

Guidelines on Prevention and Management of Missing Mentally Handicapped Persons Incidents

- I. Prevention measures on missing mentally handicapped persons
 1. For parents:
 - a. Do not confine your mentally handicapped children at home just for fear that they may get lost. You should help them to familiarize with your home vicinity and acquaint them with the way home. They should be trained to get help from passers-by or the police in case they get lost.
 - b. Mentally handicapped persons capable of verbal communication can be trained to converse with others to enhance their ability to communicate with others or answer questions.
 - c. Let the mentally handicapped persons choose and wear their favorite hand strings, necklaces, or keyholders which bear their simple personal information. It would be better if these items are of interest to them so that they are more ready to wear. Besides, the habit of wearing these items might be fostered from their early years.
 - d. Encourage the mentally handicapped persons to bring their bags or backpacks when going out. Put in the bags/backpacks copies of their Hong Kong Identity Cards, Registration Cards for People with Disabilities and other emergency contacts.
 - e. Put the mentally handicapped persons' name and emergency contact information inside the collar or sleeves of their clothes.
 - f. Keep an eye on the mentally handicapped persons when going out with them and pay attention to where they go and what they do.
 - g. Remind the mentally handicapped persons that in case they get lost with their family, stay where they are and not to wander around.
 2. For rehabilitation service units:
 - a. Maintain updated personal information record of service users including height, weight, description on their physical appearance and their recent photos, such that others can get hold of their personal characteristics in case they went missing.
 - b. Keep for handy reference the emergency contact information of the service users' family and telephone and fax number of police station, major transport facilities like MTR and KMB, management offices of major buildings and shopping malls, and major electronic mass media, to facilitate timely contact and notification whenever necessary.
 - c. Draw up contingency plan on handling of missing of service users. Prepare search maps according to local situation, guidelines for staff on searching and duty list for individual staff and transport arrangement such as centre vehicles or hiring taxi for searching, etc. so that prompt response can be made.
 - d. Rehabilitation service units should include in their daily training routines ways to reinforce their service users' ability to respond to situations in case they get lost,

such as to express verbally or write information of their own or the names of the service units, to make phone calls or seek help from passers-by and police, or to show items that can prove their identity, etc.

II. Management measures on missing incidents of mentally handicapped person for family members rehabilitation service units

1. If the missing person cannot be located upon preliminary search, the case should be reported to the police immediately. It is not necessary to wait for 24 hours to make the missing report. Assistance from electronic mass media can also be enlisted to appeal to the public for locating the missing person.
2. If the mentally handicapped person is found missing in rehabilitation service unit, the following measures could be adopted:
 - a. check whether the major entrances and exits are properly closed;
 - b. count the number of service users to verify the number and identity of person(s) missing;
 - c. search all the rooms and area of the centre/hostel under the charge of the responsible officer;
 - d. arrange staff to search according to the search map, and contact the family members, major public transport facilities and management offices of major buildings and shopping malls in the district to assist in the search if the missing persons is not found in the centre/hostel;
 - e. during the search, the rehabilitation service unit should have staff stationing in the centre for contact and care of other service users;
 - f. in case the missing person cannot be found upon preliminary search, the centre-in-charge should, with the consent of family member, report to the police promptly with relevant information of the service user; and
 - g. inform the centre-in-charge immediately, and inform the police, the family members and other staff or service units assisting in the search as soon as possible after locating the service users.

III. Areas of attention for the public in case a suspected missing mentally handicapped person is met.

1. Try to communicate with the suspected missing mentally handicapped person and understand his/her situation. Use simple, clear language with affirmative, warm and caring tone, coupled with facial expressions, signs and gestures (e.g. nodding, smile) to comfort and pacify him/her, telling him/her that you would offer help in locating his/her family member(s), and tell him/her not to wander around.
2. Try to give him/her paper and pencil and see whether he/she can write his/her own name and address. Let him/her make a phone call and see whether he/she can contact the family member(s).

3. By simple observation, look for any possible traits for identification such as hand strings, necklaces, name tags or keyholders, etc. Do not search his/her carry bag or backpack without prior consent. Do not have physical contact with him/her if he/she is emotionally unstable or in a panic state.
 4. Do not give up and leave if you are not able to communicate with him/her. Seek help from others and notify the police as soon as possible. Do not let him/her go before the police arrives.
- IV. Rehabilitation service units may refer to sections I and II for formulating guidelines for handling missing service users with other disabilities.

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