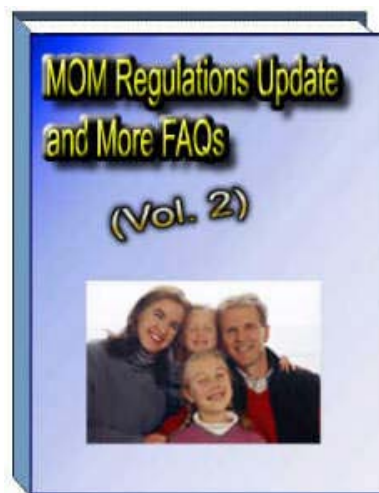


MOM Regulations Update And More Frequently Asked Questions

(Volume 2)



by 121 Personnel Services

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More updates:

➡ [An important speech on accreditation of agencies](#) to protect consumers' interest. 121 Personnel Services is accredited by the Consumers Association of Singapore for Good Business Practices, certificate number CT/0001.

[Click here](#) for MOM information on **maid abuse**.

[Click here](#) for FAQ's on **employers who change maids frequently**.

Note: These links are functional at the point of publication. However, they may not be functional now due to the frequent updating and changes at the MOM website.

We, at **121 Personnel Services** (Accredited for Good Business Practice by the Consumers Association of Singapore, Certificate No. CT/0001, and Singapore Ministry of Manpower Licensed Agency, Lic. No. C634801D), are at your service for the following:

- **Recruitment / Placement of Domestic Helpers for the Expatriate Community**
- **Bringing in of Domestic Helper from Overseas**
- **Applications / Renewals/ Administration of:**
 - **Home-leave documentation**
 - **Renewal of passport**
 - **Employment pass/ Work permit/ Visa**
 - **Other Ministry of Manpower and immigration related matters**

For quality service, please contact The 121 Customer Care Team at:

Tel: (65) 6733-8121 (3 Lines)

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It is also our pleasure to have you visit us at:

545 Orchard Road #12-07,

Far East Shopping Centre

Singapore 238882.

(Please call for an appointment)

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1. CaseTrust Accreditation

In May 2002, the Singapore Ministry of Manpower (MOM) deemed it **compulsory for all maid agencies to be accredited by June 2004 before their licence can be renewed and to continue business**. The purpose is to protect consumers from errant maid agencies and increase the standard of the industry.

Thus, the accreditation scheme (CASETrust) by the Consumers Association of Singapore (CASE) was administered. To qualify, agencies must provide good sales and after-sales service as well as fulfilling other minimum criteria, including business integrity, fair trading practices, quality of staff training and maintenance of retail facilities. A panel of independent assessors certifies agencies and admits members. Such an evaluation process may take between 3 to 6 months. The assessors are also responsible for carrying out regular and unannounced checks on accredited agencies. Another way for agencies to renew their licence is to be accredited by the Association of Employment Agencies, which is a self-governing scheme by the industry itself.

Please visit <http://121personnel.com/casetrust.htm> and <http://121personnel.com/caseprotect.htm> for more information.

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2. Compulsory Orientation Program for Employers

With effect from 1 April 2004, all first-time employers of foreign domestic helpers are required to attend a half-day orientation program. The MOM has stipulated the attendance of the course by the employer as one of the criteria for processing the domestic helper's work permit application.

The main objective of the program is to educate new employers on their role and responsibilities when employing a domestic helper. Currently, two training institutes have been appointed to conduct the orientation program. They are:

- PSB Corporation
Tel: 6885 1050 / 6885 1023
Website: www.psb.corp.com/consulting/fdw.shtml
- Singapore Polytechnic
Tel: 6772 1288
Website: www.sp.edu.sg

The course fee for the program is \$20. An on-line version of the program is also available through Singapore Polytechnic, but at a higher fee of \$30. [Please click here to access this online e-learning course provided by the Singapore Polytechnic.](#)

Besides first-time employers, the other group of employers who are required by MOM to attend the orientation program are those who have changed their domestic helpers five times or more within a year. MOM may also interview them to establish the reason for the frequent changes.

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3. Compulsory Safety Awareness Course for New Domestic Helpers

From 1 April 2004, MOM requires all newly arrived foreign domestic helpers (i.e., those who have not worked in Singapore previously) to attend a compulsory half-day safety awareness course before their work permit will be granted.

