



Your Guide to Employing a Foreign Domestic Worker

Ministry of Manpower
Foreign Manpower Management Division

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www.mom.gov.sg



Today, 1 in every 6 households in Singapore* employs a Foreign Domestic Worker (FDW). With FDWs helping with household chores and caring for our young and elderly, more Singaporeans are able to join the workforce, knowing that our homes are well taken care of while we are at work.

As in any employer-employee relationship, it is important that both parties work towards establishing a harmonious working relationship. As an employer, you have an important part to play in helping your FDW adjust to life and work in Singapore.

The Ministry of Manpower (MOM) has published this Guide to help FDW employers in the management of their FDWs. This Guide spells out your roles and responsibilities as an FDW employer and provides advice on FDW employment issues. We hope that this Guide will help you build a positive working relationship with your FDW.

**Accurate as of December 2006*

Contents



Page

1 Deciding to Employ a Foreign Domestic Worker

4

- Your Commitment as an FDW Employer
- Challenges of Hiring an FDW
- Choosing an FDW
- Alternatives to Employing an FDW

2 Obligations of FDW Employers and FDWs

8

- Your Obligations as an FDW Employer
- Employment
- Your FDW's Upkeep, Maintenance and Well-being
- Managing Your FDW
- Sending Your FDW Home
- Your FDW's Legal Obligations



Page

3 Employing an FDW

17

- Employing an FDW Who Has Not Worked in Singapore Before
- Employing an FDW Who is Currently Working in Singapore for Another Employer
- Engaging the Services of an Employment Agency

4 Building a Positive Relationship With Your FDW

20

- Understanding Your FDW
- Having an Employment Contract
- Coaching Your FDW
- Providing a Safe Working Environment for Your FDW
- Getting Your FDW Started
- Training Courses for FDWs
- Useful Contact Information





1 Deciding to Employ a Foreign Domestic Worker

Employing a foreign domestic worker (FDW) is a serious commitment. This chapter highlights some factors you should consider before you decide to employ an FDW.

Your Commitment as an FDW Employer

Employing an FDW is a serious commitment. You need to consider the financial cost, the time needed to train and supervise the FDW and your legal responsibilities. More importantly, you must be ready to have an FDW living with your family under the same roof.

Challenges of Hiring an FDW

Be prepared to face the challenges of an FDW who may:

- Not be able to speak or understand your language easily. Her spoken English may not meet your expectations
- Not be able to care for your loved ones or to clean your home according to your expectations
- Need constant supervision and coaching
- Have difficulty adjusting to living and working in a new environment
- Have a different way of life, beliefs and customs

If you are not prepared to face these challenges, there are alternatives to employing an FDW. These are discussed on page 7.



Choosing an FDW

Once you have decided to employ an FDW, think through your selection criteria carefully. Focus on the primary duties you want your FDW to fulfill and select an FDW with the skills and qualities to perform those duties. For example:

Caring for Children

Look for an FDW who:

- Likes children
- Is energetic and patient
- Is pleasant and willing to learn
- Has experience caring for children
- Has the ability to communicate with your children

Caring for the Elderly or Disabled

The FDW should:

- Be physically strong if the family member needs assistance to move around
- Be patient and sensitive
- Be willing to learn
- Have experience in looking after the invalid, disabled or elderly
- Have the ability to communicate in a language the family member is familiar with

Cleaning the House

A suitable FDW should:

- Be familiar with using household appliances
- Know basic English if you require the FDW to do marketing or shopping for groceries
- Be willing to learn

Alternatives to Employing an FDW

If you are concerned about the legal and financial obligations or the inconvenience of having an FDW living in your home, you can consider:

- Placing your children at infant, child or student care centres
- Seeking help for the elderly or sick from the relevant elderly care or medical groups
- Hiring local domestic workers on a regular basis for household chores. Such workers usually charge an hourly fee



Remember:

- **Employing an FDW is a commitment. Be prepared to provide for, manage and supervise the FDW**
- **Make sure you and your family members are ready for the FDW to live in your home**
- **Select your FDW carefully**
- **Have reasonable expectations of your FDW**



2 Obligations of FDW Employers and FDWs

This chapter highlights some employment guidelines and obligations under the Conditions of Work Permit for employers and FDWs.

