

SPEECH BY ASSOC PROF HO PENG KEE, MINISTER OF STATE FOR LAW AND HOME AFFAIRS; MP FOR SEMBAWANG GRC AND CHAIRMAN OF SEMBAWANG-HONG KAH CDC AT THE LAUNCH OF SEMINARS ON EFFECTIVE PARENTING IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS ON SATURDAY, 15 JANUARY 2000 AT 10 AM AT THE NORTH VIEW SECONDARY SCHOOL

Mr Yeo Teck.Cheng, Principal of North View Secondary School:

Mr Tony Chng, Chairman of Family Enhancement Committee;

Councillors from Sembawang-Hong Kah CDC;

Teachers, Parents, Ladies and Gentlemen

Good Morning

I am pleased to join you this morning to launch this seminar series on Effective Parenting.

2 This is the second year Sembawang-Hong Kah Community Development Council is conducting these seminars. After last year's successful pilot programme, the CDC is happy to have 19 secondary schools as partners this year in this worthwhile outreach. Leveraging on the schools' orientation programmes for secondary one. students, these seminars will equip parents of impressionable teens with useful parenting skills.

3 The various presentations span a host of relevant and useful topics. These include understanding adolescent behaviour, tapping community resources in dealing with teen problems, and Internet understanding and safety for parents. It is important for parents of teens to grasp the key preoccupations and concerns of their children. Parents should know how their teenage children spend their time, the emotional and physiological changes they are going through, and how peer influence can make or break them. One seminar will not achieve all these objectives. But it is hoped that these seminars will provide the impetus for parents to begin their journey. Some may find that they are entering uncharted, unfamiliar waters. But this is to be expected and indeed to be welcomed. For then it shows that those parents who are coming forward have the desire to fill their knowledge gaps to become a better parent. Indeed, there is nothing shameful in that.

4 In this new millennium, the Internet and other IT applications will most certainly be a major pre-occupation of today's young. Just like the telephone transformed the social behaviour of earlier generations of teens, the World Wide Web will likewise dominate the communication pattern of today's teens. More than that, today's IT-savvy youths can access a vast array of information on the Internet. What they see and read on the Internet influences their behaviour and value systems. Indeed, it is a constant challenge and struggle for parents, not brought up in this new age of Information Technology, to fully comprehend values and ideas absorbed by their children from exposure to information on the Internet. This lack of understanding, and the accompanying lack of supervision, can result in youths

engaging in cyber-related delinquent behaviour such as accessing pornographic or occultic sites. It is therefore critical that parents understand the impact of this information technology phenomenon on their children's emotional and psychological development. For this reason, the formation of PAGi, the Parents Advisory Group for the Internet, is therefore very timely. As a ground initiative, PAGi will play a key role in raising awareness *of* net safety among parents and the wider public. I would like to thank PAGi and the Singapore Broadcasting Authority for their support towards this Seminar.

5 On its part, the Inter-Ministry on Youth Crime or IMYC, in partnership with TOUCH Community Services, is developing a Family Life Education Package that aims to equip parents with the necessary skills to overcome problems associated with Internet use by their teenage children. The intended primary users of the package are social workers/counsellors and family life educators who work with parents and conduct parent talks. However, the information will also be available to all parents who wish to learn how to manage the impact of the Internet on their children. This package will be available in May.

6 Sembawang-Hong Kah CDC aims to complement the Ministry of Community Development's efforts in reaching out to parents. Indeed, all CDCs are well-placed to perform this task. Strong, wholesome families is a key to Singapore's continued prosperity, progress and social cohesion. Such families can imbue important values such as filial piety, respect for elders, diligence and thrift in our young. Children in such families will grow up as confident, self-assured,

creative teens and adults who are socially well-adjusted and mature. These are future citizens who will make useful contributions in society. Hence, the CDC's Family Enhancement Committee will also spearhead a pre-marital counselling workshop, for newly-registered couples next month. The foundation for a strong family is a strong marriage where husband and wife starts off their union on the right footing and understanding.

7 Reaching out to parents must be an ongoing process. Hence, besides targeting parents of secondary one parents during school orientation, Sembawang-Hong Kah CDC is also conducting parenting talks for factory workers and kindergarten parents. The more parents we reach, the better, Also, the earlier we reach them, the better. This outreach is in line with IMYC's approach to work with CDCs in reaching out to parents. Effective parenting will not only build up strong families but also prevent juvenile delinquency and youth crime. To all parents, let me encourage you to keep on striving to be good parents. It will not be plain sailing. There will be disappointments and frustration. But at the end of the day, the time you spend with your children getting to know them better, or with professionals who can guide you on how you can get to know them better, will certainly be time well spent

8 On this note, I wish all parents happy learning.