

**Education Bureau Circular No. 1/2020**  
**Handling Suspected Cases of Child Maltreatment and Domestic Violence**

[Note: This circular should be read by:

- (a) Supervisors/Heads of all primary, secondary and special schools, and kindergartens and kindergarten-cum-child care centres – for necessary action;
- (b) Heads of sections – for information; and
- (c) Officers of the Regional Education Offices and Joint Office for Kindergartens and Child Care Centres – for information and necessary action]

**Summary**

This circular informs schools of the procedures and points to note for handling suspected cases of child maltreatment and domestic violence. Schools are appealed to pay attention to students' conditions from time to time for early identification and intervention. They are also reminded to take appropriate measures to provide the children concerned and their families with necessary assistance in accordance with the "Protecting Children from Maltreatment – Procedural Guide for Multi-disciplinary Co-operation" (revised in 2020) ("Child Protection Guide" hereafter) and the "Procedural Guide for Handling Intimate Partner Violence Cases" (revised in 2011) jointly drawn up by the Social Welfare Department (SWD) and related professionals. This circular supersedes the Education Bureau Circular No. 5/2018 issued on 20 August 2018, and should be brought to the attention of all school personnel.

**Background**

2. Protecting children from maltreatment is the collective responsibility of various professionals who may come into contact with children. Effective child protection is built on close co-operation across disciplines. To safeguard the best interests of children and protect children suspected to be maltreated or having been maltreated, the Child Protection Guide developed by SWD

together with the Labour and Welfare Bureau, Education Bureau (EDB), Department of Health, Hong Kong Police Force (Police), Hospital Authority, The Hong Kong Council of Social Service, related non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and relevant professionals, may serve as reference for different professionals and those in close contact with children because of job nature (including school personnel) in carrying out initial assessments, investigations, multi-disciplinary case conferences and follow-up plans etc. when they come across children suspected to be maltreated or having been maltreated. In drafting the handling procedures and points to note set out in the Child Protection Guide, references have been made to the “Declaration of the Rights of the Child” and the “Convention on the Rights of the Child” of the United Nations. The personnel are reminded that they should take into consideration of the child’s need for growth and development and his/her vested rights when helping a child who is being harmed/has possibly been harmed.

3. In the “Procedural Guide for Handling Intimate Partner Violence Cases”, SWD specifically draws the attention of relevant personnel by stressing that children who have been exposed to or witnessed domestic violence may be at risk or being so traumatized that the children will display maladaptive behavioural or emotional problems. Therefore, at the time of intervention, immediate safety of the victims and their children should be given top priority. Apart from rendering timely assistance and support, the personnel should also stay sensitive and alert to the needs of the subjects and be fully aware of the assistance available from other professionals. Where necessary, other government departments or agencies should be notified as soon as practicable or case referrals should be made promptly for follow-up actions.

## **Details**

4. To protect the safety and best interests of children (students), all kindergartens (KGs), kindergarten-cum-child care centres (KG-cum-CCCs), primary schools, secondary schools and special schools should observe the Child Protection Guide and the relevant guidelines/circulars/codes of practice issued by EDB/SWD from time to time in establishing or enhancing schools’ internal mechanism, procedures and measures, so as to prevent child maltreatment incidents, handle suspected child maltreatment cases properly and provide appropriate assistance to the children and their families in need. Schools should ensure that the mechanism and procedures are transparent and recognised, and are implemented effectively.

5. In handling cases of child maltreatment and domestic violence, the school should place foremost importance on the safety and best interests of children. To prevent the likelihood of further

harm or even loss of life, school personnel (including principals, teachers, Student Guidance Officers/Personnel, School Social Workers, etc.) should be constantly alert to and watch out for possible indicators of students having been maltreated or affected by domestic violence for early identification and immediate intervention. During or after investigation, school personnel should pay attention to students' safety in school and their emotional needs and render appropriate support to help the student concerned resume normal school life. School personnel may refer to Chapter 2 "Definition and Types of Child Maltreatment" and "Possible Indicators of Child Maltreatment" in Chapter 4 of the Child Protection Guide to identify children who may have been maltreated. KGs and KG-cum-CCCs participating in the SWD Pilot Scheme on Social Work Service for Pre-primary Institutions should also refer to the relevant procedures set out in the "Reference Guide on Operational Matters related to the Pilot Scheme on Social Work Service for Pre-primary Institutions" issued by SWD on the Scheme.

6. Since children and their family might have different understandings of the definition of "maltreatment" adopted by school and other personnel, school personnel may, depending on the impacts of the incident on the children, consider using the term "harm" instead of "maltreatment" in communicating their concern to the children and their family. When explaining their concerns and categories of the case to the children and their family, school personnel should point out particularly whether the child requires protection and is being harmed (i.e. the impacts of the incident on the child) but not whether the behaviour constitutes to "child maltreatment". This is to avoid another party's misunderstanding or miscommunication resulting from insistence of possible different understanding of the term "maltreatment" (especially in relation to the intention or seriousness of the behaviour).

#### *Handling Suspected Child Maltreatment Cases*

7. School personnel have direct and frequent contact with children during teaching or school activities. If they detect any indicators of child maltreatment through observations of the physical well-being, behaviour or emotions of students (please see "Possible Indicators of Child Maltreatment" at [Appendix 1](#)), they should promptly take appropriate actions set out below, irrespective of whether the student is attending school as usual, absent from school continuously or absent from school intermittently.

(a) If school personnel have reasons to believe that a student has been maltreated or is at risk of maltreatment, the first personnel in contact with the student should inform the principal and consult Student Guidance Officer(s)/Teacher(s)/Personnel and School Social Worker(s). In handling suspected child maltreatment cases, school personnel must not conceal the incident or

delay its report.

