



Against Child Abuse
防止虐待兒童會

Patron : Prof. Ian Grenville Cross
GBS, SC
贊助人 : 江樂士教授
GBS, SC

Flat A, 2/F, TLP132, Nos. 132-134 Tai Lin Pai Road,
Kwai Chung, N.T., Hong Kong.
香港新界葵涌大連排道 132-134 號 TLP132 二樓 A 室
Tel: (852) 2915 0607 Hotline: (852) 2755 1122 Fax: (852) 2915 0788
Home Page: <http://www.aca.org.hk> E-mail: aca@aca.org.hk

Chairperson : Prof. Patrick
Cheung, BBS
主席 : 張志雄醫生,
BBS
Director : Dr. Maple Lau
總幹事 : 婁小君博士

Press Release
Protect Children for Optimal Development
20th November 2025

Today, Against Child Abuse (ACA) held annual press conference to report on significant services and statistics for the year 2024/25, and shared concerns and recommendations for child protection. ACA provides child abuse prevention, child protection, counselling and therapy, and advocacy services.

Our Parent-child Support Line is sponsored by Fu Tak Iam Foundation Limited, providing a channel for the public to report suspected child abuse and for parents and children to share difficulties in communication, parenting, child growth and development, and to seek help whenever needed. In the year 2024/25, a total of 1,144 cases were handled by our hotline and drop-in services, of which 207 (18%) were suspected child abuse cases.

Over 60% of the callers were family members

Among the 1,144 hotline calls, 738 (64%) were reported by family members. Of the 738 family members, 559 (76%) were mothers, 102 (14%) were fathers, 62 (8%) were relatives or friends, 15 (2%) were the suspected abused children themselves. Besides, five cases were calls from suspected abusers and one case was a call from a caregiver seeking assistance from our organization.

The figures showed that many parents were willing to seek help from ACA when they had difficulties in parenting, mainly related to their children's behavioral and learning problems. With the passage of the "Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse Ordinance" on 11 July 2024, which will take effect on 20 January 2026, societal attention to child protection has increased. There were 189 reports (17%) made by the public or neighbors, and 211 reports (18%) from professionals seeking consultation. This highlights the important roles that professionals, the public, and neighbors play in child protection, as everyone has a significant role when children face potential abuse crises.

Majority of the suspected abused children were aged 6 to 8

Of the 241 children involved in the 207 suspected child abuse cases, 58 (24%) were 6



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to 8 years old, 54 (22%) were 3 to 5 years old, and 39 (16%) were 9 to 11 years old. The figures indicated that the most vulnerable group was the age ranging from 6 to 8, followed by children from 3 to 5 years old.

In disciplining preschool and primary school children, both parents and children face significant challenges, especially in emotional management and behavior guidance. Daily life and work may bring heavy pressure to parents; a lack of parenting skills or insufficient support often makes it difficult for them to meet their children's needs, which may result in negative emotions being directed toward the children. For children, in addition to coping with heavy homework and tight study schedules, those transitioning to primary and secondary school need to readjust to new learning environments and teaching methods. They may feel anxious and uneasy during the learning process. If parents have excessively high expectations of their children, it can increase the children's learning pressure and may lead to tense parent-child relationships. Furthermore, with the widespread use of internet technology and electronic devices, children can easily become addicted to electronic products and online games. This not only affects their learning and physical and mental development, but also makes parents feel annoyed and helpless.

Faced with the above various challenges, parents need to pay more attention to their children, communicate with them and understand the reasons behind addiction, help their children deal with emotions and stress, and adapt to changes in the environment. At the same time, parents should also take care of their own emotions and seek ways to relieve stress. There is an urgent need for early preventive education, supporting families in crisis and strengthening positive parenting skills for parents.

Nearly 70% of the suspected abusers were family members

Among the 207 suspected child abuse cases, there were 234 suspected abusers involved. 161 (69%) suspected abusers were family members, including 63 (27%) mothers, 57 (24%) fathers, 13 (6%) both parents, 20 (9%) grandmothers, 4 grandfathers, 3 brothers and 1 step-father.

The situation in which abusers are family members has profound and complex effects on children. The family should be the safest refuge for children, but when the abuser is a parent or other close relative, the child's mental health can suffer severe damage.



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Abuse by family members can lead to a crisis of trust, causing abused children to lose confidence in their parents or other family members. They may experience fear, depression, and withdrawal, with the most significant impact being a lack of security. This also severely affects the child's self-esteem; abused children may feel a sense of low self-value, believing they do not deserve love and care. As they grow, they may repeat these negative self-perceptions, leading to diminished confidence, poor self-image, and doubts about their own value. This can adversely affect their social skills and interpersonal relationships.

