

Media: The Straits Times

Date: [Online] Monday, 9 December 2019
[Print Edition] Tuesday, 10 December 2019

Headline: Ex-offenders get free phones to help them reconnect with family, friends

Link: [Online 9 December 2019] <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/free-smartphone-initiative-for-newly-released-ex-offenders-to-reconnect-with-family-and>
[Print Edition 10 December 2019, B2 Home Section] <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/ex-offenders-get-free-phones-to-help-them-reconnect-with-family-friends>

Ex-offenders get free phones to help them reconnect with family, friends

Goh Yan Han

More than 30 former offenders each received a free mobile phone with a six-month unlimited data plan yesterday to help them reconnect with family and friends.

Project Give A Line, Change A Life, which also aims to help them familiarise themselves with technology, was officially launched at Selarang Halfway House in Changi.

The initiative is by non-profit group Industrial and Services Co-operative Society (Iscos), which helps former inmates and their families.

The smartphones come pre-loaded with the new Iscos app that was also launched yesterday.

The app allows users to access Iscos programmes and services, such as updates on new events and initiatives, and to sign up for events or make appointments to seek assistance.

Those who received the smartphones were former offenders from Iscos' Project ReConnect, a programme which helps newly released former offenders who have spent three years or more in prison to reconnect with the community.

Iscos plans to give out 500 smartphones by the end of next year.

Ms Sim Ann, Senior Minister of State for Communications and Information as well as Culture, Community and Youth, who was guest of honour at the event, said: "(These initiatives) provide beneficiaries with the access and skills needed to become familiar with using digital applications in their daily lives, and this includes various ways for them to reconnect with their friends and families."

The initiative is sponsored by food and beverage manufacturer Food Empire Holdings and virtual telco Zero1.

Mirah (not her real name), 30, was happy to receive the smartphone, as she can now use it to keep in touch with her family.

She is unable to see her four children regularly as she is under the Work Release Scheme, where she has to return to Lloyd Leas Community Supervision Centre in Changi at the end of the work day. She is currently serving the rest of her sentence for drug-related charges at the centre, after being released from prison last month.

With the phone, she can now make video calls to her children every day. "I miss my children a lot, and now I can use this to call them and find out how they are doing," she said.

Another former offender, Richard (not his real name), 60, hopes to use the app to find out more about the Iscos subsidies available to him, as he plans to upgrade himself.

"I can use the app to keep in contact with those from Iscos, and also to find out more about how to enrol myself in a barista course," he said.

Each smartphone given out under Project Give A Line, Change A Life comes with a six-month unlimited data plan and an app aimed at helping the former offenders. ST PHOTO: MARCELLIN LOPEZ

Those who received the smartphones were former offenders from Iscos' Project ReConnect, a programme which helps newly released former offenders who have spent three years or more in prison to reconnect with the community.