- (b) The school should activate immediately its school-based contingency mechanism/Crisis Management Team and assign School Social Worker (if any) and designated personnel (e.g. principal, senior teacher, designated teacher, or Student Guidance Officer/Teacher/Personnel) to handle and follow up on the suspected child maltreatment cases according to the established principles and procedures (please see the flow-chart on “Identification and Reporting of a Suspected Child Maltreatment Case” at [Appendix 2](#)). During the handling process, care should be taken to avoid having the child repeated description of the maltreatment incident. For KGs, KG-cum-CCCs and schools without a Crisis Management Team or school guidance personnel/School Social Workers, the principal should also assign designated personnel (e.g. principal, senior teacher or designated teacher) to handle suspected child maltreatment cases.
- (c) When a student is suspected to have been maltreated, designated personnel can make a preliminary enquiry of the conditions of the student. If the case of the student is not one followed up by School Social Workers but designated personnel know that the student or his/her family is a “known case”<sup>1</sup> of SWD or an NGO, the school should inform the responsible social worker of the unit concerned as soon as possible for an initial assessment. If the student or his/her family is not a “known case” of School Social Workers, SWD or NGOs, report should be made to the Family and Child Protective Services Unit (FCPSU) of SWD during office hours (please refer to [Appendix 3](#) for contact information of the FCPSUs) as far as possible. Schools should provide information of the student for the social worker of the FCPSU to conduct an initial assessment. For reports on suspected child maltreatment cases outside office hours, they could also be made through SWD hotline<sup>2</sup> (Tel. No. 2343 2255). The personnel on duty will contact the Outreaching Team of SWD for conducting an initial assessment.
- (d) The School Social Workers of individual secondary schools should follow the procedures set out in Chapters 4 to 10 of the Child Protection Guide in handling their “known cases” of which child maltreatment is suspected. Social workers of non-secondary schools, if necessary, may also report their “known cases” to the FCPSU for conducting initial assessment. School designated personnel may also, as necessary, consult the social worker of the FCPSU first (please refer to

---

<sup>1</sup> “Known cases” refer to the categories of cases that are being handled by service units, including SWD and units under NGOs that provide casework services. For details, please refer to Annex 5 to the Child Protection Guide of SWD

<sup>2</sup> SWD hotline operates 24 hours a day. The hotline service is manned by the Departmental Hotline Service Unit from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Mondays to Fridays and 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon on Saturdays (excluding public holidays). Calls received outside the above operating hours are handled by the Hotline and Outreaching Service Team operated by the Tung Wah Group of Hospitals.

Appendix 4 and Appendix 5 for the work flow on conducting initial assessment, immediate child protection actions and investigations).

- (e) If the Student Guidance Personnel of KGs, KG-cum-CCCs and primary schools is a registered social worker employed by an NGO, he/she may also take up the role of conducting initial assessment and child protection investigation for their “known cases” set out in Chapters 4 to 8 of the Child Protection Guide, subject to agreement of the school, NGO and SWD.
- (f) For suspected child maltreatment cases that require immediate attention and should be reported urgently to the FCPSU, schools may do so by telephone, then followed by completion of the Report Form at Appendix 6 and the submission of it by fax to the FCPSU of the respective district. Acknowledgment of receipt from the receiving party is necessary to ensure that the case has been followed up. If schools are only seeking advice from social workers of the FCPSU, they are not required to complete the Report Form.
- (g) While a report of a suspected child maltreatment case is made by the school to a unit responsible for the “known case”/FCPSU/Outreaching Team of SWD, the school should also discuss with the social worker of the unit/FCPSU/Outreaching Team of SWD on whether immediate actions are to be taken to protect the child. Designated personnel should also inform the parent(s)/guardian(s) about the report. However, if the parent(s)/guardian(s) is/are involved in the child maltreatment, the school does not have<sup>3</sup> to obtain the prescribed consent of the student’s parent(s)/guardian(s) for making the report. If it is necessary for the school to contact the parent(s)/guardian(s) during the assessment, advice or assistance may first be sought from the social worker of the unit concerned/FCPSU regarding the handling approach.
- (h) If the school considers that the student is likely to be in urgent need of medical service, arrangement should be made for the student to undergo medical examination/treatment in a public hospital. The FCPSU may also assist in contacting Medical Co-ordinator on Child Abuse of the Hospital Authority so as to arrange for admission of the child into a hospital for medical examination. If necessary, police assistance may be sought.
- (i) In circumstances that suggest a criminal offence may have been committed, the case should be reported to the Police to protect the safety and interests of the student concerned. Under no circumstances should the student suspected to have been maltreated be required to make a report

---

<sup>3</sup> Section 58 of Cap. 486 of the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance provides an exemption from Data Protection Principle 3 where the use of the personal data is for the purpose of, inter alia, the detection or prevention of crime or the prevention, preclusion or remedying (including punishment) of unlawful or seriously improper conduct, or dishonesty or malpractice, and the application of the provisions of Data Protection Principle 3 would be likely to prejudice the above-mentioned purposes.

in person at a police station. In non-urgent cases, the school may complete the Report Form at [Appendix 7](#) and Written Dated Notes at [Appendix 8](#) for reporting the case to the Child Abuse Investigation Unit (CAIU) and for the Police to arrange for investigation by a suitable unit. The FCPSU may assist in forwarding the Report Form to the CAIU.

- (j) If the case is serious, or if the personal safety/life of the student is under immediate threat and instant action has to be taken (e.g. serious physical abuse), the school has to call the Police for reporting the case as soon as possible. Concealing the incident or delayed report may pose safety threat to the child concerned or other people. In addition, if the school personnel is suspected to be the alleged perpetrator, the school concerned should consult the FCPSU and work out together proper ways of handling as early as possible. The school is required to remain impartial and avoid any conflict of interests/roles.

#### *Handling Suspected Child Sexual Abuse Cases*

8. For suspected child sexual abuse cases, irrespective of whether the student attends school as normal, school personnel should handle the cases with reference to Annex 12 “Points to Note on Contacting Children Suspected to be Sexually Abused” and Annex 13 “Guidance Notes on Reporting Suspected Sexual Abuse” to the Child Protection Guide.

9. Given the relative complexity and sensitive nature of cases where the alleged perpetrator is a family/extended family member of the child, or a person being entrusted to take care of the child, or if a number of child victims are involved, the school should call the FCPSU before contacting the parent(s) for discussing the appropriate handling approach. Social worker of the FCPSU will contact the CAIU of the Police for a joint investigation. If in doubt, the school may seek advice or assistance from the School Liaison Officer of the Police or social workers of the FCPSU.

10. In handling child sexual abuse cases where the alleged perpetrator is a staff member of the school, the school is required to strictly observe the procedures as stipulated at [Appendix 9](#) to maintain effective communication among the designated personnel of the school (e.g. School Social Worker/guidance personnel), the school, EDB and other relevant government departments. Apart from taking appropriate protective actions for the student suspected to be maltreated, the principal should also step up measures to ensure the safety of other students in the school. Principals of secondary schools, primary schools, special schools and kindergartens should inform the School Development Officer of the respective District of the incident(s) as early as possible. For KG-cum-CCCs, their principals should inform the Joint Office for Kindergartens and Child Care

Centres as early as possible.

