

Patron : Mrs. Regina Leung
贊助人 : 梁唐青儀女士



Chairperson : Dr. Patrick Cheung
主席 : 張志雄醫生

Director : Dr. Jessica Ho
總幹事 : 何愛珠博士

13/F, Corn Yan Centre, 3 Jupiter Street, North Point, Hong Kong.

香港北角木星街3號澤盈中心13樓

Tel: (852) 3542 5722 Fax: (852) 3542 5709

E-mail: aca@aca.org.hk Home Page: <http://www.aca.org.hk>

Press Release **(19.11.2015)**

“Give Children the Best Start in Life”

Today is the World Day for Prevention of Child Abuse. The Against Child Abuse (ACA) held a press conference to report on significant events and statistics of its work for the year 2014/15 and to share concerns and recommendations for child protection. The ACA shoulders the roles of a child protection agent, a counselor, a trainer and an advocate.

With the support of our collaborative partner, Save the Children Hong Kong, the ACA carried out the Parent-child Support Line Services for parents and children to share difficulties in communication and to seek help whenever needed.

Physical abuse remained the highest

A total of 1,490 cases were handled by our hotline and drop-in services in the year under review. Of the 1,490 cases, 339 (23%) were on suspected child abuse: 168 cases (50%) were on physical abuse, which ranked the highest in number. The second highest was sexual abuse, 63 (18%); followed by neglect cases, 51 cases (15%); multiple abuse, 30 cases (9%) and psychological abuse, 27 cases (8%).

12% of abused children were two years old or below

Of the 426 children involved in the 339 suspected child abuse cases, 126 (30%) were 6 to 8 years old, 75 (18%) from 3 to 5 years old, and 53 (12 %) were aged 2 or below. Infants and young children are vulnerable to be hurt. They do not know how to seek help. They need to be protected. Abuse can cause permanent physical harm, psychological damage and can be fatal. Therefore, early prevention to support parents with newborn babies and young children is urgently needed.

67% suspected abusers were parents

Of the 417 suspected abusers in the 339 suspected child abuse cases, 278 (67%) were parents. Abused children do not have a sense of security and their trust in others is low. Parents should learn positive parenting and make the home a safe place for children.



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51% hotline calls were about child management problems

Of the 1,490 hotline calls, 762 (51%) were related to child management, with an increase of 306 cases compared to the 456 cases in last year. This shows that parents' awareness and readiness to seek help at an early stage of having parenting difficulties might have increased. It might also be due to the effectiveness of publicity.

66% callers were family members

Of the 1,490 hotline calls, 986 (66%) were by family members: 743 (75%) were children's mothers, 124 (13%) were relatives or friends, 74 (7%) were children's fathers, 45 (5%) were the abused children themselves. There were 14 (1%) abusers who reported the cases themselves and sought help from ACA. Some parents were ready to seek help. Relatives and friends also played an important role in protecting children.

Of the 63 sexual abuse cases, 80% victims were 12 years old or below

Of the 77 children involved in the 63 sexual abuse cases, 25 (32%) were from 6 to 8 years old, 20 (26%) from 3 to 5, 12 (16%) from 9 to 11, and 5 (6%) were 2 years old or below. Child sexual abuse trauma causes deep hurt and negative impact on the life of a child. It requires in-depth treatment for the child to re-integrate life and rebuild relationship with others. To prevent child sexual abuse, schools can provide comprehensive sex education. Parents should also learn to provide sex education for their children at home.

Of the 51 neglect cases, 35% children had been left unattended

Of the 51 neglect cases, 18 (35%) children had been left unattended at home and 17 (33%) children had not been provided with sufficient food and care. The rest of the children had not been deprived of receiving medical care and education. Leaving children unattended is very dangerous. It can be fatal. Parents or caregivers may violate the law because of negligence and ignorance.

8 % were child psychological abuse cases

Of the 339 suspected child abuse cases, only 27 (8%) were psychological abuse. Some children may experience psychological abuse only, without ever experiencing another form of abuse. However, each form of abuse causes psychological damage to children. Psychological abuse that exists independently of other forms of abuse is the most difficult form of abuse to identify.