Your Obligations as an FDW Employer

When you employ an FDW, you are required by law to comply with the Work Permit Conditions.

Employers who breach the Work Permit Conditions may:

- Have their FDW's Work Permit revoked
- Have their security deposit forfeited
- Have their future Work Permit applications rejected
- Be prosecuted

Employment

You are Responsible for Your FDW

- You are responsible for the supervision of your FDW. You also have a duty to take care of your FDW even if you are not the person involved in the day-to-day supervision of your FDW.

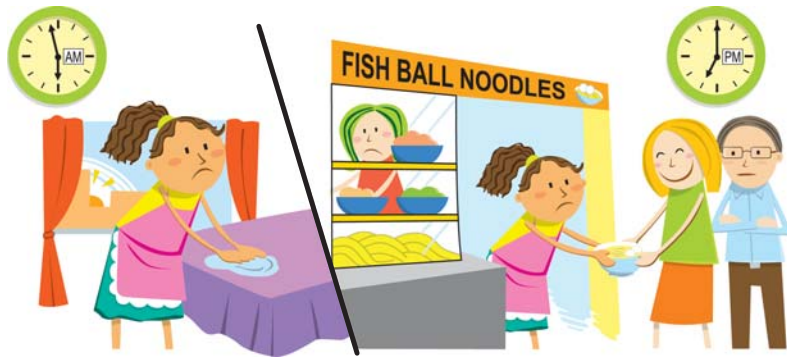


FACT FILE

In February 2006, an FDW fell eight stories to her death when hanging laundry on a narrow ledge. The employer claimed that it was her mother-in-law who had instructed the FDW to climb onto the ledge. The court rejected her claim and ruled that as the legal employer, she should bear the "ultimate responsibility" for the FDW's safety. The employer was sentenced to two weeks in jail.

Your FDW cannot work for Another Person or for Your Business

- Your FDW is only allowed to work for you; the employer stated on her Work Permit card. She must not be deployed to work for anyone else or asked to help out in your business.



FDW can only do Household Work

- FDWs are not allowed to do non-household work. For example, FDWs must not:
 - cook for the employer's food catering business
 - serve in a food stall
 - work in the employer's shop, business or office

FDW can only work at Employer's Address as stated in her Work Permit Card

- The FDWs should not work at a different location. An exception may be made for FDWs who accompany their employer's children to a caregiver's home to care for the children under the caregiver's supervision. In this case, the FDW must agree to the arrangement and should not be asked to do the full load of housework in both homes.



FACT FILE

In September 2005, an employer deployed her FDW to help out at her food stall from 10am to 6pm from Monday to Friday. The FDW's duties at the stall included serving customers, collecting money from customers and packing food. The employer was charged for illegal deployment and fined \$3,000. Her security deposit of \$5,000 was also forfeited.

Your FDW's Upkeep, Maintenance and Well-being

Maintenance and Well-being

- You must bear the costs of your FDW's upkeep and maintenance such as food, lodging and medical expenses. Such costs should not be deducted from her salary.

Medical Care

- You must provide your FDW with access to medical treatment and bear her medical and hospitalisation expenses. In addition to purchasing Personal Accident Insurance, you may want to include coverage for hospitalisation expenses.

Accommodation

- You should provide for your FDW's basic needs such as a bed or mattress, a blanket, towels and bathroom amenities.
- Your FDW should only stay at the address stated on the Work Permit card. An exception may be made if your FDW is staying at a different address when you are temporarily not in Singapore.

Adequate Rest

- Ensure that your FDW has sufficient rest.
- Grant her rest day(s) according to your employment contract with her.



Paying Your FDW's Salary

- The salary period agreed between you and your FDW must not exceed one month.
- The FDW must be paid her salary promptly and regularly. She must be paid no later than 7 days after the last day of her salary period.
- Give her the option of having her salary transferred directly into her bank account.
- You must keep a record of all salary payments.
- Do not penalise your FDW by making deductions from her salary to offset the costs of her food, lodging, medical expenses or repatriation.
- Your FDW should be paid in full. For example, you should not withhold her salary or ask her to put up a bond to guarantee her return from home leave.

