



IMH to be rebuilt by 2040 and renamed National Centre for Mental Health in 2027

Description

The Institute of Mental Health (IMH) will be redeveloped and expanded at its present site by 2040, and renamed the National Centre for Mental Health Singapore in 2027, under plans in Health Minister Ong Ye Kung's [World Mental Health Day message](#) on Saturday 10 October. The hospital will be redesignated as a national specialty centre, putting it alongside Singapore's national centres for cancer, heart and eye care.



Photo: Institute of Mental Health

What changes for IMH

IMH has long been the bedrock of specialist psychiatric care in Singapore. Under the plan, it gets a bigger and more modern hospital by 2040 and a new role from 2027.

As a national specialty centre, the National Centre for Mental Health Singapore will lead research, coordinate psychiatric care across hospitals and build capabilities for the wider sector. That is the same model the national cancer, heart and eye centres follow.

Planning for the redevelopment has started.

Three regional hospitals take on more

IMH will not carry the load alone. Changi General Hospital, Woodlands Hospital and Alexandra Hospital are strengthening their psychiatric capabilities to add to national capacity.

The reason is demand. Mental health challenges are rising around the world, especially among young people, and hospitals and specialist clinics are seeing more patients, many of them still in school.

Community services are busier too. The number of youths attended to in the community has more than doubled, and the national mindline 1771 now handles 9,000 calls for help a month.

Fear of a permanent record

Mr Ong said the long-term answer is prevention and early intervention, and the main barrier is stigma.

People hesitate to seek help because they fear being judged by family, friends, teachers or employers, he said. Many also worry that a record of mental health support will count against them later, in school admissions, scholarship and job applications, or when buying insurance.

His position is that seeking support should not, by itself, become a mark against a person. Where disclosure is genuinely necessary, it should be limited to relevant circumstances and handled fairly.

Parental consent rules for young people

The other change is parental consent. Mr Ong said current practice is uneven. Callers to mindline 1771 can stay anonymous, and community-based providers generally do not insist on parental consent before counselling. Schools are more likely to require it before formal counselling begins.

He said an across-the-board consent requirement should not become a barrier for a young person who is not yet ready to talk to their parents. The aim is a system that lets a young person enter through a safe door and then brings the family in as care goes on.

Two pieces of work are under way. The Singapore Medical Council is revising its ethical guidelines to give doctors clearer guidance on parental consent, allowing clinicians to proceed with treatment where it is in the patient's best interests. The Ministry of Health is drafting parental consent guidelines for service providers and will seek public views in the coming weeks.

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