#### *Multi-Disciplinary Case Conference on Protection of Child with Suspected Maltreatment (MDCC)*

11. An MDCC will be convened by the unit responsible for child protection investigation so as to formulate a follow-up plan for the student concerned. The school personnel concerned should attend the MDCC and prepare a written report for facilitating discussion in the conference. The report may include the student's academic and behavioral performance, emotional state in the school, parental attitude and any previous incident(s) of suspected maltreatment. If members of the MDCC consider it necessary, school personnel may be invited to join the core group for a joint follow-up of the case (please refer to [Appendix 10](#) relating to MDCC and follow-up services).

#### *Collaboration with Other Parties Involved in Handling the Cases*

12. If a case is categorized as a child protection one and the student concerned continues to attend school, the school should keep keen observation on the student's academic/behavioural performance and emotional state, and keep the key social worker or other follow-up personnel informed of the student's condition and development. Collaboration should be continued to provide assistance to the student and his/her family so as to reduce or eradicate the risk of harm to the student concerned, enhance the family's capability in childcare, parenting and their functions so that they can assume full responsibility in child protection.

#### *Protecting Children from Sexual Abuse*

13. EDB encourages schools (including kindergartens, primary schools, secondary schools and special schools) to raise students' awareness of self-protection through different means, such as inclusion of teaching topics on understanding the body and protecting oneself, and designing related learning activities. Through story times, morning assemblies, afternoon assemblies, weekly assemblies, class teacher lessons and talks, etc., schools may enhance sex education and organise sex-related preventive and developmental guidance activities to teach students how to protect their bodies, refuse when they feel offended, and seek necessary help from teachers, family members, guidance personnel or relevant organisations. In offering guidance service, schools are also encouraged to make good use of the learning and teaching resources provided by EDB, such as sex education animation resources and lesson plans on prevention of sexual assaults, and strengthen related parent education to remind parents of the need to protect their children against sexual assaults.

14. To further safeguard the well-being of children, schools are strongly advised to conduct

checks under the Sexual Conviction Record Check Scheme in their appointment procedures. For details about the operation of the Scheme, schools may visit the dedicated webpage ([https://www.police.gov.hk/ppp\\_en/11\\_useful\\_info/scrc.html](https://www.police.gov.hk/ppp_en/11_useful_info/scrc.html)) and refer to relevant circulars/guidelines issued by EDB.

15. For details of the Child Protection Guide, please refer to SWD webpage ([https://www.swd.gov.hk/en/index/site\\_pubsvc/page\\_family/sub\\_fcwprocedure/id\\_1447/](https://www.swd.gov.hk/en/index/site_pubsvc/page_family/sub_fcwprocedure/id_1447/)). In addition to handling procedures and points to note at different stages set out in Chapters 1 to 13 of the Child Protection Guide, school personnel should pay special attention to Annex 10 “Role of Educational Services” and Annex 11 “Points to Note on Initial Contact with Children Who may have been Harmed/Maltreated or Their Parents” to the Child Protection Guide.

### *Handling Cases of Domestic Violence*

16. In general, domestic violence refers to actual or threatened use of violence among family members. “Intimate Partner Violence” (IPV) is a kind of domestic violence. It refers to battering that occurs in a relationship between a couple who live or have lived together intimately. They maintain or have maintained a lasting intimate relationship which is more than just a brief encounter. They can be a married couple, cohabitees or separated spouses/cohabitees, etc. In using violence or the threat of violence, physical or psychological harm is inflicted with the effect of establishing control by one induced over another. IPV may take the form of one or more than one of the following: physical violence, sexual violence and psychological abuse.

17. IPV may undermine the parenting capacity of parents or make them underestimate the risk that they themselves and their children exposed to. Students who exposed to IPV may display fear, distress, anger, confusion and frustration or develop behavioural problems. As students are seldom prepared to disclose the problems of their family, school personnel are advised to be sensitive to the behavioural and emotional traits of the students affected and render immediate and necessary assistance. In handling cases of intimate partner violence, schools should follow the procedures set out in SWD’s “Procedural Guide for Handling Intimate Partner Violence Cases” (revised in 2011) ([http://www.swd.gov.hk/en/index/site\\_pubsvc/page\\_family/sub\\_fcwprocedure/id\\_1450/](http://www.swd.gov.hk/en/index/site_pubsvc/page_family/sub_fcwprocedure/id_1450/)), which is drawn up by SWD in collaboration with government departments concerned, NGOs and relevant professionals. Schools should pay particular attention to the following chapters and appendices:



- Chapter 2 : Multi-Disciplinary Collaboration in Handling Intimate Partner Violence Cases
- Chapter 8 : Schools
- Appendix I : Identification of Intimate Partner Violence – Impacts of Intimate Partner Violence on Children
- Appendix II : Risk Factors on Child Abuse and Spouse Battering

18. If it is suspected that the student concern is being maltreated at the same time, the school should follow the principles and procedures mentioned in paragraphs 4 to 10 above and take measures to protect the well-being and safety of the students.

### *Confidentiality*

19. The designated personnel involved should have close communication among themselves and adhere strictly to the principle of confidentiality in the course of handling the suspected child maltreatment or domestic violence cases. The information collected with regard to the suspected maltreatment incidents should be shared on a need-to-know basis with relevant parties concerned (e.g. principal, the responsible social worker and the Police) as soon as possible.

20. All records should be kept centrally by the principal/designated personnel. Access to these records within the school must be restricted and recorded. On no account should these records be kept with the general records of the student concerned. Should the parent(s) of the student request access to information<sup>4</sup>, it should be handled in accordance with the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance (please refer to Annex 2 to the Child Protection Guide for details about information sharing and principles of confidentiality).

### **Enquiries**

21. For enquiries about this circular, please contact the Guidance and Discipline Section on 2863 4705.

M K CHENG

for Secretary for Education

---

<sup>4</sup> According to Section 18(1) and Data Protection Principle 6 of the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance, an individual or a relevant person on behalf of an individual may make a request including: (a) to be informed by a data user whether the data user holds personal data of which the individual is the data subject; (b) if the data user holds such data, to be supplied by the data user with a copy of such data.

## **Possible Indicators of Child Maltreatment**

The following, which is excerpted from Chapter 4 of the Child Protection Guide for reference, provides a list of some of the indicators that can be found on a maltreated child and seeks to give school personnel an initial understanding of the possible indicators of child being harmed/maltreated. For more detailed information, please refer to Chapter 4 of the Child Protection Guide.

