

SWD announces gradual resumption of subsidised welfare services

In view of the latest epidemic situation, subsidised welfare services operated by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) will be resumed by phases, a spokesman for the Social Welfare Department (SWD) said today (September 14).

In gist, subsidised welfare services will be resumed in a gradual mode whilst keeping a vigilant watch over the COVID-19 epidemic. The running of groups and small-scale programmes, such as talks, will be resumed on a pre-scheduled and appointment basis, with proper infection control measures put in place and subject to the prohibition on group gatherings in force at the time under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Prohibition on Group Gathering) Regulation (Cap. 599G). For centre-based services, no drop-in is allowed for the time being, with the flow of people at the centres properly managed. For home-based services, rehabilitation training and other assistive services for both persons with disabilities (PWDs) and the elderly will gradually be resumed to cater for the rehabilitation needs of the clientele, in addition to the existing delivery of meals, escort, nursing care, administration of medicine and personal care services. The SWD encourages that NGOs operating subsidised welfare services may also provide services through visual or online means where circumstances permit.

Details of service resumption in specific areas are as follows.

Rehabilitation services

- Special child care centres will resume half-day classroom training for upper classes from September 23 and for other classes from September 29. Other pre-school rehabilitation services will gradually resume in full scale, including small-group training, from September 23.
- From September 23, home care services for PWDs, namely home care service for persons with severe disabilities and integrated support service for persons with severe physical disabilities, will gradually increase their intensity and frequency with a view to resuming full-range service provision. Services in sheltered workshops, integrated vocational rehabilitation services centres, integrated vocational training centres and day activity centres will be resumed gradually from September 23.
- Starting from September 23, service users of district support centres for persons with disabilities, parents/relatives resource centres, integrated community centres for mental wellness, social and

recreational centres for the disabled and community rehabilitation day centres may join pre-enrolled groups and programmes, while no drop-in is allowed for the time being.

Elderly services

- Starting from September 23, integrated home care services and enhanced home and community care services will gradually increase their intensity and frequency with a view to resuming full-range service provision.
- Day care centres/units for the elderly will resume service gradually to around 50 per cent of their service capacity from September 23.
- Starting from September 23, service users of district elderly community centres and neighbourhood elderly centres may join pre-enrolled groups and programmes, while no drop-in is allowed for the time being.

Family and child welfare services

- With effect from September 15, the running of groups and programmes by integrated family service centres (IFSCs) and specialised co-parenting support centres, as well as the use of play corner/room, will be resumed on an appointment basis. Extended hours sessions in IFSCs will also be resumed on the same day.
- Child care centres will gradually resume normal service from September 29. Starting from mid-September, child care centres may, having regard to their circumstances (e.g. individual centres' operational modes and individual parents' needs), flexibly arrange for children to return to the centres to facilitate their adjustment. Service users may contact respective centres for details of the arrangements.

Youth and community services

- Starting from September 23, service users of centre-based services such as integrated children and youth services centres, children and youth centres, counselling centres for psychotropic substance abusers and community centres may join groups and use centre facilities on an appointment basis.

- With the resumption of face-to-face classes for Secondary One, Five and Six from September 23, school social work service will resume stationing in secondary schools correspondingly.
- With the resumption of face-to-face classes in schools by phases, centres providing after-school care programmes will be open to service users of Primary One, Five and Six from September 23 and will be fully open from September 29.

Services for residential care homes for the elderly (RCHEs) and residential care homes for persons with disabilities (RCHDs)

- With effect from September 23, multi-disciplinary outreaching support teams for the elderly and professional outreaching teams for private RCHDs will resume providing rehabilitation training and support services for service users at private RCHEs and RCHDs, etc.

Service operators should keep their service users informed of the latest arrangements and strictly follow the latest anti-epidemic guidelines issued by the Centre for Health Protection of the Department of Health. The SWD will continue to monitor the epidemic situation and work with stakeholders to ensure smooth and gradual resumption of subsidised welfare services.