Month	Amount	FDW Signature	Employer Signature
Feb	300	Bike	Too
Mar	300	Bike	Too
Apr	320	Bike	Too
May	320	Bike	Too
Jun	320	Bike	Too
Jul			

FACT FILE

In October 2004, an employer who failed to pay her FDW for almost two years was fined \$3,000. She was also ordered by the court to pay her FDW the outstanding salary owed to her, which amounted to \$3,580.

Providing a Safe Working Environment

- You must provide a safe working environment for your FDW and ensure that she does her household chores in a way which does not endanger her life and safety.

For more information on your FDW's safety, see Chapter 4.

FACT FILE

In September 2006, an employer instructed her FDW to climb out of the window of her 18th storey apartment and stand on a narrow ledge to clean the windows. The employer was convicted for breach of the Work Permit Conditions and fined \$3,500.



FACT FILE

In July 2006, an employer was fined \$2,000 for asking her FDW to climb and prune a 6-metre mango tree in her yard.

Managing Your FDW

- You must ensure that your FDW is not ill-treated, exploited, neglected or endangered. As FDWs work and live with their employers, they can be more vulnerable to abuse.
- Do not subject your FDW to verbal abuse.
- To provide greater protection for FDWs, the Penal Code was amended in 1998 to increase penalties for abuse of FDWs by 1½ times. Convicted employers may have their future Work Permit applications rejected.



FACT FILE

In March 2002, an employer received a five-year jail term for abusing her 19-year-old FDW. For over 20 days, the employer scalded the FDW with boiling water, poked her thighs with a pair of scissors and hit the back of her head with the back of a chopper.

FACT FILE

In July 2002, an employer who physically abused his FDW and caused her death was sentenced to 18½ years in prison and 12 lashes of the cane. At her death, the FDW was found to have multiple scars and injuries.

Sending Your FDW Home

Sending Your FDW Home

- You are responsible for sending your FDW home when her Work Permit is revoked, cancelled or if you no longer require her services. She must be sent to her town or place of origin within her home country.
- You must bear the full cost of repatriation. All outstanding salaries or monies due must be paid to your FDW before she is sent home.
- Give your FDW due notice if you are cancelling her Work Permit. If your FDW requests for her employment to be terminated, be sensitive and respect her request.

Breaching of Work Permit Conditions by FDW

- If your FDW breaches any of the Work Permit Conditions applicable to her, inform MOM, cancel her Work Permit and send her home.

For more information on FDWs' obligations under the Work Permit Conditions, see page 16.
- Employers who fail to repatriate their FDWs upon cancellation of their Work Permits risk losing their \$5,000 security deposit.

Remember:

- You are legally responsible for the supervision and management of your FDW
- Your FDW must not work for another employer or in your business
- Your FDW can only do household work at the address stated in her Work Permit
- You must provide for the upkeep and maintenance of your FDW
- You must provide a safe working environment for your FDW
- You must pay your FDW's salary within 7 days after her salary period
- You must bear the full cost of repatriation and ensure that your FDW is repatriated to her town or place of origin within her home country

Your FDW's Legal Obligations

FDWs are bound by the Work Permit Conditions. FDWs who breach the Work Permit Conditions are liable to have their Work Permits revoked and be barred from working in Singapore in future. You should ensure that your FDW understands and complies with the Work Permit Conditions.

Some Work Permit Conditions for FDWs

The FDW:

- Can only work for the employer at the address stated in the Work Permit
- Can only perform household duties
- Cannot be involved in or own a business



- Must reside at the employer's residential address as stated in the Work Permit
- Must go for medical examinations by a Singapore registered doctor as and when directed by MOM
- Must report to MOM as and when directed by MOM
- Must not apply to marry a Singapore Citizen or Permanent Resident without MOM's prior approval
- Cannot become pregnant or deliver a child in Singapore

For a full set of the Work Permit Conditions for FDW Employers and FDWs, please refer to www.mom.gov.sg