### ● **Behavioural/emotional indicators relating to various types of harm/maltreatment**

#### (a) Child

- Enacting/reproducing scenes of harm/maltreatment in play or daily behavior
- Always in fear/excessive vigilance
- Extremely rebellious or overtly compliant or pleasing
- Over-sensitive to the carer's emotions/responses
- Exceptionally friendly towards strangers or persons other than the carer or being suspicious and difficult to build trust in people
- Presence of attention problems/marked change in academic performance
- Poor self-image
- Regressive or repetitive behaviour (e.g. bed-wetting, thumb-sucking, hair-pulling, head-banging, body-rocking, etc.)
- Psychosomatic symptoms, which refer to physical discomfort or symptoms resulting from psychological or emotional disturbances, e.g. headache, tummy ache, diarrhea, vomiting, skin allergy, etc.
- Reluctant to return home/running away from home
- Absence/withdrawal from school without reason or sudden loss of contact
- Child disclosing that he/she has been forced into marriage by parents (e.g. children of ethnic minorities)

#### (b) Parent/carer

- Parent/carer repeatedly refusing others from approaching the child or forbidding the child to communicate with personnel directly (e.g. the child is always absent or asleep during scheduled visits by personnel and cannot be reached by relatives and family friends)
- Parent/carer forbidding the child to receive vaccination or health/medical follow-ups without sound reasons

### ● **Indicators relating to physical harm/abuse**

#### (a) Bruises and Welts

- Should be interpreted with reference to various factors, including the number, size and distribution of bruises; bruises that are unlikely to be accidental are suspicious

#### (b) Lacerations and Abrasions

- Laceration to the frenulum (the piece of tissue in midline that connects the inside of upper lip to the upper gum) may be indicative of forced feeding

(c) Burns and Scalds

- Inflicted burns may assume the shape or pattern of the burning objects, e.g. a heated plate or cigarette
- Distribution of scalds on hands/feet or buttocks of the child in glove or stocking shape is indicative of immersion into hot water

(d) Fractures

- Should be interpreted/handled individually based on case circumstances

(e) Internal Injuries

- Brain/head injuries
  - May be caused by direct impact, shaking or piercing
- Abdominal injuries
  - Perforation of internal organs may lead to abdominal pain and vomiting
  - Child may have been seriously wounded or even die without any visible signs of injuries. Hence, a high degree of suspicion is required for the detection of abdominal injury

(f) Others

- Fabricated or induced illness, Factitious Disorder Imposed on Another
- Hair loss by pulling or burning

(g) Behavioural Indicators

- The explanations of the causes/course of child's injury made by the parent/carer/child are unconvincing/contradictory to or inconsistent with the injuries sustained
- Failure or delay in seeking medical advice
- Excessive amount of clothes worn by the child to cover his/her body

● **Indicators relating to sexual abuse (for both boys and girls)**

(a) Physical Indicators

- Torn, stained or bloodstained underclothing
- Complaints of pain during urination
- Complaints of pain, swelling or itching in the genital area
- Pregnancy
- Bowel control or bladder control weakened despite toilet trained
- Repeated urinary tract infection

(b) Behavioural Indicators

- Child showing particular interest in body parts of adults or touching adults' sensitive body parts repeatedly
- Enacting/reproducing scenes of sexual abuse in play or daily behavior
- Child disclosing that his/her parent or other person has played secret games with him/her
- Knowledge about sex or sexual behaviour that is beyond the expectation for the age of the child
- Excessive masturbation
- Hyper-sensitive to being touched

- Highly resistant to stay at somewhere or with someone/a specific gender/individual(s) of a certain identity
- Child with adequate self-care abilities disclosing that the carer often takes care of his/her personal hygiene/care matters (e.g. bathing, cleaning after toileting, changing clothes, etc.)
- Child of an older age disclosing that his/her parent of the opposite sex often shares the same bed with him/her
- Having frequent contact with strangers through mobile phone or the internet and having been invited to meet outside

- **Indicators relating to neglect**

- (a) Physical and environmental Indicators

- Delayed childhood development (e.g. speech disorder, motor skills, intelligence, etc.)
- Malnutrition, under-weight or frail
- Unattended physical problems or unmet medical/ dental needs
- Persistently dirty/shabby/lack of sufficient clothing/ inappropriately dressed for weather conditions
- Frequent accidental injuries
- Child with special care/educational needs being deprived of opportunities in receiving appropriate assessment, education or training
- Left in the care of inappropriate carer (e.g. young child)
- Child being exposed to venues with suspected dangerous drugs or drug-taking equipment, carer/other persons suspected to be taking drugs in the presence of the child

- (b) Behavioural Indicators

- Persistent complaints of hunger or constant rummaging for food, wolfing down meals or begging for/stealing food
- Addiction or delinquency
- Involved in sexual activities because of inadequate supervision

- **Indicators relating to psychological harm/abuse**

- (a) Physical Indicators

- Underweight or frail
- Developmental delay
- Eating disorder (e.g. Anorexia nervosa)
- Psychosomatic symptoms, which refer to physical discomfort or symptoms resulting from psychological or emotional disturbances, e.g. headache, tummy ache, diarrhea, vomiting, skin allergy, etc.

- (b) Behavioural Indicators of the Child

- Resisting contact with others and the outside world
- Anxiety symptoms observed, e.g. habitual nail-biting, hair-pulling, thumb-sucking, head-banging and body-rocking, etc.
- Language delay
- Wetting/soiling
- Self-harm or suicidal thoughts/attempts

