

保護兒童 你我有責

兒童的成長和發展需要父母和照顧者的愛護，以及適當的照顧和管教。當父母或照顧者對兒童的身心安全或健康構成傷害或忽略，兒童會受到負面的影響，這些影響往往會較受其他人所造成的傷害為大。在生理方面，受傷害／虐待的兒童除了身體受傷外，身體機能和智力發展都會受到不同程度的傷害，嚴重的甚至會死亡。在心理社交方面，兒童的行為、情緒、思想及人際關係等會出現問題，這些問題若得不到適當處理，會對兒童造成創傷，亦有可能影響他們日後照顧及管教子女的模式，把問題延及下一代。

保護兒童免受傷害／虐待既是兒童的權利，亦是兒童的父母／監護人、照顧者和社會的責任。不論兒童的性別、年齡、種族、語言、宗教、居港身份、健康狀況、能力或行為，父母及各界都應盡力保障兒童的身心安全，預防虐兒問題的出現。

何謂虐待兒童

廣泛而言，虐待兒童是指對十八歲以下人士作出／不作出某行為以致兒童的身心健康發展受危害或損害。

虐待兒童是有人利用本身與兒童之間權力差異的特殊地位（例如年齡、身分、知識、組織形式）使兒童處於一個易受傷害的境況。他們是對兒童有照顧或管教的責任，或按地位／身分已擁有照顧或管教兒童的角色。在性侵犯兒童個案中，亦包括其他兒童認識或不認識但與兒童之間有權力差異的人，這些人可能是成年人或未成年人士。

傷害／虐待行為的類別

（一）身體傷害／虐待

指對兒童使用暴力或以其他方式令兒童身體受傷或痛苦（例如拳打腳踢、以物件擊打、下毒、使窒息、灼傷、搖盪嬰兒或照顧者假裝兒童生病求醫等），而且有明確的資料可以肯定或合理地懷疑這些傷害並非意外造成的。

（二）性侵犯

- 指強逼或誘使兒童參與性活動，以對兒童作出性方面的利用或侵犯，而兒童並不同意或因心智發展未成熟而不能完全明白或理解發生在他／她身上的這些性活動。
- 這些性活動包括與兒童有或沒有直接身體接觸的行為（例如強姦、口交、促使兒童為他人手淫／展示其性器官、製作色情物品等）。
- 性侵犯包括以獎賞或其他方式引誘兒童加以侵犯，亦包括有計劃地透過不同方法（例如藉流動電話或互聯網與兒童通訊）與兒童建立關係及／或情感聯繫，以博取兒童的信任，意圖對他們作出性侵犯。
- 少年人自願或同意與他人進行性活動亦有可能是有人利用本身與少年人之間的權力差異或特殊地位而對少年人在性方面作出利用。

（三）疏忽照顧

指嚴重或重複地忽視兒童的基本需要，以致危害或損害兒童的健康或發展。疏忽照顧可以由下列不同的形式造成：

- 身體方面（包括沒有給予兒童必需的飲食／衣服／住所、沒有避免兒童身體受傷／受痛苦、缺乏適當看管兒童、獨留年幼兒童不顧、沒有適當儲存危險藥物或讓兒童身處吸食危險藥物的環境以致兒童誤服／吸入危險藥物）；或
- 醫療方面（包括沒有讓兒童接受必須的醫療或精神治療）；或
- 教育方面（包括沒有讓兒童接受教育，或忽視因兒童的殘疾而引起的教育／訓練需要）。

（四）心理傷害／虐待

指危害或損害兒童身心健康（包括兒童的情緒、認知、社交或身體發展）的重複的行為及／或照顧者與兒童之間的相處模式；或單一的極端事件。

怎樣協助受傷害／虐待的兒童和傷害／虐待兒童的人？

- 當懷疑兒童身心安全受到威脅或傷害，必須認真看待事件，盡早了解情況及求助。
- 受傷害／虐待的兒童可能擔心透露事件的後果，有些少數族裔兒童受其文化背景影響亦會顯得退縮或不願意透露事件。如兒童表露有任何擔憂或困擾，應盡量明白兒童的感受，協助兒童釋懷，亦要幫助兒童明白透露事件對協助他／她避免再受傷害的重要性，鼓勵兒童把事件說出來。
- 傷害／虐待兒童的人不一定會意識到自己的行為可能有問題，即使意識到也往往無法控制該行為，或未必會主動尋求協助，認識他們的人可鼓勵他們及早求助。
- 任何人或家庭都會遇到大大小小的問題，而傷害／虐待兒童可能只是個人或家庭問題的徵兆。要知道所有困難總有解決的方法。受傷害／虐待的兒童和傷害／虐待兒童的人同樣需要專業人士的協助，以處理他們面對的各種困難。
- 希望每個關心兒童成長的人都能積極地提高對傷害／虐待兒童問題的警覺性，並正視這問題的嚴重性和深遠影響。
- 若發現或懷疑兒童受傷害／虐待，應盡早聯絡有關機構或社會福利署熱線（電話號碼：2343 2255）或各區的保護家庭及兒童服務課。

Child Protection - We All Have a Duty



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The growth and development of children requires the love of their parents and carers as well as appropriate care and discipline. If children's physical and psychological safety or health is jeopardised or neglected by their parents or carers, it will have adverse effects on the children. These effects will usually bring greater harm to the children than those brought about by other people. Physiologically, children being harmed/maltreated will suffer not only from physical injuries but also different degree of harm in body functions and intellectual development which may even result in death in serious cases. Psychologically and socially speaking, problems will arise with the children's behaviour, emotions, perceptions and interpersonal relationship. If these problems are not properly dealt with, they may lead to trauma to the children and may also affect their parenting and child discipline mode posing potential problems to the next generation.

