

## > IN FOCUS

# HIRING A FOREIGN DOMESTIC WORKER

Ms Shirley Ng, president of the Association of Employment Agencies (Singapore) (AEAS), and Ms Lim Hwee Er from the National Council of Social Service (NCSS) offer some tips on hiring a Foreign Domestic Worker (FDW).

It is important that an employer is clear about the reasons for hiring an FDW, says AEAS president Shirley Ng.

- Does she have to take care of children?
- Will she be the main caregiver for a disabled or elderly family member?

In addition, consider if the FDW will be under the supervision of a family member while you are at work.

If the FDW's main duty is to take care of children, she suggests that employers look for an FDW who is a mother herself.

"The FDW is likely to be more matured and capable of caring for young ones."

If your FDW has to look after a disabled family member, you should hire someone with experience as a caregiver.

"The FDW has to be willing to spend the extra effort in caring for a disabled family member. Physical strength is also necessary because she will probably need to assist him or her around the house," adds Ms Ng.

An FDW looking after the elderly or the disabled should not only possess a good attitude but good communication skills, shares Ms Lim Hwee Er from NCSS.

How does one match an FDW to the elderly or the disabled who requires their care? One way is to involve them in the selection of the caregiver, says Ms Lim.

There are also some general guidelines. "If she has past experience as a domestic worker, she will understand the demands and requirements of the job," says Ms Ng.



Ms Lim  
Hwee Er,  
NCSS



AEAS  
president,  
Shirley Ng

Have realistic expectations of your FDW and communicate your needs to the employment agency. This should narrow down your search and increase your chances of hiring a suitable FDW. If an agency does not have someone that matches your requirements, you should approach another agency.

Remember the FDW may be unfamiliar with your needs, so constant communication and support is important to make the relationship a harmonious one.

## TIPS

### A caregiver for children should...

- Possess patience and maturity to cope with the demands of caring for children. An FDW who has children back home is likely to be more mature.
- Have experience in baby care if you require the FDW to care for your baby.

### A caregiver for the elderly or disabled should...

- Speak the same language as the person who requires their care.
- Have experience in caring for someone in a similar condition. For instance, if you have a wheelchair-bound family member, the FDW with such caregiving experience will be more familiar in helping them move about.
- Possess good attitude and communication skills such as a respectful tone, positive body language, even pace of speech and good eye contact.
- Possess initiative to cope with the changing needs of the elderly.

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# KEEP YOUR FAMILY SAFE FROM H1N1

A healthy lifestyle and good standard of cleanliness keeps the flu virus away. Your Foreign Domestic Worker (FDW) can play a key role in keeping your family healthy.

The best approach in dealing with the current H1N1 flu is to educate ourselves and our loved ones on flu prevention.

## 1. IMPART THE NECESSARY KNOWLEDGE

Your FDW is a member of your household too. It is just as important to educate her on personal hygiene and household cleanliness.

Fifty-year-old employer Shirley Tay watches the news with her FDW, Rico, to stay updated on the H1N1 situation.

"That's how we learnt the prevention measures to help keep the flu at bay," adds Shirley.

## 2. KEEP YOUR MESSAGE SIMPLE

FDW employer Angeline Tan, 33, too keeps herself up to date with the news, before conveying the information to her FDW using simple instructions.

"I tell her there's a new virus called H1N1 that's slightly different from the common flu, and the precautionary measures to take," says Angeline.

## 3. SHOW HER HOW TO BE SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE

Depending on her language proficiency, your FDW may have problems understanding the information given. You may have to resort to other means to get the information across – such as through visuals or demonstration.

What is important to bring across is the concept of social responsibility. Teach your FDW how to use a thermometer. Stress to her that she must inform you if she is unwell. Bring her to see a doctor and ensure she gets sufficient rest to recuperate. Explain to her that she should minimise social contact if she is unwell and she should wear a mask if she needs to be out in crowded places.

A healthy family includes a healthy FDW. Everyone needs a work-life balance, proper diet and high personal hygiene to stay healthy. So, make it a family affair and embark on a healthy lifestyle as a family unit. It is your best bet against an infection.

