

SECTION I

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 1

AIM, BELIEFS AND PRINCIPLES

AIM

- 1.1 The aim of this Procedural Guide is to provide guidance on the way government departments, non-governmental organisations and other concerned sectors should work together to serve the best interest of children and to provide protection to the children suspected to be abused or having been abused. This Procedural Guide is to provide reference to professionals or personnel engaged in social service, health service, educational services, law enforcement and those whose work brings them into close contact with children. This Procedural Guide recognizes that the key to effective action is built on the multi-disciplinary approach of **WORKING TOGETHER, TRUSTING EACH OTHER** and **FOR THE WELFARE OF CHILDREN**.

BELIEFS

- 1.2 All children have the right to :
- (a) grow and develop as physically, emotionally and mentally healthy as possible before as well as after birth;
 - (b) live in a safe environment and be protected from harm;
 - (c) be loved and valued, and be supported by a network of reliable and affectionate relationships;
 - (d) become competent in looking after themselves and coping with everyday living;
 - (e) have a positive image of themselves, and a secure sense of identity;
 - (f) receive proper education;
 - (g) develop adequate inter-personal skills and confidence in social situations; and
 - (h) receive medical and health assessment and treatment.
- 1.3 All children have physical, psychological and social needs that should be met by their parents / guardians, carers and society at large.

GOVERNING PRINCIPLES OF CHILD PROTECTION

- 1.4 All children have the right to be protected against harm and exploitation regardless of their :
- (a) race, language or religion;
 - (b) political or immigration status;
 - (c) gender;
 - (d) age;

- (e) health or ability; and
- (f) behaviour.

- 1.5 The safety, needs, welfare and rights of the children should always come first and should be the primary concern in working with children and families.
- 1.6 All relevant parties should collaborate and share the responsibility for protection of children at relevant stages of case development with the involvement of the children and significant others.
- 1.7 Any symptom or report of suspected child abuse must be taken seriously and investigation should be conducted as soon as possible.
- 1.8 To avoid requiring the children to describe the suspected abuse incident(s) repeatedly, the number of investigative / assessment interview on the suspected abuse incident(s) should be kept to a minimum. Face-to-face contacts with the children should be conducted and relevant information should be collected from sources other than the suspected abusers wherever applicable to ascertain the condition of the children.
- 1.9 Where necessary, the information collected with regard to the suspected abuse incident(s) should be shared with other concerned parties as soon as possible to ensure effective protection of the children. The Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance, Cap 486 provides specific exemption for collection of data and transfer of information under Part VIII of the Ordinance (refer to Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance, Cap 486 for details).
- 1.10 The children's participation should be encouraged and their voices should be heard at different stages including investigation and assessment. Their wishes and feelings must be explored and attended to in formulating welfare plans. However, care must be exercised to strike a balance between safety and the preference of the children.
- 1.11 While serving the best interest of children, consideration should be given to assist the families and the children's significant others to protect the children. In the formulation of welfare plans for the children, the views of the parents / guardians / significant others should be sought and should be taken into account. The parents / carers' co-operation and capability to protect the children should also be considered. However, risk assessment has to be conducted irrespective of the severity of the abuse. Statutory protection under the Protection of Children and Juveniles Ordinance, Cap 213 should be sought whenever situation warrants, including removal of the children to a place of safety.