Protecting the children from harm/maltreatment are not only children's rights but also the responsibilities of their parents/guardians, carers and the society. Regardless of children's gender, age, race, language, religion, status of residence, health condition, capability or behaviour, parents and all sectors should ensure children's physical and psychological safety as far as practicable for prevention of child maltreatment.

What is Child Maltreatment

In a broad sense, child maltreatment is defined as any act of commission or omission that endangers or impairs the physical/psychological health and development of an individual under the age of 18.

Child maltreatment is committed by individuals who by their characteristics (e.g. age, status, knowledge, organisational form) are in a position of differential power that renders a child vulnerable. They are responsible for the care or supervision of the child, or play a role in the care or supervision of the child owing to their statuses/identities. In child sexual abuse cases, they also include other individuals who are in a position of differential power to the child. These individuals, who may be known or unknown to the child, can be either adults or minors.

Types of Harm/Maltreatment

(1) Physical Harm/Abuse

Refers to physical injury or suffering inflicted on a child by violent or other means (e.g. punching, kicking, striking with an object, poisoning, suffocation, burning, shaking an infant or Factitious Disorder Imposed on Another), where there is a definite knowledge, or a reasonable suspicion that the injury has been inflicted non-accidentally.

(2) Sexual Abuse

- Refers to forcing or enticing a child to take part in any acts of sexual activity for sexual exploitation or abuse and the child does not consent to or fully understand or comprehend this sexual activity that occurs to him or her due to mental immaturity.
- This sexual activity includes behaviours that have or do not have direct physical contact with children (e.g. rape, oral sex, procuring a child to masturbate others/exposing his/her sexual organs, production of pornographic material, etc.).
- Sexual abuse includes luring a child through rewards or other means, also including designedly establishing relationship and/or emotional connections with the child by various means for gaining his/her trust with an intent to sexually abuse him/her (e.g. communication with a child through mobile phone or the Internet).
- Consensual sexual activity between an adolescent and another person may also involve sexual exploitation by a person whose characteristics are in a position of differential power to the adolescent.

(3) Neglect

Refers to a severe or repeated pattern of lack of attention to a child's basic needs that endangers or impairs the child's health or development. Neglect may be caused by the following forms:

- (a) Physical (includes failure to provide necessary food/clothing/shelter, failure to prevent physical injury/suffering, lack of appropriate supervision, leaving a young child unattended, improper storage of dangerous drugs resulting in accidental ingestion by a child or allowing a child to stay in a drug-taking environment resulting in inhaling of the dangerous drugs by a child); or
- (b) Medical (includes failure to provide necessary medical or mental health treatment to a child); or
- (c) Educational (includes failure to provide education or ignoring the educational/training needs arising from a child's disability).

(4) Psychological Harm/Abuse

Refers to a repeated pattern of behaviour and/or interaction between carer and child, or an extreme incident that endanger(s) or impair(s) the child's physical and psychological health (including emotional, cognitive, social and physical development).

What can we do to help the child being harmed/maltreated and the perpetrator?

- Where it is suspected that a child's physical and psychological safety is threatened or harmed, it must be taken seriously by exploring the situation and asking for assistance as early as possible.
- The child having been harmed/maltreated may worry about the consequences of disclosing the incident. Some children of ethnic minorities may also appear withdrawn or reluctant in disclosing the incident as being influenced by their cultural background. If the child expresses any worries or anxieties, his/her feelings should be understood and assistance should be given to him/her as far as possible to ease his/her worries. The child should also be encouraged to disclose the incident by helping him/her understand the importance of disclosure in preventing him/her from being further harmed.
- The perpetrators do not necessarily realise that they may have problems with their behavior. Even when they are aware of the problem, they are often unable to control it or may not necessarily seek help. People who know them may encourage them to seek help as early as possible.
- Any individuals or families have problems of large or small scale. Harming/maltreating a child might be a sign of personal or family problems. Knowing that there is always a solution to every difficulty, child being harmed/maltreated and the perpetrator are equally in need of professional assistance to deal with the difficulties they face.
- It is hoped that everyone who cares about the development of children will be able to actively raise the awareness of the problem of harming/maltreating children and attend to the seriousness and far-reaching impact of the problem.
- If a child is found to be harmed/maltreated, please contact the concerned organisation or the Social Welfare Department Hotline (Tel: 2343 2255) or Family and Child Protective Services Unit of respective district as soon as possible.

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