The family is a crucial environment for children's growth and self-development, and parents are the closest family members to children. Therefore, providing early support for parents in learning positive disciplinary knowledge and skills is essential to ensure that children grow up in a safe and positive family environment.

Physical abuse accounted for nearly 60%

Among the 207 suspected child abuse cases, 116 (56%) involved physical abuse which ranked the highest rate, followed by 34 (16%) neglect cases, 26 (13%) psychological abuse cases, 22 (11%) multiple abuse cases, and 9 (4%) sexual abuse cases.

In the child abuse statistics, physical abuse cases are notably high because physical injuries are easier to detect. In contrast, cases of neglect, sexual abuse, and psychological abuse appear lower, likely because they are harder to identify, resulting in fewer reports. We aim to collaborate with parents, professionals, and the public to raise awareness of child protection and encourage the early reporting of suspected abuse.

Additionally, we stress that parents should address children's emotions and behaviours using positive, non-violent methods. Corporal punishment is a form of violence that violates children's rights and should be completely prohibited. It often arises from inappropriate disciplinary approaches. Although many parents regard corporal punishment as an effective discipline method, it actually harms the parent-child relationship, teaches children to respond with violence, and perpetuates abusive behaviour, potentially leading to severe injury or death.

Neglect cases accounted for over 10%

Among the 207 suspected child abuse cases, 34 (16%) were neglect. Of these, 13 cases



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involved children being left unattended at home, insufficient physical and health care accounted for 15 cases and 12 cases, 5 cases involved deprivation of education, and 1 case involved forcing a child to work excessive hours. Leaving young children unattended at home is very dangerous and can be fatal, and parents and caregivers may also face legal consequences for neglecting the care of their children.

Psychological abuse cases should not be overlooked

Among the 207 suspected child abuse cases, 26 cases (13%) involved psychological abuse. Psychological abuse encompasses various forms of emotional harm that may be difficult to detect but have profound effects on children. It includes actions (such as malicious humiliation) or inactions (like deliberate isolation, exploitation, and neglect) by caregivers, leading children to feel worthless, flawed, unworthy of love, or merely existing to satisfy others. This can damage children's behavioral, cognitive, emotional, and physiological functions. The historically low reporting numbers do not reflect the severity of the issue; cases of psychological abuse are often overlooked because many people do not understand what psychological abuse is or find it challenging to recognize its seriousness. Nevertheless, every type of child abuse carries an element of psychological harm.

Sexual abuse cases need attention

Among the 207 suspected child abuse cases, 9 cases (4%) involved sexual abuse. In recent years, there has been an increase in cases where suspected abusers use smartphones or the internet to lure children and establish relationships before abusing them. This situation is alarming, as the internet's anonymity makes it easier for abusers to access and manipulate children. Abuser often pose as peers or trustworthy adults on social media, chat apps, or online games to gain trust. Once a relationship is formed, they may lead children into sexually suggestive conversations or solicit private images. This exposure not only harms children's physical and mental health but also increases their vulnerability to risks. With schools integrating more online learning, children are spending more time online, heightening their chances of encountering potential offenders. The trauma from sexual abuse can have lasting impacts, requiring extensive therapy for recovery. Sex education is crucial to children's physical and mental development, yet sex education in Hong Kong schools still requires improvement. Additionally, it is important to establish legislation and strategies to combat various



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online sexual crimes.

Multiple abuse cases mainly involved physical and psychological abuse

Among the 207 suspected child abuse cases, 22 cases (11%) involved multiple abuse, with 12 of these cases involving both physical and psychological abuse. Physical abuse often begins with mild corporal punishment, which gradually escalates over time and unconsciously leading to more severe abuse. During the process of corporal punishment, harsh scolding and even humiliating words are often used, resulting in negative psychological impacts on children's growth and development. Therefore, in addition to strengthening parents' positive parenting skills, society also needs to prepare for a total ban of corporal punishment.

Risk factors of suspected child abuse/difficulty in child management cases

As for the risk factors of suspected child abuse or difficulty in child management cases, 67% were related to the suspected abusers, parents, or caregivers. Among them, the highest proportions were lack of child rearing and parenting skills, emotional or psychological problems, expectations too high for children, and marital problems. Child-related factors accounted for 25%, of which the highest proportions were behavioral problems, emotional or psychological problems, academic performance, and mental illness or special educational needs. Environmental factors accounted for 7%, among which the highest proportions were lack of community resources, lack of support network, and economic difficulty. Other unidentified factors account for 1%. These risk factors not only weaken the ability of parents or caregivers to care for children, but also leave children in hidden crisis, which may have profound impacts on their development.

