

Press Release

Survey on the Implementation of the Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse Ordinance – Views of Designated Professionals and Parents

(18 March 2026)

Against Child Abuse (ACA) was established in 1979 and has been committed to eliminating all forms of child abuse in Hong Kong. Our mission is to promote a caring and non-violent environment for the optimal growth and development of our children through delivering quality services in the areas of prevention, training, crisis intervention, treatment, and advocacy.

The Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse Ordinance (the Ordinance) came into effect on 20 January 2026. In response to this, Against Child Abuse held a Professional Forum on Child Protection titled "A Multi-disciplinary Forum on Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse: From Legislation to Practice – Challenges and Responses" on 13 March 2026, attracting around 120 professionals. The event opened with a welcome speech by Prof. Patrick Cheung, BBS, ACA Chairperson, followed by three presentations: Dr. Maple Lau, ACA Director, on "Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse – Views of Designated Professionals"; Ms. Jade Chan, Superintendent of Police (Crime Support Group), and Ms. Amy Au Yeung, Senior Social Work Officer (FCPSU Kwun Tong), both on "Implementation of the Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse". The forum culminated in a panel discussion on "Sectoral Collaboration in Implementing Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse" featuring representatives from the Hong Kong Police Force, Ms. Jade Chan; Social Welfare Department, Ms. Amy Au Yeung; health sector, Dr. Anna Cheng, United Christian Hospital; education sector, Ms. Catherine So, Principal of S.K.H. Yautong Kei Hin Primary School; and social work sector, Ms. Cynthia Cheng, ACA Service Manager (Chuk Yuen Centre). Participants gave positive feedback on the practical insights and cross-sector dialogue.

To better understand how different sectors of the community perceive the implementation of the Ordinance – including their views, knowledge, experiences, and recommendations – ACA conducted a survey using an online questionnaire targeting designated professionals from 25 specified categories and parents. Overall, the findings show that respondents generally support the policy objectives and positively perceive the expected outcomes of the Ordinance in protecting children. At the same time, they

expressed concerns about system operation, pressure on frontline practitioners and the potential impact on families, indicating that more systemic support and public education are needed during the implementation process.

Findings of the Survey on Designated Professionals' Views on the Implementation of the Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse Ordinance

The professional survey was conducted between December 2025 and February 2026 via an online questionnaire, with a total of 308 responses from designated professionals. Respondents came from the education, social welfare and healthcare sectors, accounting for 38%, 37% and 25% of the sample respectively, enabling comparison of views across different frontline professions on the implementation of the Ordinance. The study focused on professionals' views on the effectiveness of the Ordinance, their level of understanding, the pressures and challenges encountered in practice, and their policy recommendations.

Broad recognition of the positive value of the Ordinance

The survey results indicate that designated professionals widely recognize the importance of the Ordinance in strengthening child protection. A total of 96.4% of respondents agreed that the Ordinance helps improve the existing child protection system. In addition, 93.8% believed that the Ordinance raises awareness of child protection, and 88.6% agreed that it helps increase the detection of child abuse cases. Furthermore, 86.4% of respondents considered that the Ordinance facilitates cross-sectoral collaboration in protecting children, reflecting that the professional community generally sees the policy direction of the Ordinance as positive.

A gap between “knowing” and “doing”

However, the study also identified a gap between knowledge and practice in the implementation of the Ordinance. While nearly 80% of professionals self-reported that they “understand” or “fully understand” the content of the Ordinance, the accuracy rates of some knowledge-test questions were relatively low. For example, the correct response rate to the question “Is it necessary to report immediately once child abuse is identified?” was only 39% (the correct answer is “No”), and the correct rate for the question “Does serious harm caused by another child fall within the scope of mandatory reporting?” was 45.1% (it is not within the mandatory reporting scope). These findings suggest that some frontline professionals still lack sufficient understanding of the

reporting scope and related operational procedures. In addition, around 63.3% of respondents considered the reporting procedures to be complicated, indicating that there remains room for improvement at the practical level.