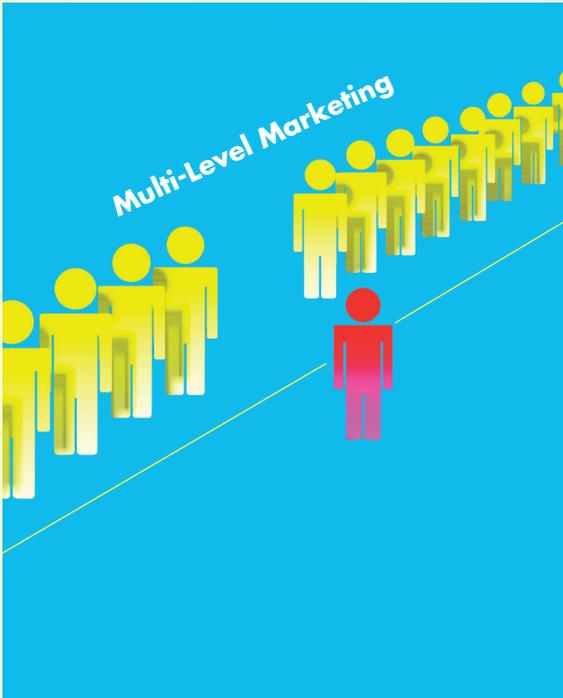
Click [here](#) for more information about H1N1.

Click [here](#) to download a copy of INFORM (MOM's newsletter for FDWs) for H1N1 prevention tips in Bahasa Indonesia.



# NO TO MULTI-LEVEL MARKETING

Earlier this year, a reader wrote to the Straits Times Forum asking if it is legal for his Foreign Domestic Worker (FDW) to be involved in multi-level marketing (MLM).



## WHAT IS MULTI-LEVEL MARKETING?

The typical MLM scheme will usually involve someone who tells you that there is an easy way to make money by selling a product, usually something not found in the market, or sold at a price people will not normally pay. You will then be told to buy some of these products for your inventory and advised that the fastest way to recover your money is to recruit more people to join the MLM scheme.

The MLM scheme will typically collapse when the newest members find that they are unable to recruit any others and stuck with very expensive products that no one will buy.

## IS IT LEGAL FOR AN FDW TO ENGAGE IN MLM?

Under the Work Permit conditions, FDWs are only allowed to work in the occupation and for the employer, which is stated in the work permit card. Those who engage in employment or business through MLM activities are committing an offence. They are liable to be fined up to \$5,000 or a maximum jail term of six months or both. They are also likely to be barred from further employment in Singapore.

Do warn your FDW about the consequences of working illegally if she is being persuaded to participate in MLM.

Click [here](#) for more information about **MLM**.

Share this information with your Indonesian FDW. Click [here](#) to download a copy of INFORM (MOM's newsletter for FDWs)

## DO YOU KNOW?

### Your legal obligations as employer

The medical insurance requirements and security bond conditions for employers of Foreign Domestic Workers (FDW) will be revised from 1 January 2010. You will be affected by this change if you are renewing the Work Permit of your FDW or hiring an FDW on or after this date.

#### Medical Insurance

In 2008, about one of every 10 hospital bills for foreign workers and FDWs was in excess of \$5,000. To help reduce employer's exposure to potentially large hospital bills, the minimum insurance coverage for FDWs will increase from \$5,000 a year to \$15,000 a year with effect from 1 Jan 2010. However, there will not be any cap on the maximum medical liability of an employer.

Employers may choose to obtain higher coverage on their own accord if they wish to have greater protection. For cases where medical bills exceed the coverage, the employers will have to pay the difference.

#### Security Bond

- Conditions where employers have little or no control over will be removed from the security bond. These include conditions that prohibit FDWs from getting pregnant and the condition that prohibits a foreign worker from marrying a Singaporean. Instead, employers will be required to inform their FDWs of the Work Permit Conditions and report to the relevant authority if the FDWs breach any of the conditions.
- In cases where the FDW absconds, \$2,500 of the security bond (rather than the full \$5,000) will be forfeited if employers take reasonable steps to locate her.
- There will be a new security bond condition to ensure prompt payment of salaries for FDWs.