Our recommendations to the Government:

1. The "Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse Ordinance" will commence on 20 January 2026. To ensure that the mechanism can function effectively, it is recommended that the government continue to improve the relevant support measures, including professional training, emergency accommodation arrangements, and public education and promotion, in order to enhance societal understanding and capacity for implementation.



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2. To consider the recommendations of the final report by The Law Reform Commission of Hong Kong on “Causing or allowing the death or serious harm of a child or vulnerable adult” introducing the new offence and reviewing the maximum penalty under section 27 of the Offences against the Person Ordinance (Cap. 212).
3. Corporal punishment is not an effective method of discipline and can easily escalate to the level of violence unwittingly. It should be totally banned, including in the home.
4. To set up a mandatory Sex Conviction Record Check System and a mandatory treatment programme for criminals committing serious sexual crimes, carry out comprehensive school sex education, and formulate regulations/policies to regulate internet service providers to ensure the security of online platforms in response to cyber-crimes so as to prevent child sexual abuse incidents.
5. To raise public awareness of child psychological abuse and to enact clear legislation on child psychological abuse.
6. To strengthen systematic parent education programmes for delivering positive parenting methods, and to provide more resources for early prevention services, such as home visitation services for families with infants and toddlers to support new parents to learn positive parenting and home safety knowledge.
7. To provide supporting services for at risk groups as early as possible, such as families in poverty, single/young mothers, new arrival families, children with special education needs and their parents/care givers, parents/care givers with emotional/mental health problems or substance abuse, etc.
8. To face up to the problem of leaving children unattended, continue to improve the quality, monitoring and provision of residential child care and related services, as well as the service needs of after-school care, and raise parents’ awareness of home safety through community education.



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9. To concern about the psychological impacts on children witness of domestic violence and suffered from school bullying, provide appropriate counseling or treatment services for them.
10. To ensure that children's voices are heard in the process of formulating child-related policies, and that the impact of policies on children is reviewed and assessed so that their rights to protection, development and participation are safeguarded.
11. To develop a central data bank for children to centralize, collect, analyze and disseminate related information on child protection and child development, to facilitate research, resource allocation, and directions of policy and service.
12. To promote child protection policy in the community to create a safe and friendly environment for children.

Social worker's case sharing

The Daylily Project for Young / Single Mothers, sponsored by the Community Chest of Hong Kong, provides support services for 60 young/single mothers across Hong Kong. Referrals come from the Department of Paediatrics & Adolescent Medicine, the Department of Obstetrics & Gynaecology of the United Christian Hospital, Comprehensive Child Development Service, and Integrated Family Service Centres in various districts. Nearly 80% of the participating families live in public housing or transitional housing, while most of the remaining families reside in subdivided flats or old tenement house. About 70% of project families rely on Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA), with the rest depending on family support or unstable income from part-time or casual work.

Many single or young mothers have to care for their children on their own every day, bearing heavy financial burdens and lacking a robust support network. Due to prolonged stress, more than half of the beneficiary parents experience mental or emotional health problems, which warrants greater attention from society.



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The Daylily Project supports these families through home visits by volunteers, regular phone contacts, outdoor activities, and the provision of positive parenting education. Social workers and volunteers maintain close communication with the beneficiary families to understand their needs and offer timely assistance.

One of the beneficiaries, Gigi (anonymized), is a single mother whose parents passed away early and who has no siblings. She was referred to the project by a nurse at the United Christian Hospital and has been participating for a year. As a first-time mother, Gigi faced many challenges in caring for her newborn. Fortunately, she was matched with a volunteer who has childcare experience. After receiving training from social workers, the volunteer not only conducts regular visits but also provides prompt responses to her questions and shares parenting advice and emotional support through instant messaging. Having someone who consistently cares about her has helped Gigi maintain a positive mindset on her parenting journey. She often takes the initiative to share daily moments with her child with the volunteer. The project continues to support young or single mothers like Gigi through regular volunteer visits and parent-child activities, helping them overcome difficulties.

Two seasoned volunteers, Ms. Sun and Ms. Choi, believe that the project has provided invaluable assistance to many single or young mothers experiencing emotional distress. They are grateful that these mothers are willing to trust them and share both the hardships and joys of their lives. The volunteers also feel that through the visits, they have grown alongside the families involved in the program, becoming more empathetic and better at expressing themselves. Lastly, they wish to encourage all single or young mothers facing life challenges that, no matter what difficulties they encounter, by facing them courageously and seeking help when needed, there will always be someone to walk alongside them.

Protect Children for 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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Media Enquiries:

Dr. Maple Lau

Director

Tel: 3542 5722 / 9121 4650

Ms. Summer Lin

Funding and Communications Manager

Tel: 3542 5725 / 9470 4801

Email: pr@aca.org.hk



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