(c) Behavioural Indicators of the Carer

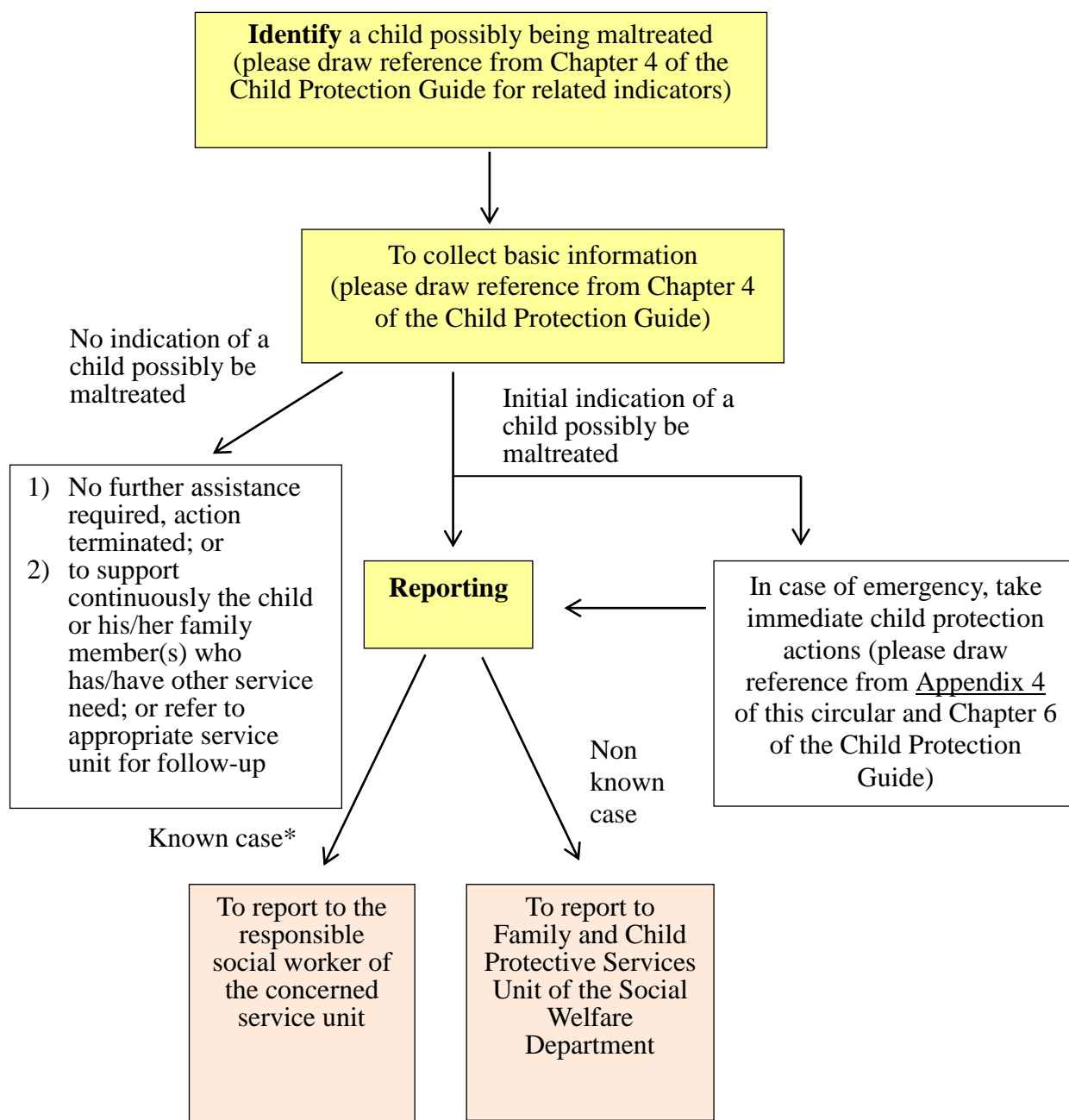
- Often emotionally unavailable/giving inappropriate emotional response
- Being detached or indifferent towards the child
- Often singling a particular child and treat him/her badly
- Rejection and constant scolding
- Humiliating criticism
- Often requiring the child to bear responsibilities of an adult/that is inappropriate for his/her age
- Encouraging deviant or criminal behavior
- Bizarre punishment
- Repeatedly accusing others of harming/maltreating the child without factual evidence, subjecting the child to repeat unnecessary investigating procedures (this is more common in divorced/separated families with disputes)

If any of the above indicators of maltreatment is detected on their students, the school personnel may seek necessary professional advice from the social worker of the FCPSU. If there are reasons to believe or suspect that a student has been harmed/maltreated, the school personnel should take actions by following the principles and procedures set out from paragraphs 4 to 10 of this circular. Moreover, the school personnel should pay attention to the following when making reference to the above indicators:

- Physical/behavioural/emotional/environmental indicators may manifest singly or in combination. Neither does the presence of a single nor even several indicators point to the occurrence of child maltreatment. It however indicates that attention is required for the child. Personnel should first collect information, gain preliminary understanding and conduct initial assessment.
- School personnel should not prematurely conclude that an incident is suspected child maltreatment in order to prevent the child from experiencing unnecessary investigations, examinations or hospitalisation. School personnel should also not exclude the possibility of a child being harmed/maltreated just because certain circumstances are not listed above.
- In serious situation, indicator(s) may appear only once even these indicators usually occur repeatedly.
- Physical/environmental indicators are usually more readily observable while behavioural/emotional indicators (including the behaviour/emotion of the child or his/her parents/carers) are more subtle or concealed, which may be manifested by the child through drawings or play. Professionals have to be more sensitive and observant to identify these indicators.

- Due consideration should be given to the age and capability of the child, and also to the behaviours, attitudes of parents/carers and family circumstances.
- Should consider thoroughly if the child may have been harmed/maltreated by different types of harm/maltreatment instead of focusing on one single type.
- Some indicators can only be identified by professionals with relevant training (e.g. medical professionals may be required to determine whether the physical injury of a child is due to an accident). Please seek advice from professionals of relevant sectors as early as possible if there is any doubt about the indicator(s) identified.
- If schools have any doubts on the nature or severity of the injury of the child, schools should arrange a medical examination for the child as soon as possible.