**FAST SKILLS**

# CARING FOR THE AGED OR UNWELL

If you have elderly household members or someone who requires medical care in your family, you may wish to sign up your Foreign Domestic Worker (FDW) for the Nursing Aide Course organized by the Philippine Bayanihan Society.

The Nursing Aide Course is open to FDWs of all nationalities. It aims to provide FDWs with a solid grounding in caring for the sick and the elderly. This includes ensuring the cleanliness and comfort of bedridden patients and recognizing signs of distress or a possible heart attack.

Lectures cover basic nursing aide theory and training. It includes practical sessions in a nursing home, where students gain first hand experience of nursing activities under the close supervision of professionals.

The course also covers basic first aid skills, prepares students to respond quickly and calmly in emergencies and teaches them when they should call for help.

Courses run for approximately eight months, with lessons held every second Sunday of the month. The next course intake will be in March 2010. Please register in person at the Philippine Bayanihan Society located at 43 Pasir Panjang Road. For more information, refer to [www.bayanihancentre.org](http://www.bayanihancentre.org).

## WHAT FDWS CAN LEARN FROM THE COURSE

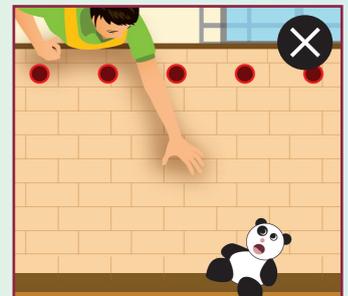
- Basics of human anatomy and physiology.
- Recognition of the general and typical symptoms of sickness, including temperature, fevers and heart attacks.
- Hands-on experience in taking a patient's temperature, pulse rate and blood pressure, including procedures to brief the patient on what is being done.
- Patient care such as diet and food preparation, hygiene, bed care, and posture and support for those who are bedridden.

## SAFE ZONE

To a foreign domestic worker (FDWs) who is new to the city, the modern home is fraught with potential danger. One of the most common causes of accidents in domestic work is falling from heights. Your FDW should have been trained to work safely in the Safety Awareness Course that all FDWs have to undergo before they begin work in Singapore. Here is a useful reminder for your FDW on the common dangers that can easily be avoided:

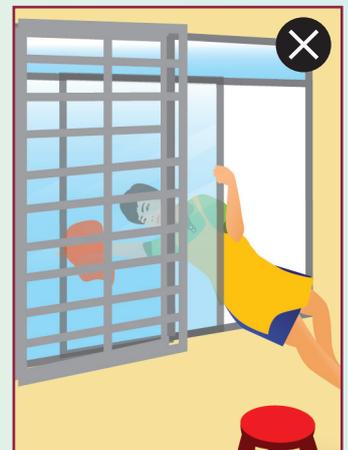
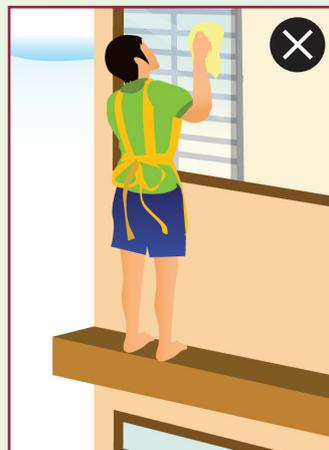
### HANGING LAUNDRY

- Make sure your feet are firmly on the floor, and the body is inside the apartment.
- Hang the heavier clothes closer to the bracket and the lighter clothes at the far end of pole.
- Be extra careful while retrieving laundry when it is windy or raining.



### CLEANING WINDOWS

- Lock window grilles before cleaning the window exterior.
- Do not stand on chairs, stools or any raised platform.
- Use window-cleaning tools with extended handles.
- Do not climb or lean out of window to clean the window exterior. MOM takes this seriously and has prosecuted a number of employers for getting their FDWs to clean windows by climbing outside.



## READERS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Do you have a good tip to share on managing your foreign domestic worker? We would love to hear from you. Email your suggestions to [MOM\\_FMMD\\_eNews@mom.gov.sg](mailto:MOM_FMMD_eNews@mom.gov.sg). The best tips will be published in this column for the next issue. (We seek your understanding that we may not be able to respond to all e-mails.)