

Critical appraisal of children & youth health in child care facilities & correctional institutes

Press Conference

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**THE HONG KONG
PAEDIATRIC SOCIETY**



**THE HONG KONG
PAEDIATRIC FOUNDATION**



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About The Hong Kong Paediatric Society & The Hong Kong Paediatric Foundation



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Dr. CHAN Chok Wan
Chairman of Board of Directors of
Hong Kong Paediatric Foundation,
Past President of the
International Pediatric Association (IPA)



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The Hong Kong Paediatric Society



- Established in 1962
- Key members are paediatricians and healthcare professionals
- Dedicated to
 - advance the knowledge of child health care
 - maintain high standard of child health care
 - promote child health through public education
 - foster children's right



The Hong Kong Paediatric Foundation



- Established in 1994
- A charitable organization wholly owned by the Hong Kong Paediatric Society
- Primary members include child health professionals from intersectoral domains and community celebrities
- Dedicated to the promotion of child health and child advocacy through public education





Thousands of children and youth living in child care facilities and correctional institutes in Hong Kong

*Deprived of family support,
far away from familiarized environment,
the juvenile inmates are physically and emotionally vulnerable.*

Without addressing their needs properly, the physical and mental development of children and youth may be largely affected which could lead to other social problems

Ref:

1.Social Welfare Services in Figures, 2016 Edition. Social Welfare Department. http://www.swd.gov.hk/doc/res_stat/swdfig2016.pdf
2.2016 Statistics, Hong Kong Correctional Services. http://www.csd.gov.hk/english/pub/apc_leaflet.html



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The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)

Article 3(1)

▪ all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, *the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.*

Article 40(1)

▪ States Parties recognize *the right of every child alleged as, accused of, or recognized* as having infringed the penal law to be treated in a manner consistent with the promotion of the child's sense of dignity and worth, which reinforces the child's respect for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of others and which takes into account the child's age and the desirability of promoting the child's reintegration and the child's assuming a constructive role in society.



**The Rights of All Children & Youth
Shall be Protected**



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As the advocate of child health

The Hong Kong Paediatric Society and the Hong Kong Paediatric Foundation not only concern about the wellbeing of children at home or in the community,

but also care about the rights and health status of children under special situations (those living in child care facilities and juvenile correctional institutes)





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The Surveillance Group of the Child Health Policy for Hong Kong

- A professional panel review was conducted in Sep 2017.
- The panel comprised more than 10 child health professionals of various sectors including paediatricians, paediatric nurses, educators, clinical psychologist, legal experts and social workers.
- The panel conducted a systematic review on the health challenges of children and young people under special situations.

The key issue: to review if their health needs have been properly addressed under the current system



The basic principles of the expert panel

- Child health focused
- Social justice
- The best interest of children and youngsters as the first priority
- Enable juvenile inmates to resume their normal lives when they return to the community and their families



Critical appraisal of children & youth health in child care facilities & correctional institutes



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Dr. Wong Hiu Lei, Lilian
Secretary General, Hong Kong Paediatric Foundation
and Past President of Hong Kong Paediatric Society



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Health challenges of juveniles at child care facilities

- 35-45% with chronic or untreated physical health condition at admission

- Children and youngsters come from broken family, or the children with behavior or emotional problems
- International study indicated that children at admission to child care facilities,
 - 35-45% with chronic or untreated physical health condition
 - 40-95% suffer from mental health problem

TABLE 1 Health Problems at Entry to Foster Care⁴¹

Problem or Condition	%
Chronic or untreated physical health condition	35–45
Birth defect	15
Mental health problem	40–95
Developmental/educational:	
Developmental delay in child <5 y	60
Special education placement/academic underachievement	45
Significant dental conditions ^a	20
Family problems ^b	100
Reproductive health issue risks (eg, pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections)	100

^a Data are from Starlight Pediatrics, personal communication. Sangeeta Gajendra, DDS, MPH, Eastman School of Dentistry, Clinical Chief of Community Dentistry, Rochester NY, 2002.

^b By definition, because that is why they are in foster care.



Youth inmates under custody

- 30-39% with physical health concerns
- 33-41% with mental health concerns
- 45-50% with substance misuse
- 31-63% with suicide or self-harm risks

Key characteristics of children and young people entering youth custody

Admissions characteristics can vary considerably depending on whether the offender is male or female.



Ref:

Key characteristics of admissions to youth custody: April 2014 to March 2016, which was published alongside the Youth Justice annual statistics: 2015 to 2016 and available online at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/youth-justice-statistics-2015-to-2016>.



45-81% juvenile inmates suffer from mental health disorder

TABLE 6 Estimated Rates of Mental Health Disorders in Incarcerated Youth From Studies Conducted Between 1995 and 2006^{49,50,52,53}

Disorder	Rate Males %	Rate Females %
Any mental health disorder	45–69	50–81
Any mood disorder	6–19	13–29
Major depressive	5–13	11–22
Any anxiety disorder ^a	17–26	29–56
Generalized anxiety	2–7	3–7
Panic disorder	0.3–5	2–3
Obsessive compulsive	5–8	6–11
Separation anxiety disorder ^b	13–25	19–33
Any disruptive behavior ^c	20–45	20–51
ADHD	1–17	0.5–21
Oppositional-defiant	3–15	11–18
Conduct disorder	18–38	17–41
Any substance abuse	26–51	22–55

Ref:

1. Health Care for Youth in the Juvenile Justice System Policy Statement, American Academy of Pediatrics



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Higher physical and mental health risk of youngsters in the child health facilities and correctional system

1. Youth in the child care institutes and juvenile correctional system have **higher health risks** due to their previous exposure to **high risk behavior** such as substance misuse, premature sex and violence. They are at **higher risk** of developing **epilepsy , respiratory diseases and malnutrition** than their counterparts in the general population.
2. Study indicated that **45-81% youth inmates suffering from mental health disorder**
3. They have higher risk of **suicide or self-harm**
4. If the underlying causes are not properly addressed, the problems may aggregate resulting in severe and long term consequences.