**Identification and Reporting of a Suspected Child Maltreatment Case**



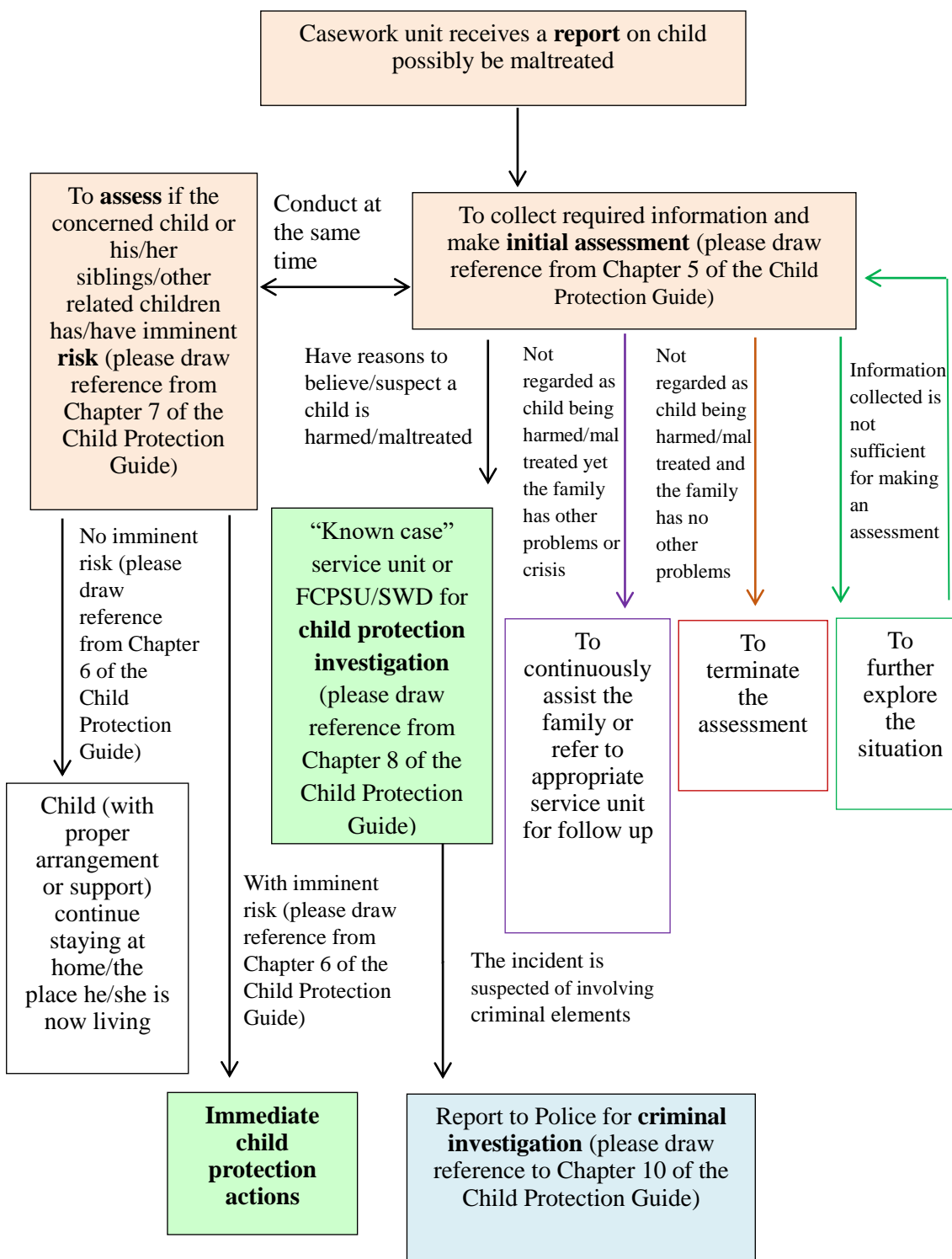
\* Please refer to Annex 5 to the Child Protection Guide for the definition of known case. Some of the known cases could also be reported to Family and Child Protective Services Unit of the Social Welfare Department for initial assessment, child protection investigation and convening/chairing the Multi-disciplinary Case Conference on Protection of Child with Suspected Maltreatment. Please refer to related chapters of and Annex 4 to the Child Protection Guide for details.

** List of Family and Child Protective Services Units of the Social Welfare Department (SWD)**

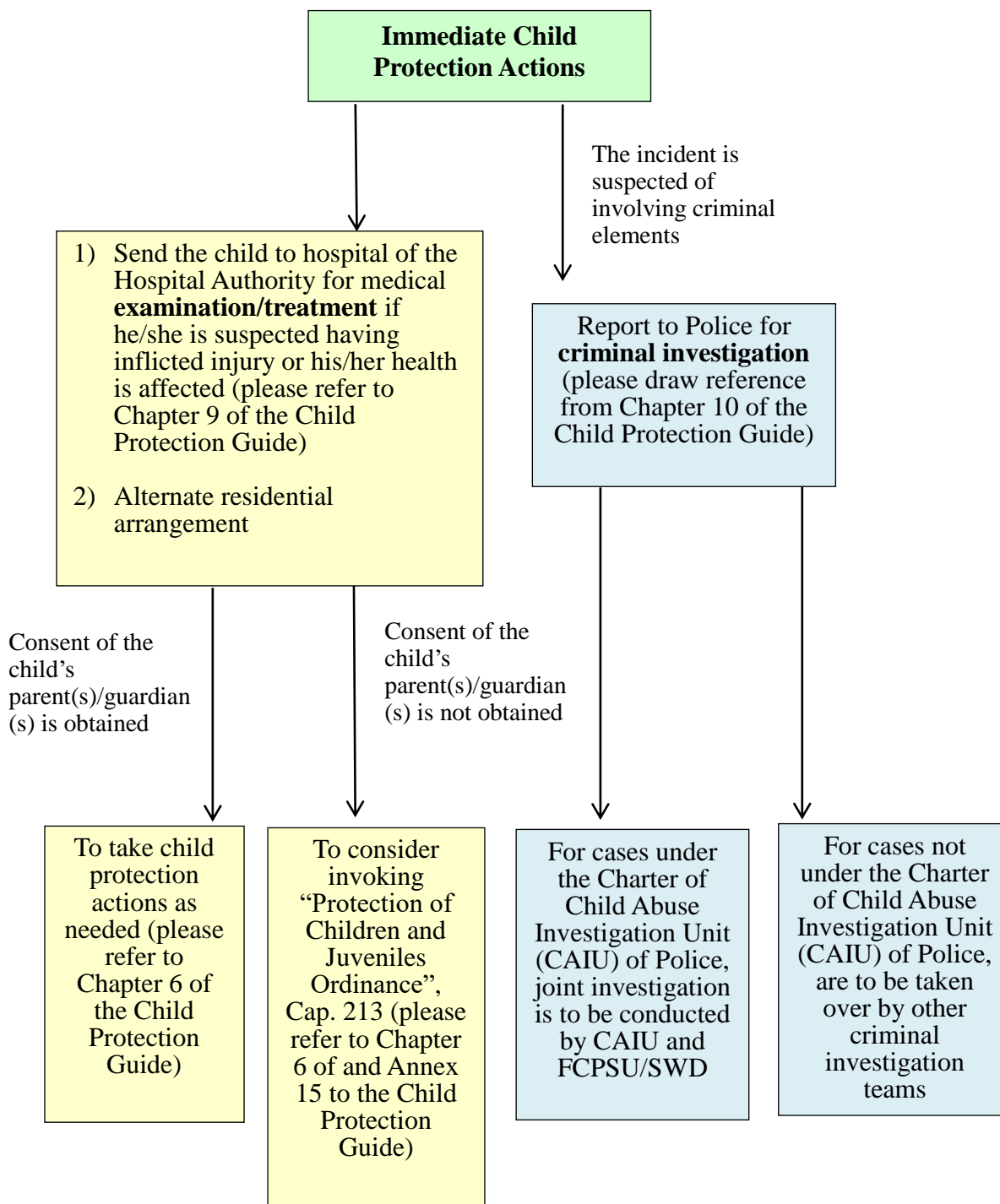
<b>The Hotline of Social Welfare Department</b>		2343 2255
<b>Family and Child Protective Services Units (FCPSUs)</b>		
1. FCPSU (Central Western, Southern and Islands)	Room 2313, 23/F, Southorn Centre, 130 Hennessy Road, Wanchai, H.K.	2835 2733
2. FCPSU (Eastern/Wanchai)	Room 229, 2/F, North Point Government Offices, 333 Java Road, North Point, H.K.	2231 5858
3. FCPSU (Sham Shui Po)	G/F, Cheung Shan Wan Community Centre, 55 Fat Tseung Street, Kowloon	2247 5373
4. FCPSU (Kowloon City/Yau Tsim Mong)	Room 803, 8/F, Kowloon Government Offices, 405 Nathan Road, Kowloon	3583 3254
5. FCPSU (Kwun Tong)	Unit 2101, 21/F, Kwun Tong View, 410 Kwun Tong Road, Kowloon	3586 3741
6. FCPSU (Wong Tai Sin/ Sai Kung)	3/F, Wong Tai Sin Community Centre, 104 Ching Tak Street, Wong Tai Sin, Kowloon	3188 3563
7. FCPSU (Shatin)	Room 716, 7/F, Shatin Government Offices, 1 Sheung Wo Che Road, Shatin, New Territories	2158 6680
8. FCPSU (Tai Po/North)	4/F, Tai Po Complex, 8 Heung Sze Wui Street, Tai Po Market, New Territories	3183 9323
9. FCPSU (Tsuen Wan/Kwai Tsing)	21/F, Tsuen Wan Government Offices, 38 Sai Lau Kok Road, Tsuen Wan, New Territories	2940 7350
10. FCPSU (Tuen Mun)	4/F, On Ting/Yau Oi Community Centre, On Ting Estate, Tuen Mun, New Territories	2618 5614
11. FCPSU (Yuen Long)	G/F, Wah Yuet House, Tin Wah Estate, Tin Shui Wai, Yuen Long, New Territories	2445 4224



