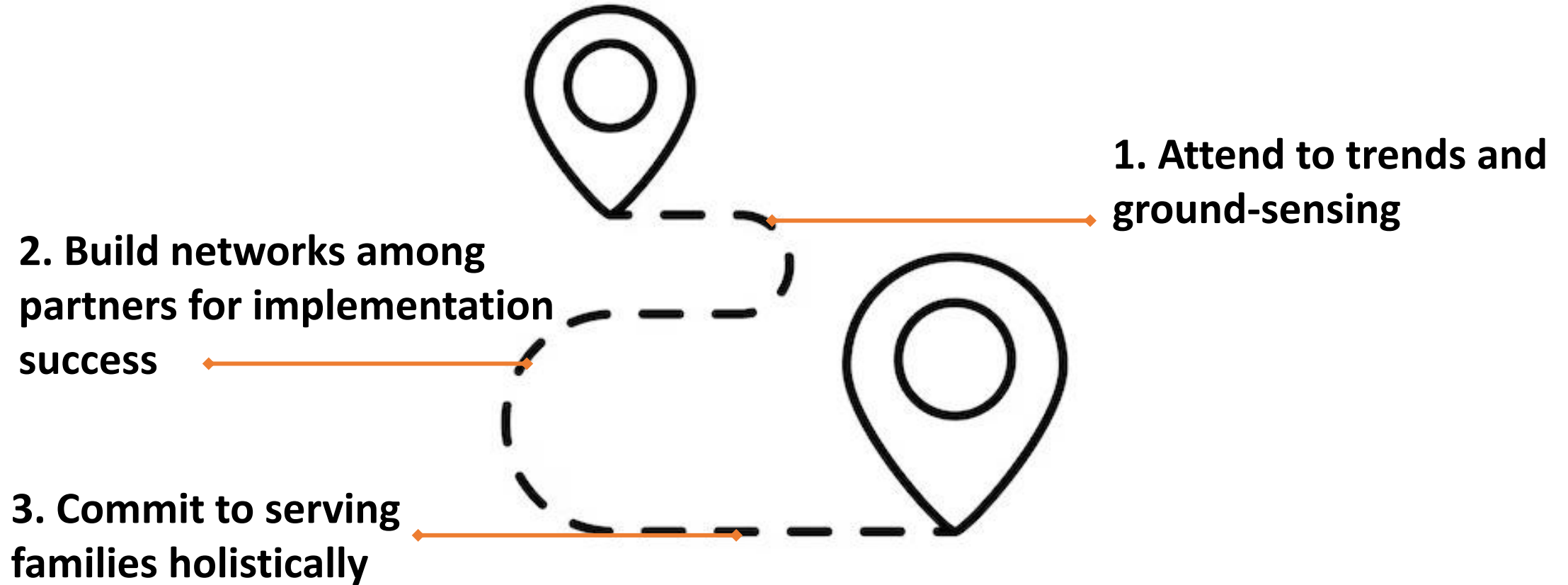
- Families receive the support of family coaches who work on adult family members' challenges with housing, work, debts, and incentivize the family to ensure children's needs for education are met.

- **For families in Domestic Violence crises:**

- Re-imagining an integration of services for families facing domestic violence and child protection concerns to make their experience with protection services more unified and effective
- Aligns with research insight on the impact of parental domestic violence on the risk of offspring experiencing domestic violence in childhood



Singapore will continue exploring new frontiers in the DV landscape



Thank you
