

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



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Press Release **(7.11.2016)**

“Protect Our Children for their Optimal Development”

Today, the Against Child Abuse (ACA) held a press conference to report on significant events and statistics of its work for the year 2015/16 and to share concerns and recommendations for child protection.

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. A total of 1,485 cases were handled by our hotline and drop-in services in the year 2015/16, 253 (17%) were suspected child abuse cases.

Nearly half of the callers were family members

Of the 1,485 hotline calls, 684 (46%) were reported by family members. Of the 684 family members, 423 (62%) were children's mothers, 100 (15%) were fathers, 85 (12%) were relatives or friends, 76 (11%) were the abused children themselves. There were 13 (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 1,485 hotline calls, 466 (32%) calls were made by the public or neighbours, which was the second largest group of referrers followed by 303 (20%) professionals and 19 (1%) by the media. All parties play an important role in protecting children at risk of abuse.

More than 35% of abused children were five years old or below

Of the 311 children involved in the 253 suspected child abuse cases, 88 (28%) were 6 to 8 years old, 73 (23%) from 3 to 5 years old, and 42 (14 %) 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.



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73% suspected abusers were family members

There were 284 suspected abusers in the 253 suspected child abuse cases. Of the 284 suspected abusers, 207 (73%) were family members, including 105 mothers, 50 fathers, 36 of both parents, five step mothers, four grandmothers, three brothers, two step fathers, one grandfather and one sister. Parents being suspected abusers were 191 (67%). Abused children lost trust in the family members who are abusers. They may experience fear, depression and become withdrawn. They would also feel insecure, lack of confidence and have low self-esteem and self-doubt. Parents should learn positive parenting and ensure that their children grow and develop in a safe and happy family.

Over 50% were physical abuse

Of the 253 suspected child abuse cases, 131 cases (52%) involved physical abuse, which ranked the highest in number. The second highest was neglect cases, 38 (15%); followed by sexual abuse, 30 cases (12%); multiple abuse, 28 cases (11%) and psychological abuse, 26 cases (10%). Physical abuse not only harms the child's body, but also affects the child's self-control and mental ability, and the outcome of parent-child relationship would be poor. Corporal punishment is a form of violence that should be totally banned.

15% were child neglect cases

Of the 253 suspected child abuse cases, 38 (15%) were neglect cases. Of the 38 neglect cases, children of 18 cases had not been provided with sufficient food and care, 13 cases had been left unattended at home and the rest of the children had been deprived of receiving medical care and education. Children have the right to survival and enjoy an appropriate living standard, including nutritious food, clothing and safe housing. If the basic needs of children are not provided for, children's health or development are endangered.

12% were child sexual abuse cases

Of the 253 suspected child abuse cases, 30 (12%) were child sexual abuse cases. 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, comprehensive sex education should be provided for children. Parents should also learn to provide sex education for their children at home.



10% were child psychological abuse cases

Of the 253 suspected child abuse cases, 26 (10%) were child 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. Psychological abuse is the repeated pattern of behaviour and attitude 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 provide resources for early prevention services, such as home visitation services for families with newborn babies to support new parents to learn positive parenting and home safety knowledge.
2. To provide systematic parent education programmes for parents with children below 18 years of age so that parents can learn ways to handle stress and emotions and to understand the developmental needs of children in different ages.
3. To provide 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 strengthen and monitor the follow-up services after multi-disciplinary case conferences (MDCC) on child abuse and provide appropriate treatment for the abused children and abusers.
5. To use non-violent ways to manage children. Corporal punishment is a form of violence and should be totally banned, including at home.
6. To review the law on leaving children unattended and enhance parents' home safety awareness.
7. To set up a mandatory Sex Conviction Record Check System, to carry out comprehensive sex education and to prevent child sexual abuse incidents.
8. To set up a clear legislation for child psychological abuse, to promote public awareness in identification of child psychological abuse, and to facilitate multi-disciplinary cooperation in dealing with psychological abuse cases.
9. To develop a central data bank to centralize, collect, analyze and disseminate related information on child protection and child development.
10. To provide resources for research on the prevalence, trend and characteristics of child abuse and explore directions and strategies to prevent violence against children.

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11. To develop children's developmental policies, set indicators and review the effectiveness.
12. To set up an independent system such as a Child Commission to actualize the spirit of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, to ensure the welfare of the child and to ensure children's voices and views are heard and considered in the process of formulating policies.

Service user's sharing

Wai is a single mother and has a 4-year-old child to look after. When Wai was pregnant, she felt lost and helpless. She was referred by the hospital to the ACA Daylily Project for Young/Single Mothers. After ACA social worker's assessment, she started to receive the volunteer home visitation service and join positive parenting activities.

When Wai's child studied in kindergarten, the child was diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. Wai did not know how to cope with the child's misbehaviours which caused lots of conflicts between them. Wai always blamed and scolded the child. Wai worked full-time. She was under great stress and her emotions were adversely affected.

After attending the parenting knowledge and skill groups and getting support from the volunteers, the project social worker and other parents, Wai has learnt positive parenting attitude and skills. She became aware of the needs and limitations of her child and she has learnt to deal with her own emotions. She learned how to reply to her child's questions about the father. She started to set a timetable and rules with her child and has story-telling time before sleep. Gradually, they have built up a closer relationship.

Wai was able to get help from the volunteers and the project social worker when she encountered life difficulties. Wai became more positive in facing different challenges. She felt being cared for and supported. Besides, Wai attended various parent-child activities which helped reduce her stress. She became more patience in parenting.

She appreciated ACA and the volunteers' support and encouragement. She appealed to all single mothers in similar situations to seek help.



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Protect Our Children for their Optimal Development. 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.

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