### Conducting Initial Assessment and Immediate Child Protection Actions



**Immediate Child Protection Actions and Investigations**



**Report Form (Sample for Reference)**

Unit/Organisation responsible for initial assessment      Name and address of Organisation/School

Mr/Ms XX,

**Reporting of Suspected Child Maltreatment Case**

Our organisation/unit identified a suspected child maltreatment case on \_\_\_\_\_ (Date)\_\_\_\_\_(Month)\_\_\_\_\_(Year) and has reported to your Organisation/Unit via phone on \_\_\_\_\_(Date)\_\_\_\_\_(Month)\_\_\_\_\_(Year). Case information is hereby enclosed for your reference and record:

**A. Information of the child suspected to be maltreated and the family**

Name : \_\_\_\_\_ Sex : \_\_\_\_ Date of Birth/Age : \_\_\_\_\_  
Birth certificate/HKID No. : \_\_\_\_\_ Current whereabouts : \_\_\_\_\_  
Class : \_\_\_\_\_ Language normally used : \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Father/Mother/Guardian : \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship : \_\_\_\_\_  
Address : \_\_\_\_\_  
Tel. No. : \_\_\_\_\_  
Language normally used : \_\_\_\_\_

Whether preliminary information indicates immediate danger of the child :

1. Child has immediate danger of continual staying at home/the place he/she is now living : Yes/No
2. Child has immediate need for medical examination and treatment : Yes/No
3. Child has urgent need for statutory protection : Yes/No
4. Urgent report to Police for this suspected child maltreatment incident is needed : Yes/No

Any disability or special needs of the child : \_\_\_\_\_

The child and/or the family members concerned is/are known case(s) of social service unit(s) :

Yes

[please specify : Name of the Unit :

Name of the responsible social worker : \_\_\_\_\_ ]

Contact means :

No       Unknown

**B. Information of the Incident**

- 1. Date/Time/Location of the incident : \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. Types of maltreatment suspected :  Physical harm/Abuse  Sexual Abuse  
 Psychological harm/Abuse  Neglect  cannot be categorised
- 3. Name and HKID No. of the alleged perpetrator (if available) : \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. Relationship of the alleged perpetrator with the child : \_\_\_\_\_
- 5. Brief account of the incident : \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

For follow-up by your organisation/unit please. For enquiry, please contact Mr/Ms \_\_\_\_\_ (Name) on \_\_\_\_\_ (Tel. No.) at/during \_\_\_\_\_ (time convenient for contact).

(Name)  
(Reporting Organisation/School)  
Date : \_\_\_\_\_

----- ✂ -----

**Reply**

From : (Organisation/Unit receiving the report) ( Fax No. : )  
To : (Reporting Organisation/School) ( Fax No : )  
Date : ( \_\_\_\_\_ )

**Reporting of Suspected Child Maltreatment Case**

Our Organisation/Unit has received the captioned report.

- Social worker has conducted/will conduct initial assessment.
- The captioned case is a known case of  (Organisation/Unit) , please contact the responsible social worker \_\_\_\_\_ ( Tel. No. : \_\_\_\_\_ ) .

For enquiry, please contact  (Name)  on \_\_\_\_\_ .