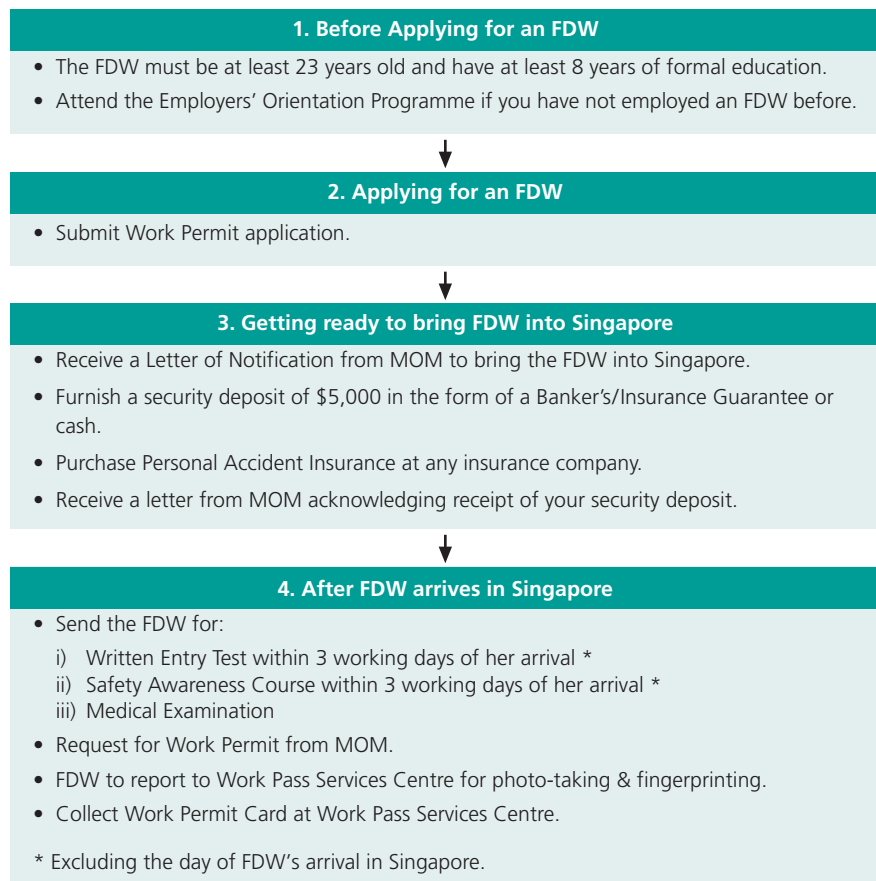
3 Employing an FDW

You can choose to employ an FDW who is not in Singapore or an FDW who is currently working for another employer. This chapter gives you an overview of how to apply for an FDW.

If you employ an FDW who has not worked in Singapore before, the procedures and requirements are different from employing an FDW who is already working for another employer.

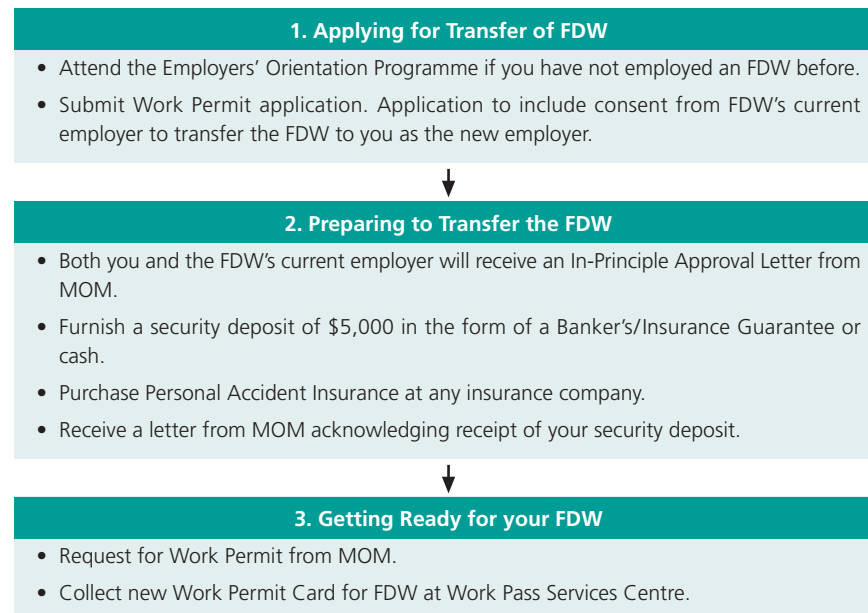
Employing an FDW Who Has Not Worked in Singapore Before

All FDWs must meet MOM's requirements before they are allowed to work here.



