

Advocacy organisation, funeral company to help those with mental health and financial issues



[Timothy Goh](#)

Health Correspondent
PUBLISHED

MAY 5, 2022, 12:58 PM SGT

SINGAPORE - Those with mental health conditions who are facing financial difficulties will be able to get simple funeral services free of charge for themselves and their next of kin, thanks to a collaboration between mental health advocacy organisation Silver Ribbon (Singapore) and funeral service provider Nguan Gratitude Services.

Announcing this at the second Silver Ribbon Mental Health Awards Ceremony for Employers on Thursday (May 5), Ms Valerie Lee, director of Nguan Gratitude Services, said: "When Silver Ribbon (Singapore) first approached us with a proposal for pro bono funeral services, we responded quickly as we understood the importance of being able to provide a dignified send-off for our loved ones."

She added: "Similar to seeking help for mental health or wellness, there may be reluctance to seek financial assistance for funeral expenses for various reasons."

The two organisations had earlier signed a memorandum of understanding for the collaboration last Friday.

As part of the collaboration, Nguan Gratitude Services will provide simple pro bono funeral services for people with mental health conditions who have financial difficulties.

In order to be eligible, applicants must provide personal details of the deceased and present supporting documents indicating that the person who died was diagnosed with a mental health condition by a mental health professional.

They will also need to show that the deceased or their next of kin met at least one of the following criteria: Having a monthly income of less than \$1,000; being on social welfare or unable to finance the funeral expenses by other means; being homeless or living alone with limited or no financial support from family members or relatives.

Other requests for discounted or pro bono funeral services for the next of kin of those with mental health conditions will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Ms Porsche Poh, founder and executive director of Silver Ribbon (Singapore), told The Straits Times that quite a few people with mental health conditions she had spoken to had said they are without jobs, do not have much money, and wonder what will happen to them if they or their loved ones die.

She recalled: "I remember this conversation late at night, at around 2am to 3am, when a person with mental health issues called, saying her father had passed away. She has depression and hasn't been working all this while, and is dependent on financial assistance. She said she didn't know what to do."

The collaboration aims to plug some of the gaps in support for such people here, said Ms Poh.

Under the collaboration, Nguan Gratitude Services will also share its experiences at mental health events organised by Silver Ribbon

(Singapore). The sharing includes, for example, how people grieve when they lose a loved one.

Meanwhile, Silver Ribbon (Singapore) will help process applications for the pro bono funeral services, and provide complimentary emotional support for clients of Nguan Gratitude Services who need it.

"There is significant stress when one is faced with the loss of a loved one and not knowing what to do for (the) last journey... (but) there is only this much funeral directors can do," said Ms Lee, pointing out that funeral directors are not trained in counselling or grief management.

"With Silver Ribbon's assistance, we are able to offer families an additional listening ear."

She said: "We hope to give holistic help to both the living and the departed and, at the same time, do something for the community, especially for those with mental health issues, and help lift the stigma around help-seeking (behaviour)."