(Name )  
Post

**(Confidential)**

**Report Form for Reporting Suspected Child Abuse Cases to Police**

(to be completed by Informant and/or sent together with the Written Dated Notes (Appendix 8))

**A. INFORMANT**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Rank/Post: \_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Agency: \_\_\_\_\_ Unit: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Tel. No.: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax No.: \_\_\_\_\_  
Emergency contact Tel. No. outside office hours (for the use of this case only):  
\_\_\_\_\_

**B. CHILD VICTIM**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Sex: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_  
HK Birth Certificate/Identity Card No.: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Present Location: \_\_\_\_\_ Tel. No.: \_\_\_\_\_  
School: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_  
Any Disability or Special Needs of the Child: \_\_\_\_\_  
Language normally used: \_\_\_\_\_

**C. PARENTS/CARER**

Name: _____	Name: _____
H.K.I.D. No.: _____	H.K.I.D. No.: _____
Sex/Age: _____	Sex/Age: _____
Relationship: _____	Relationship: _____
Address: _____	Address: _____
_____	
Tel. No.: _____	Tel. No.: _____
(Home/Mobile)	(Home/Mobile)
Language Normally Used: _____	Language Normally Used: _____
_____	

**D. SIBLINGS**

1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_  
(Name, Sex/Age)  
3. \_\_\_\_\_ 4. \_\_\_\_\_  
5. \_\_\_\_\_ 6. \_\_\_\_\_

**E. INCIDENT INFORMATION**

1. Date and Time of Incident: \_\_\_\_\_  
2. Location of Incident: \_\_\_\_\_  
3. Type of Abuse: Physical Sexual Psychological Neglect  
(tick one or more) cannot be categorised

4. Narrative Description: \_\_\_\_\_
- 
5. How the Informant is aware of the Information: \_\_\_\_\_
- 
6. Any Known History of Similar Incident for the child victim: \_\_\_\_\_
- 
7. Name/H.K.I.D. No. of Alleged Perpetrator: \_\_\_\_\_
- 
8. Relationship of Alleged Perpetrator with Victim: \_\_\_\_\_
- 
9. Name of Other Witness(es): \_\_\_\_\_
- 
10. Other Agency/Government Department(s) Involved in Handling the Case of the child/family concerned: \_\_\_\_\_
- 
11. Result of Child Protection Registry Check: \_\_\_\_\_  
(If there are more than one incident, please use a separate sheet to provide the information.) \_\_\_\_\_
- 

Signature : \_\_\_\_\_  
Name : \_\_\_\_\_  
Agency/Department : \_\_\_\_\_  
Unit : \_\_\_\_\_  
Tel. No. : \_\_\_\_\_  
Date : \_\_\_\_\_

**(Confidential)**

**Written Dated Notes**

(This form is to be forwarded with the Report Form (Appendix 7) in making a report to Police)

- 1. File Reference: \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. Name of the Child: \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. Sex/Age of the Child (Date of Birth): \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. Family Members in brief: \_\_\_\_\_
- 5. Type of Abuse:     Physical    Sexual    Psychological    Neglect  
                           Other    cannot be categorised
- 6. Information Collected:

<b>Date/Time</b>	<b>Details</b>

Signature : \_\_\_\_\_  
Name : \_\_\_\_\_  
Agency/Department : \_\_\_\_\_  
Unit : \_\_\_\_\_  
Tel. No. : \_\_\_\_\_  
Fax No. : \_\_\_\_\_  
Date : \_\_\_\_\_

(This Document may be submitted to Court as legal evidence)

**Procedures in Handling Suspected Child Sexual Abuse Cases Involving School Staff as the Alleged Perpetrators**

When any school staff is suspected to have sexually abused a student, the School Social Worker/designated personnel (e.g. responsible person of the school and Student Guidance Officer/Teacher/Personnel), the school authority, EDB and other government departments concerned should maintain communication in the following way:

**1. Victim and alleged perpetrators from the same school**

- (a) The School Social Worker/designated personnel should inform the school supervisor/principal of the abuse case and approach the Family and Child Protective Services Unit of the Social Welfare Department or the responsible investigation unit of the Police as soon as possible to work out appropriate handling procedures.
- (b) The school supervisor/principal should make reference to the risk assessment of the School Social Worker/designated personnel in providing appropriate support for the victim and considering other follow-up actions, e.g. finding out whether there are other victims of sexual abuse in the school and co-operating in investigation work.
- (c) The school should assign suitable personnel to take the necessary child protection action(s) and should notify without delay the child's guardian(s)/parent(s)/family/relative(s) about the progress of such actions and the safety of the child under circumstances, that will not pose further harm to the child.
- (d) The school supervisor/principal should notify EDB's relevant Regional Education Office/Joint Office for Kindergartens and Child Care Centres.
- (e) The relevant School Development Officer of the Regional Education Office or Service Officer of the Joint Office for Kindergartens and Child Care Centres may seek further advice from relevant professionals and make recommendations to the school on appropriate follow-up actions for the victim and the alleged perpetrators.
- (f) During the investigation process, the school should maintain its impartiality and avoid any conflict in interests/roles. The school personnel should not reach any private agreement of compromise with the staff involved, such as agreeing to terminate relevant investigations if the staff involved agrees to resign.



## **2. Victim and alleged perpetrators not from the same school**

### ***School of the victim***

- (a) It is in the interest of other students in the school that the School Social Worker/designated personnel, upon consulting the Family and Child Protective Services Unit of the Social Welfare Department or the responsible investigation unit of the Police and obtaining the consent of the victim and his/her parents, should inform the supervisor/principal of the victim's school of the sexual abuse case. However, under the principle mentioned in paragraph 7(g) of this circular, even without the consent of the known victim and his/her parents, the sexual abuse case should still be reported to the supervisor/principal of the known victim's school to ensure the safety and interests of other students when there may be more than one victim in the same school.
  
- (b) The school supervisor/principal should then inform EDB's relevant Regional Education Office or Joint Office for Kindergartens and Child Care Centres and consult relevant professionals on the appropriate support for the victim in school and rendering other follow-up services.

### ***School of the alleged perpetrators***

- (a) Upon consulting the Family and Child Protective Services Unit of the Social Welfare Department or the responsible investigation unit of the police, the School Social Worker/designated personnel should, through the supervisor/principal of the victim's school, notify EDB's Regional Education Office that supports the alleged perpetrator's school or EDB's Joint Office for Kindergartens and Child Care Centres.
  
- (b) The school supervisor/principal should make reference to the risk assessment conducted by the School Social Worker/designated personnel in considering follow-up actions in the school.
  
- (c) The relevant School Development Officer of the Regional Education Office or Service Officer of the Joint Office for Kindergartens and Child Care Centres may seek further advice from relevant professionals and make recommendations to the school on follow-up actions for the alleged perpetrators.

**Conducting the Multi-disciplinary Case Conference on Protection of Child with Suspected Maltreatment (MDCC) and Follow-up Services**