The course aims to inculcate safety awareness in the foreign domestic helpers so that they will perform their household chores safely. The National Safety Council of Singapore has been appointed to conduct the course. For further information, please contact:

NSCS Training Centre
7 Keppel Road
Tanjong Pagar Complex #02-03A/04/05
SINGAPORE 089055
Tel: 6423 9626
Website: www.nscs.org.sg
Email: nscstc@pacific.net.sg

USEFUL RESOURCES ON MOM WEBSITE

- Orientation Videos for Newly Arrived Foreign Domestic Workers
<http://www.mom.gov.sg/FMMD/OrientationVideoforNewlyArrivedFDWs.htm>
- Foreign Domestic Worker Safety Pamphlet – Do's and Don'ts
http://www.mom.gov.sg/NR/rdonlyres/3847890E-9980-4A15-AA72-9E3C3E5961C2/1829/Worker_Safety.pdf

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4. Foreign Domestic Worker Levy Concession

Employers have to pay a monthly Foreign Domestic Worker levy of \$295 to the Government on top of the domestic helper's salary.

As part of the pro-family measures implemented by the Government recently, employers will pay a reduced levy of \$200 per month with effect from 1 April 2005 if:

- a. the employer or spouse has a child who is a Singapore Citizen below the age of 12 years staying in the same household as the employer; or
- b. the employer/ co-residing spouse is a Singapore Citizen aged 65 years or above; or
- c. the employer has a parent, parent-in-law, grandparent or grandparent-in-law who is a Singapore Citizen aged 65 years or above staying in the same household as the employer.

Those who do not meet the criteria will continue to pay the current monthly levy of \$295.

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5. New Additional Requirements

From 1 January 2005, foreign domestic helpers applying for a work permit in Singapore must be at least 23 years old and should have at least 8 years of formal education. They are also required to pass a test on basic numerary and literacy knowledge before they are granted work permits. These are new measures introduced by the MOM to ensure that the foreign domestic helpers have the ability to understand safety instructions and to adapt in an urban environment.

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1. I am a first-time employer of a domestic helper, and it seems like there are some new requirements. What exactly are they, and how would they affect me?

The Ministry of Manpower (MOM) has deemed it compulsory for all first-time employer of a domestic helper to attend an **orientation program**. This is applicable to all applications subsequent to 1 April 2004. There is also an equivalent orientation program for first-time domestic helper.

The orientation program for employers lasts for 4 hours and costs \$20. There is also an online orientation program that costs \$30. [Please click here to access this online e-learning course provided by the Singapore Polytechnic.](#)

It is advised that you attend the course first, and then **allow a day or two for the MOM systems to reflect that you have attended** and passed the course before any application is made. Therefore, if your application is urgent, it is advisable to attend the course as soon as possible while conducting interviews to find the right helper for your family.

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2. What if during the interview, I cannot decide on which girl is right for me? All of them seemed pretty good.

It is pretty difficult to decide, especially if most of the shortlisted candidates are close to your requirements and you are pretty comfortable with them. One way to go about it is to ask yourself **how do you feel about each girl**. How do your spouse and your children feel about each girl? You may also wish to consider the reaction of your pet dog or cat to the candidates, if applicable. :-)

Invite them to your house to see their working environment and ask them whether they would like working there. Another point to consider is why do you need a helper in the first place? What is the most important task that you need her for, and whether each candidate can satisfy your needs?

Another way is to **assign a number from 1 to 10 on each girl** such that 10 is the

perfect girl that you would want to employ immediately and 1 is the girl you wouldn't even consider in the first place. This would help you gauge the girls in a "concrete" manner as how good each girl is can be represented by a number. Hence, the higher the number of the girl, the better she suits you.

Yet another way is to **go by elimination**. That is, comparing girl A to girl B, you decide to take girl A. And girl B is out. Comparing girl A to girl C, you decide to take girl C, and so on and so forth, until one girl is left. She is likely to be the best girl for the job.

All in all, there is no hard and fast rule, and these are just some ideas to consider.

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3. Why is it that the candidate I want does not want to work for me?

There can be many reasons for this. Bear in mind that domestic helpers are just like you, looking for the best employer or working terms possible for themselves. They are no different from, say an IT specialist looking for a job with Dell Computers or Hewlett-Packard or Seagate. **You are choosing them just like they are choosing you.**

Generally, experienced helpers are looking for **all sundays and public holidays off**. From our experience with them, having a good rest after a week of hard work is very important. After all, an IT specialist would have the weekend off, and so should all workers, wouldn't you think so? And, you wouldn't want your helper to burn out, would you?