Employing an FDW Who is Currently Working in Singapore for Another Employer

This is also known as applying for a Transfer of FDW.



Note: The FDW can only start working for you after the new Work Permit Card has been issued in your name.

Engaging the Services of an Employment Agency

Most employment agencies (EAs) can help you with these procedures. When selecting an EA:

- Ensure the EA is licensed as MOM requires all EAs to be licensed. You may also want to check the EA's compliance with MOM's regulations by referring to information on the EA Demerit Points System and the demerit points accumulated by the EA, if any.
- Check if the EA is accredited if it has been in business for at least a year. EAs are required to be accredited from their second year of business. The two accreditation bodies are the Association Of Employment Agencies (Singapore) and CaseTrust.

For more information on Work Permit application procedures and EAs, please refer to www.mom.gov.sg



4 Building a Positive Relationship With Your FDW

Cultivating a good employer-employee relationship takes time and effort. Get to know your FDW, be fair to her and treat her well.

FDWs who are new to Singapore will need time to orientate themselves to our way of life. Even if your FDW has experience working in Singapore, she still needs time to understand your expectations of her.

Help your FDW fit into your family by showing her care and understanding.

Understanding Your FDW

Your FDW comes from a different background

Her values, lifestyle and customs are different. Be firm but patient and understanding with her. This will help you create a good working relationship with her. FDWs who get along well with their employers are generally more motivated.

She is far from her family and friends

Anyone who is separated from their loved ones would feel homesick and lonely sometimes. Help your FDW adjust by allowing her to communicate with her family and friends at home.

Good working relationships start with communication

Encourage your FDW to approach you if she has any questions or problems. Make it clear to your FDW what you expect of her. With better communication, misunderstandings and disputes are also less likely to occur.

Having an Employment Contract

An employment contract which clearly spells out the terms and conditions of work and benefits such as salary and rest days can help to minimise misunderstandings. The contract should be based on mutual agreement between you and your FDW. Your employment agent can assist you in drawing up an employment contract.

Coaching Your FDW

Explain, demonstrate, supervise, give feedback

Employers sometimes need to take on the role of a coach to demonstrate, correct and encourage. Your FDW will learn faster if she is shown how to do the job. Compliment her when she has done a good job.

If she has done consistently well, it may be time to reward her with a bonus or salary increase. If her poor performance persists, consider looking for another FDW or finding alternatives to your household needs.

Plan her work

- Make sure your FDW's workload for each day is reasonable.
- Check on your FDW occasionally and repeat your instructions and explanations where necessary.
- Provide your FDW with a weekly or daily schedule. This will help your FDW plan her work better.

If childcare is one of her responsibilities, you should:

- Outline how general tasks such as babysitting should be performed
- Let her know your expectations for each task
- Tell her about any special requirements the child may have

If caring for the elderly or disabled is one of her responsibilities, ensure that the FDW is aware of:

- Any special dietary requirements
- How to handle any special needs of family members, such as physical needs or medications. Write down instructions that are more complex

If cooking is expected, discuss with her:

- Any special dietary requirements
- Your preferred recipes, ingredients and style of cooking
- Practical skills

Providing a Safe Working Environment for Your FDW

Employers are responsible for their FDWs' safety. She may come from an environment that does not present the same dangers that you have learnt to deal with. Supervise your FDW closely so that she knows how to perform household chores safely. Go through the following with her:

Safety in high-rise buildings

If you live in a high-rise building, your FDW must take extra safety precautions when:

a) Hanging Laundry



Do's

- ✓ Make sure 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 when retrieving laundry when it is windy and / or raining.

Don'ts

- ✗ Do not stand on chairs, stools or any raised platform.
- ✗ Do not lean too far out of the window.
- ✗ Do not tip-toe when hanging laundry.
- ✗ Do not retrieve objects that have fallen out onto the window ledge or platform.

b) Cleaning Windows



- Do's**
- ✓ Lock window grilles before cleaning the window exterior.
 - ✓ Use window cleaning tools with extended handles.

