

EA Alert Dated: 16 July 2014

EA Alert: Advisory to FDW-Placing EAs Against Insensitive Advertising and Inappropriate Display of FDWs

This advisory is applicable to employment agencies (EAs) which seek to place foreign domestic workers (FDWs) into employment.

We are concerned by incidences of insensitive advertising and inappropriate display of FDWs by EAs.

Insensitive Advertising by EAs

2 We understand that advertisements indicating very low agency fees are sometimes used among FDW-placing EAs to attract prospective employers. However, these advertisements which emphasise cheap fees, promotional rates, and/or discounts inadvertently give the impression that the FDWs are being marketed as merchandise. EAs should ensure that all advertising collaterals accord FDWs basic respect and human dignity.

3 EAs should therefore refrain from all forms of public advertising (eg on shop fronts and websites) that casts FDWs in an undignified light. EAs' advertisements should not make any mention of fees or liken FDWs to merchandise that can be purchased and replaced when found unsatisfactory. The Ministry considers such practices unacceptable. EAs can however continue to communicate the full schedule of their fees and policies to prospective clients upon their request.

Inappropriate Display of FDWs

4 While we understand that the presence of FDWs at EAs' premises is aimed at facilitating job matching between the FDWs and prospective employers, displaying FDWs in an undesirable manner (including having them sit outside EA premises) reinforces the impression that FDWs are commodities to be "tested" or traded is unacceptable to the Ministry.

5 The Ministry considers the practices listed above as potentially detrimental to FDWs, who are ultimately EAs' clients. The Commissioner of Employment Agencies has grounds to take action against EAs with such practices under Section 11(1)(c) of the Employment Agencies Act which states that an EA should not act in a manner likely to be detrimental to the interests of its clients.

6 EAs should therefore cease the above unacceptable practices with immediate effect. The Ministry will take action against EAs which persist in such undesirable practices.

7 Please contact us at Tel: 6438 5122 or email: mom_fmmd@mom.gov.sg if you require any clarification.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely

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Deputy Commissioner for Employment Agencies