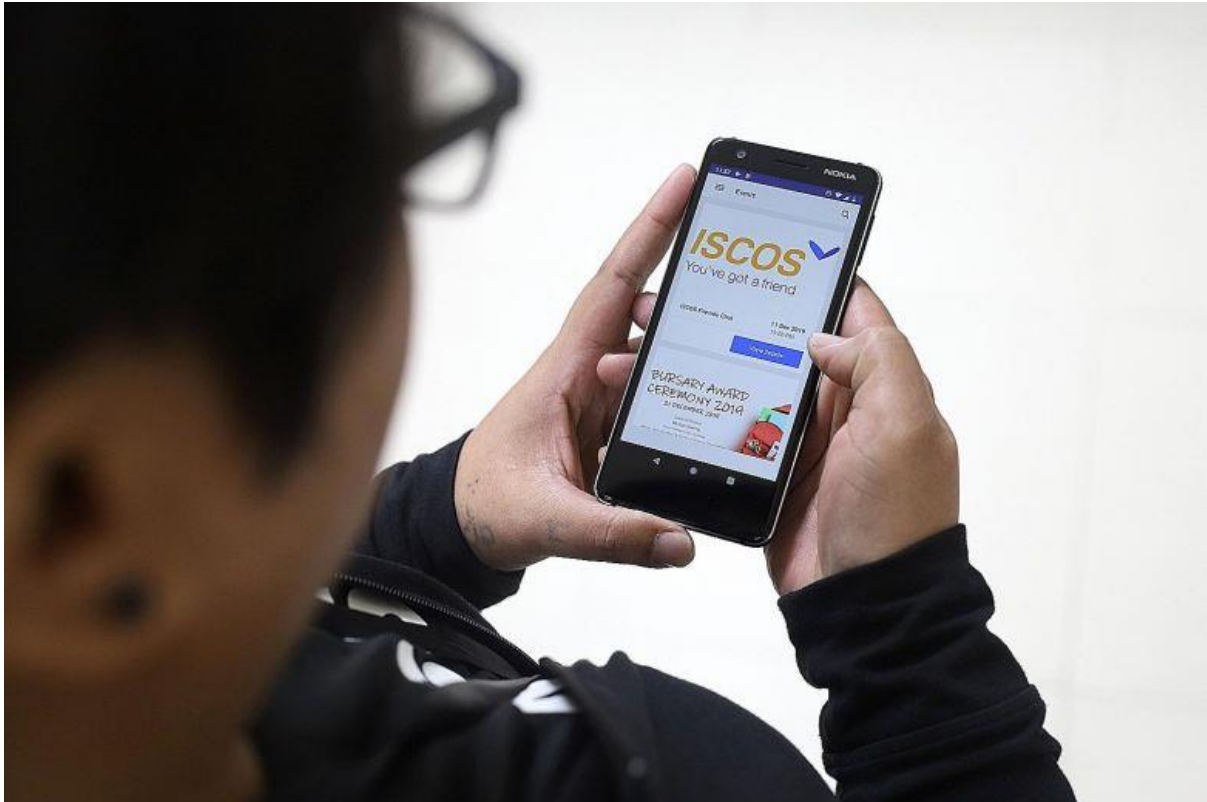
500

Number of smartphones Iscos plans to give out by end-2020.

gyanhan@sph.com.sg

Text:

Ex-offenders get free phones to help them reconnect with family, friends



Each smartphone given out under Project Give A Line, Change A Life comes with a six-month unlimited data plan and an app aimed at helping the former offenders. ST PHOTO: MARCELLIN LOPEZ

By Goh Yan Han

More than 30 former offenders each received a free mobile phone with a six-month unlimited data plan yesterday to help them reconnect with family and friends.

Project Give A Line, Change A Life, which also aims to help them familiarise themselves with technology, was officially launched at Selarang Halfway House in Changi.

The initiative is by non-profit group Industrial and Services Co-operative Society (Iscos), which helps former inmates and their families.

The smartphones come pre-loaded with the new Iscos app that was also launched yesterday.

The app allows users to access Iscos programmes and services, such as updates on new events and initiatives, and to sign up for events or make appointments to seek assistance.



Those who received the smartphones were former offenders from Iscos' Project ReConnect, a programme which helps newly released former offenders who have spent three years or more in prison to reconnect with the community.

IsCOS plans to give out 500 smartphones by the end of next year.

Ms Sim Ann, Senior Minister of State for Communications and Information as well as Culture, Community and Youth, who was guest of honour at the event, said: "(These initiatives) provide beneficiaries with the access and skills needed to become familiar with using digital applications in their daily lives, and this includes various ways for them to reconnect with their friends and families."

The initiative is sponsored by food and beverage manufacturer Food Empire Holdings and virtual telco Zero1.

Mirah (not her real name), 30, was happy to receive the smartphone, as she can now use it to keep in touch with her family.

She is unable to see her four children regularly as she is under the Work Release Scheme, where she has to return to Lloyd Leas Community Supervision Centre in Changi at the end of the work day.

She is currently serving the rest of her sentence for drug-related charges at the centre, after being released from prison last month.

With the phone, she can now make video calls to her children every day. "I miss my children a lot, and now I can use this to call them and find out how they are doing," she said.

Another former offender, Richard (not his real name), 60, hopes to use the app to find out more about the IsCOS subsidies available to him, as he plans to upgrade himself.

"I can use the app to keep in contact with those from IsCOS, and also to find out more about how to enrol myself in a barista course," he said.