- Don'ts**
- ✗ Do not stand on chairs, stools or any raised platform.
 - ✗ Do not climb or lean out of window to clean the window exterior.



Electrical and Fire Safety

We use different electrical appliances in our homes, such as washing machines, microwave ovens, irons, etc. Improper use of such appliances can cause burns, serious injuries or even death. Make sure your FDW knows the following:

a) Electrical Safety



- Do's**
- ✓ You should demonstrate how to use electrical appliances properly and safely.
 - ✓ After use, first switch off the appliance, turn off the socket switch, and then pull the plug out of the wall socket.

a) Electrical Safety



- Don'ts**
- ✗ Do not touch electrical appliances, switches, plugs and power points with wet hands.
 - ✗ Do not overload electrical outlets by using too many plugs in one electrical socket.

b) Fire Safety



- Do's**
- ✓ Keep petrol, paint and other inflammable materials in safe containers away from open flames and other sources of heat.
- Don'ts**
- ✗ Do not leave stoves and heated appliances unattended.
 - ✗ Do not leave plastic bags, cloths, towels, paper or other inflammable material near lighted stoves.

Getting Your FDW Started

Help your FDW start on the right footing by going through the checklist below.



Orientation Checklist

a) Job Duties

Go through her job duties with her. Provide a daily or weekly schedule if possible.

b) Safety

Go through household safety procedures with your FDW.

c) Hygiene

Ensure that your FDW understands your expectations of her, for example:

- Hygiene in preparing food and drinks
- Cleanliness at home
- Tips to prevent the spread of common illnesses (for eg, a cold or flu)

d) Terms and Conditions of Employment

Explain the terms and conditions in the employment contract including:

- Salary and mode of payment
- Rest days
- Medical benefits
- Scope of duties

e) Emergency telephone numbers

Your FDW should know how to get help in an emergency. Give her a list of emergency telephone numbers, such as:

- Your mobile phone /office number
- Contact numbers of other family members in case of emergency
- Police
- Ambulance services
- Fire station

f) First aid

Your FDW should be taught how to handle minor injuries.

- Treating minor cuts and bruises
- Using common drugs and medications (for eg, cough syrup, Panadol)
- When to call for an ambulance



g) FDW's Legal Obligations

Ensure that your FDW understands her obligations under the Work Permit Conditions.

h) About Singapore

Give her an overview of Singapore culture and your lifestyle. For example:

- Your working hours and daily schedule
- The different races in Singapore
- Some local customs
- Public transport
- Banking services

Training Courses for FDWs

There are many opportunities for your FDW to upgrade her skills. Courses on childcare, elderly care, cooking and sewing are easily available and may benefit you and your FDW. Here is a list of some FDW training courses.

Some Training Courses for FDWs	
FDW Association for Skills Training (FAST) Courses run by FAST are outsourced to various training providers who charge subsidised rates. They include courses on cooking, elderly care, baby care, etc.	6735 7687 www.fast.org.sg
Darul Arqam Singapore Courses on self-improvement, etc	6348 8344
Mujahidah Centre of Learning Courses on computer literacy, cooking, etc.	6473 7400
Filipino Overseas Workers In Singapore Courses on first aid, dressmaking, nursing, etc.	6250 0011

Useful Contact Information

Ministry Of Manpower	
General enquiries	6438 5122
Cancellation of Work Permit	6317 1347
In the event of a missing FDW, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make a police report • Cancel the FDW's Work Permit 	6317 1347
In the event of an FDW's death, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact MOM within 12 hours of FDW's death with the following information: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - FDW's name - Work Permit Number - Cause of death (if known) - Employer's name and contact numbers - Date, time and place of death 	1800-3395505 Or email: mom_fmmd@mom.gov.sg

Accreditation of Employment Agencies	
Consumer Association of Singapore, (CaseTrust)	6461 1800
Association of Employment Agencies (Singapore), (AEA(S))	6836 2618

Updated versions of this Guide in English, Mandarin, Malay and Tamil may be downloaded from www.mom.gov.sg.