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Psychological abuse is the repeated pattern of behaviour and attitudes towards a child or an extreme incident that endangers or impairs the child's emotional or intellectual development. Acts of spurning, terrorizing, isolating, exploiting/ corrupting, denying emotional responsiveness, conveying to a child that he/she is worthless, flawed, unwanted or unloved. Such acts damage the behavioural, cognitive, affective, or physical functioning of the child.

Recommendations:

1. To use non-violent ways to manage children. Corporal punishment is a form of violence and should be totally banned, including at home.
2. To allocate resources for early prevention services, such as visitation programmes for families with newborn babies to support new parents to learn positive parenting and home safety knowledge.
3. To provide systematic parent education and supporting services for at risk groups, such as families in poverty, single/young mothers, new arrival families with young children, caregivers with emotional problems, etc.
4. To implement comprehensive sex education and to set up a mandatory Sex Conviction Record Check System.
5. To review the law on leaving children unattended and enhance parents' home safety awareness.
6. To set up a serious child abuse cases review system.
7. To review and ensure that the child protection laws, policies and services are in place.
8. To develop a central data bank to centralize, collect, analyze and disseminate related information on child protection and child development.
9. To put resources into research on the prevalence, trend and characteristics of child abuse and explore directions and strategies to prevent violence against children.
10. To promote children's rights to survival, protection, participation and development and to set up an independent system such as a Child Commission to ensure children's voices and views are heard and respected.

Give Children the Best Start in Life. We appeal to all of you to report suspected child abuse cases and encourage parents and children to seek help at an early stage of risk.

Service users' sharing

A volunteer invited Ching to join the Healthy Start Home Visiting Project in 2010. Ching received home visit service by two volunteers during the pre and post natal period. The volunteers



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developed a good rapport with her. In the first month after she gave birth to her baby girl, she had difficulty in breast feeding and felt frustrated. She had to take care of her baby on her own. She felt lonely, helpless and not being understood. She regarded the volunteers as friends. She shared with them her worries and frustrations. Through the volunteers' support and experience sharing, her negative emotions were alleviated.

Ching was not aware that the home can be unsafe for her baby. She did not install window grille and did not put padding on the table sharp corners. After being alerted by the volunteers, she realized that she has to make the home a safer place for her child to grow and develop.

Child management was another challenge for Ching as her daughter was growing up. When her daughter was naughty or did not listen to her instructions, she would scold or hit her hands. The volunteers pointed out that hitting and scolding were not effective in managing her daughter and encouraged her to participate in parent education programmes to learn child management knowledge and skills and attitudes of positive parenting. She practiced what she has learnt and stopped using hitting and scolding to discipline her daughter.

In 2014, she joined the volunteer team of the family corner service in ACA Tuen Mun Centre after her daughter began kindergarten. In 2015, she became a volunteer of the Healthy Start Project and started to provide home visiting service to families with new born babies. In the belief that 'Life affects Life', she hopes to help others just as she was helped.

Wah is a single mother. She felt helpless in taking care of her 5 year-old son and 3 year-old daughter. Her family case social worker referred her to the ACA Daylily Project for Young/Single Mothers to receive services. After an ACA social worker's assessment, the project trained volunteer began to provide home visiting service for her and encouraged her to join positive parenting activities. Wah had high expectations on her children and this caused conflicts between her and her children. When her son did not want to go to sleep and she was very tired, she would hit him with a hanger. The son would cry until he got tired and went to sleep. After attending parenting groups and listening to the volunteer's experience sharing, Wah tried to use different positive child management methods. She started to make a timetable, set rules with her son to avoid playing strenuous games before sleeping, and tell bed-time stories.



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Wah was grateful for the help of the volunteers. When she encountered difficulties in life, the volunteers would be there for her. A volunteer even prepared soup for her when her health was weak. She felt being cared for and loved. This project gave her more opportunities to attend different parent-child activities which helped reduce her stress and improve the parent-child relationship. She became more patient in taking care of her children. She thanked ACA and the volunteers for their support and encouragement. She appealed to all single mothers in similar situations to seek help.

Enquiries:

Dr Jessica HO (Director, Against Child Abuse)
Tel: 3542 5728/ 9121 4650

Ms Vanice CHAN (Communication and
Development Officer, Against Child Abuse)
Tel: 3542 5725/ 9704 3375

