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Ground-up initiative to help verify crowdfunding efforts

By TAN EN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR & CO-FOUNDER, ADVOCAID



AdvocAid, a non-profit organisation, adopts a three-step verification process it uses before listing a beneficiary’s case on crowdfunding platforms. Photo: Tim Marshall/Unsplash.com

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I refer to Dr Desmond Wai’s letter, “Online fundraising activities need some



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- i. The current lack of a transparent verification process
- ii. The tendency to neglect updating the campaign, thus creating a false sense of “urgency” where there may no longer be one
- iii. The lack of accountability and transparency regarding the donations received

To this end, AdvocAid was recently founded as a non-profit organisation with the aim of increasing trust and accountability in the crowdfunding sphere by verifying such campaigns, so donors can make an informed decision to donate.

To achieve this, we have devised a rigorous three-step verification process.

First, volunteers will conduct a home visit and interview the beneficiary to find out more about their family and financial history.

Second, the volunteer will request to personally inspect the relevant documentation. This may include work pay slips, medical documents, insurance policies, bank account balances, and credit card statements.

Third, the volunteer will contact relevant stakeholders such as hospitals and employers to verify the beneficiary’s circumstances.

We will only list a beneficiary’s case on crowdfunding platforms after completing this three-step verification process.

In cases involving medical claims, we will also seek a general opinion from our medical advisory committee.

After the listing goes live, AdvocAid will remain in contact with the beneficiary. If there is a change in his or her situation that is materially relevant to the campaign (eg. the insurance company covering a larger part of his hospitalisation fees), we will update the campaign accordingly.

We hope these should address Dr Wai’s second concern.



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to do so, and we are open to collaborating with the relevant authorities on ways to increase trust and accountability in crowdfunding campaigns.

However, regulations should not touch on the beneficiary’s “eligibility” for crowdfunding. Many of these beneficiaries turn to crowdfunding because they have slipped through the “safety nets” provided by the welfare framework.

Individuals should be allowed to exercise discretion over whether another individual, who may be ineligible for governmental financial aid, is nonetheless “deserving” of their donations.

Having a government entity dictating the eligibility criteria for crowdfunding beneficiaries is antithetical to the principles and benefits of crowdfunding.

Finally, as a non-profit organisation, we are legally required to have our accounts audited yearly. Donors can be assured that their donations are properly disbursed as 100 per cent of the funds raised flow through us to the beneficiary. AdvocAid does not earn a commission from donations raised for our beneficiaries.

Our goal is to increase trust in the crowdfunding sphere, so that Singaporeans will feel more at ease about making direct donations to another person who would otherwise fall through the cracks.

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