Sometimes, the candidate you choose cannot work with you because of timing issues like her ex-employer cannot release her to you earlier when you need her urgently, or her ex-employer wants to transfer her immediately, but you are not ready to take her

in yet. On rare occasions, there may be this unreasonable ex-employer who may disagree or change her mind repeatedly - in which case, we would advise looking for another candidate.

Another reason can be some of the candidates have a deadline for the transfer and would accept the best possible offer as soon as possible. **If an employer takes too long to ponder** and consider and think whether a candidate is right for her, the **candidate may have already found a job with someone else**. So, it would be advisable for an employer to employ the helper if she is, say **90% to 95% sure** of her choice. In case it doesn't work out, the employer just has to ensure a **reasonable guarantee** is in place.

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4. What if my domestic helper makes mistakes?

As human beings, we make mistakes, and nobody is perfect. Please be **more forgiving**.

The best way is to talk to her and explain to her what you need of her and get her to perform accordingly. Give her a chance to prove herself. **Do not scold her or verbally abuse her**. This is an **offence under Singapore regulations**. Of course, physical abuse is even worse. Please read our free ebook “Volume 1: Frequently Asked Questions on Getting a Domestic Helper for Your Family” for even more details on abuse. [Please click here to download free ebook.](#)

As a guideline, allow the girl **3 months** to get used to the work (3 months is also the general probation period of many companies). Even though she is experienced, your working style and her previous employer's working style may be different, and she would need some time to pick up.

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5. I heard so many horror stories about young girls going after the husbands. How can I prevent that?

If an employer is very worried and is always imagining about the young domestic helper (it can also be an old domestic helper) :-) going after her husband, the best prevention is not to employ a domestic helper. At least, the employer can have a peace of mind.

But, to **put things in perspective**, the girls are here to make a decent living. Remember that they are the daughters of their parents, and the wives of their husbands and the mothers of their children back home. They are here to work so that they can provide a better living for their loved ones back home.

Horror stories spread like wild fire because "a dog bites man" is no news, but "a man bites dog" is big news. This is just like the newspaper or TV telling bad news all day long because that's how you get viewer-ship. And, telling horror stories and

frightening other people can also be something that some "experienced" expatriates enjoy.

So, really, horror stories are blown out of proportion. **If the employer trusts her husband, and she trusts her own judgment in marrying her husband, there is nothing to worry about.**

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6. I want to throw my domestic helper out immediately! Can I do that?

The answer is "**no**". An employer should treat her helper with dignity and treat her as a fellow human being. When the MOM allows an employer to employ a helper, it is the employer's duty to take care of the helper. (Details is in the MOM's form).

Taking care of the helper include **proper food and lodging**. As long as the girl is under the employer's name, the girl shall stay in the employer's home because **that is the address on the work permit**. Moreover, under the regulations, the employer should allow the girl **at least 2 weeks to look for a new job**, if things have come to pass.

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7. I only want to employ a domestic helper who has worked in an expatriate family. But, I heard that they are "spoilt", so what should I do?

Whether the girl is "spoilt" is really up to the girl. This is pretty much like the good people and the bad people in this world. So, who's good, or who's bad? It is difficult to judge what is "spoilt" as it depends on how you perceive it.

We would advocate interviewing **both helpers who have worked in an expatriate family and those who have worked with the local family**. This would allow you to have a **better comparison**.

We have quite a number of clients who decided later that helpers with experience working with local families actually fit them better.

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8. I only want to give 0, 1 or 2 days-off per month. I am afraid that my domestic helper will become bad after mixing with bad company outside.

There are two issues here. One, if you only give 0,1 or 2 days-off per month, you are **not likely to attract strong candidates**. These performers generally want to have a good rest during weekends. Going to church, catching up with friends, having an enjoyable time are important to them.

Two, whether the helper turns bad really depends on her. If she is self-disciplined and she is clear about her priority here, she will know what to do. After all, they are all adults.

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9. It seems like engaging the service of employment agencies is expensive. Why is that so?

The answer is both "yes" and "no". If an employer feels that a few hundred dollars is expensive, then it is expensive. Even a few dollars can be expensive.