Widespread concern about work stress and risk

The survey shows that 78.9% of designated professionals generally expect an increase in work-related stress following the implementation of the Ordinance, while 62% expressed concern about potential legal or professional risks. The study suggests that, while the mandatory reporting regime may enhance the capacity to protect children, it may also bring greater legal responsibilities and professional judgment pressure to frontline professionals.

Concerns and challenges differ across the three main professional sectors

Healthcare professionals mainly highlighted pressures related to professional judgment – for example, how to determine whether a case has reached the threshold of “reasonable suspicion” in clinical settings, under the dual pressure of time constraints and legal responsibilities. Nearly half of healthcare respondents indicated that they had not received sufficient training to accurately identify and handle child abuse cases.

Social welfare professionals were more concerned about ethical and relational pressures. Nearly 90% of social welfare respondents anticipated increased work stress. Some noted that they need to build trust with families in the course of service delivery, but when mandatory reporting is required, they worry about damaging their working relationship with families and experiencing greater emotional stress; therefore, they emphasized the need for more supervision mechanisms and institutional support.

Education professionals were the most optimistic about the effectiveness of the mandatory reporting regime. At the same time, they were more concerned about procedural issues and the division of responsibilities within schools, and the survey also revealed misunderstandings regarding reporting procedures among some respondents.

Overall, designated professionals commonly suggested that, to implement the Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse Ordinance effectively, multi-faceted support must be strengthened. This includes adequate resource allocation (ensuring sufficient manpower and infrastructure to support implementation), enhanced professional

training (such as decision-making training, case-based learning, scenario-based simulations, and cross-sectoral training), and clearer practical guidance on cross-sectoral collaboration and reporting procedures. In addition, it is essential to establish robust institutional support, including legal consultation, psychological support, and internal supervision, to alleviate professionals' pressure and perceived risks.

Findings of the Survey on Parents' Views on the Implementation of the Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse Ordinance

In addition to professionals, an online survey on parents' views of the implementation of the Ordinance was conducted between December 2025 and February 2026, collecting 788 responses. The results show that parents generally hold an attitude of "support mixed with anxiety" towards the Ordinance. On the positive side, around 52.8% of parents believed that the Ordinance helps raise their awareness of appropriate parenting, while 49.1% felt that it enhances community awareness of child protection. At the same time, some parents expressed concerns. A total of 46.7% of respondents worried that the Ordinance could increase family stress and anxiety, and 43.3% were concerned about the possibility of being mistakenly reported, which could affect family reputation.

The study also examined parents' understanding of the Ordinance. Among the three knowledge-test questions, around 24.8% of parents answered only zero to one question correctly, reflecting that some parents still have limited knowledge of the Ordinance's content. For example, in a question asking which professionals have mandatory reporting duties under the Ordinance, 47.7% of parents believed that tutorial class / interest class tutors are mandated reporters, and 40% believed that ordinary citizens / neighbours have such a duty. These findings show that public education plays a crucial role in the implementation of the Ordinance.

Parents also indicated which types of information they considered most important: 75.1% selected clear written guidelines and definitions of "serious harm"; 71.6% preferred real-case illustrations; and 57.6% favored videos or leaflets introducing positive parenting. As for preferred channels to receive such information, the most widely supported was school circulars and parent talks (73.9%), far exceeding mass and online media. The second most preferred channel was television and radio announcements (46.8%), followed by government official websites / mobile

applications (42.5%), and social media platforms (34.8%). These results underline the importance of close collaboration between schools and parents in promoting understanding of the Ordinance.

Overall conclusions and suggestions

The study indicates that the policy direction of the Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse Ordinance has generally gained social support, but the success of the regime will depend to a large extent on whether the Government and relevant agencies can provide sufficient supporting measures. The research team recommends strengthening professional training, providing legal and psychological support for frontline professionals, establishing clearer cross-sectoral collaboration mechanisms, and enhancing public education to deepen understanding of the content and boundaries of the Ordinance. With comprehensive institutional support and educational measures in place, it will be possible to protect children more effectively while reducing unnecessary anxiety among professionals and families, thereby facilitating the effective implementation of the Ordinance.

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