At the end of the day, what does an employer want for herself and her family? What is the price of having the family well taken care of? The children well tended to? Having more time for oneself and having a life? And, not having to worry about a helper who is not well-matched to her needs? And not having to worry about not having a good guarantee to protect her interest? Is a few hundred dollars worth the total peace of mind and a good family life?

Fact: "Cheap things are no good. Good things are not cheap." But, 121 Personnel Services is reasonable (see testimonials) and we don't practise "piece-meal" pricing (see below).

Another thing to note is that certain agencies may quote a "piece-meal" price so that they appear cheaper than other agencies. And, after the employer engages their service, the hidden charges start to come into the picture, and the whole exercise actually costs much more.

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10. Where do the girls agencies shortlist for my interviews come from? How do I know whether these girls are good?

Generally, the girls come to agencies from many different sources. It can be through recommendations by friends, from newspaper or magazine advertisements, from flyers, and through the agencies' own business networks.

At 121 Personnel Services, we operate by the **Law of Attraction and the Girls' Goodwill**. We attract girls to us by being **open and fair** to both employers and employees, and by the **word of mouth** among the girls. **This trust was built up over time, and we value it a lot.**

You see, if 121 Personnel Services attract good girls - **the good girls will ask other good girls to come to us**. Think about it - "the goody two shoes will only mix with the goody two shoes." Aren't you and your friends pretty similar in certain ways? It's almost impossible for a cop to be the best friend of a thief. By us being open and

honest and impartial, we attract the good domestic helpers we deserve. And, so it is for the employer.

Another important thing to note is that we do not force any girl to take up any job she doesn't like. What's the point if she is not going to do her best if she doesn't like working for a particular employer.

Hence, it is very important that the employer ensures that the girl wasn't forced to take up the job and that she really would like to work for the employer.

Whether the girls are good is really **relative to the needs** of the employer. Certain girls simply suit certain employers better than others. Hence, we use the [121 Match-Point System](#) to match the best girls possible to our employers.

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11. I want to look for my own helper. What should I do? And, what should I watch out for?

There are a few ways:

- check with friends or relatives to see whether there are any good helpers who are looking for a transfer to another employer
- check out the notice boards at your embassy or clubs or at supermarkets like Cold Storage for notices of helpers looking for a transfer
- engage the service of a maid agency to help you find a suitable helper

Quite frankly, all of them have their advantages and disadvantages.

For instance, if you take over the helper of your friends or relatives, the chance of your helper working out should be very high. We could then help you with the necessary paper (the industrial term used here is called "processing").

What about the helper you find through notice boards or from acquaintances. Like marriage, it is sometimes very hard to say whether it will end up in a divorce. In this instance, there are **2 pitfalls to watch for**:

1. The ex-employer of the helper may *lie* (God bless that not everybody is like that!) that the helper is good so that she doesn't have to incur the cost of sending the helper home. If it doesn't work out, it is your responsibility to send the helper home, and yes, you have to bear all the expenses.
2. Some helpers want to save money by looking for their own employers. By doing so, they don't have to pay the agency any "job find" fee. But because she doesn't have to pay any "job find" fee, she may *not do her best* for you since she has not invested any money in finding a job. To her, the worst case scenario is to go home or find another job. (And of course, this may not always be the case.)

You just have to watch out for these 2 pitfalls. Nevertheless, they may not *always happen*.

In the third instance, if the prospective employer finds the "wrong" agency, she may be ripped off, or certain promises may not be kept. In the end, the employer "suffers the consequences", so to speak. Therefore, it is important to [use this checklist to evaluate your agency.](#)

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Section II: More FAQs

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12. Where can I look for help if my helper doesn't work out?

Bear in mind that it takes two to clap. If your helper doesn't work out, ask whether you have contributed to it somehow. Or, does your helper need more time to adapt to her new working environment?

Look at the matter objectively and keep emotions out of the way. Many people tend to get personal and start blaming each other when things do not work out. Treat this as an employer-employee issue and settle it rationally. Using common-sense and being reasonable should go a long way.

Have a heart to heart talk with your helper if possible. It is important to have an open channel of communication so that both of you can understand each other's needs better.

If the matter cannot be resolved, ask your agency for help. Sometimes, the helper prefers to talk to the agency.

In a worst case scenario, you may wish to either send your helper back to her country of origin or allow her to transfer to another employer.

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