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**What are the health concerns
of children in child care facilities and
juvenile inmates in Hong Kong?**



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#1. No systemic health check-up at the child health facilities and correctional institutes

- A comprehensive screening will help to provide timely intervention which could prevent serious complications.
- Health education during detention period can improve future health prognosis of young inmates.
- However, there is **no systemic health screening and mental health assessment** for the children and juvenile inmates at the special situations.
- Their health risks may be unnoticed until the situation getting worse and leading to long term consequences.

Ref:

1. Health Care for Youth in the Juvenile Justice System Policy Statement, American Academy of Pediatrics



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#2. No education or training opportunity for six months to three years during the trial or unsentenced period

- For severe cases, the Young Offender Assessment Panel (YOAP), which is a special board jointly set up by the Correctional Services Department (CSD) and the Social Welfare Department (SWD)
 - will provide professional views to magistrates/ judges in the sentencing.¹
- It may take **6 months to 3 years** for the report.
- Youth in detention has **no education or vocational training** during the trial or unsentenced period.
- Losing the rights for education and increasing risks of developing other physical and mental illnesses.

Ref:

1. Youth Offender Assessment Panel, Hong Kong Correctional Services.

http://www.csd.gov.hk/english/reh/reh_overview/reh_overview_assessment/reh_over_yoap.html



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#3. “Punishment” and “Correction” – not tackle the root causes

- “Punishment” and “Correction” is the basic philosophy of the correctional service in Hong Kong.
- Though there is “reward system” in juvenile correctional institutes, the **motivation** of the crime committed and the **underlying problems** have not been addressed.



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- 1. How to protect the health needs of children and youth in special situations?**
- 2. Are there any better options of rehabilitation for youth inmates other than imposing penalty or correctional measures?**



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Early intervention to support children and young people before the break point

Youth Justice emphasizes on **rehabilitation and treatment** rather than **punishment**.

Children and youth in child care facilities and correctional institutes should have the **same quality of support** as those living in families and community.

We need to have early intervention and support to children and young people before the break point.

Ref:

1. NHS: Securing Excellence in Commissioning for Offender Health Feb 2013



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1. For all children and youth under special situations

Health focus with early intervention

- children and youngsters are facing new health challenges nowadays (behaviour and mental problems)
- identification of risk factors and early intervention are crucial to children and young people in special situations.



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Recommendations – Health Aspects

1. Health check up
 - In the first 48 hours of detention
 - To exclude emergencies and infectious diseases
 - To assess the need for continuous use of drugs
 - Within one week after arriving at the institutes
 - A full health check-up and psychiatric assessment
 - Screening for sexually transmitted diseases for sexually active young people

2. Provide appropriate and adequate health care resources for inmates in child health facilities and correctional institutes

3. Ensure the emergency, acute and chronic physical and mental care and dental care for children and juvenile inmates



Recommendations – Health Aspects

4. Provide mental health services

- ❑ Timely care of acute and chronic mental illness and emotional conditions
- ❑ Screening of suicide risk and taking appropriate preventive measures
- ❑ For those taking psychiatric drugs, prompt psychological assessment and evaluation on the need for continuous use of drugs

5. Regular assessment of the safety of the activities of detainees

- ❑ Exercise program in hot weather
- ❑ Safety of water sports and climbing equipment
- ❑ Use of physical restraints and violence

6. Provide health education to reduce future health risks



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2. For youth inmates under correctional institutes Need A Conceptual Change to adopt “Youth Justice”

- “Youth Justice” is the new approach widely adopted in USA, Australia and Europe in recent years
 - Try to *identify the motivation of the crime committed*
 - Ascertain *the risk factors*
 - *Solve the root causes*
 - *Build up the resilience of young people*
 - Help young inmates to understand their responsibility of the offensive act and the impact on victims
 - Provide guidance and supervision to inmates in order to **prevent** them from committing the same crime again
 - *Focus on the wellbeing and health of the young inmates*
 - *Improve the communication between inmates and staff*



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Recommendation - A Conceptual Change in Correctional System for Youth

1. Address the consequences of their offense with with the goal on treatment and rehabilitation

- ❑ based on the developmental characteristics of children and youth
- ❑ based on children's rights
- ❑ giving young people a chance to renew their life

2. Ensure youth in detention under the trial or unsentenced period to enjoy education and vocational training opportunity



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Recommendation - A Conceptual Change in Correctional System for Youth

3. Establish an independent complaint mechanism

- ❑ To take care of feedback and complaints
- ❑ To improve communication between young inmates and correctional staff
- ❑ To ensure it is open and transparent

4. Strengthen the follow-up of young people after release

- ❑ To partner with community youth agencies
- ❑ To build up resilience of young people and help them to restore their normal life



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Other Recommendations

1. Ensure the babies born in prison by female inmates to have healthy growth and development
 - ❑ Facilitate the babies to enjoy the same rights as other children including the opportunity of breastfeeding and continuous maternal bonding
 - ❑ Collaborate with social welfare organizations to ensure the babies have appropriate developmental support and care.



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How to safeguard the right and health of the children in special situations and juvenile inmates?



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The Underlying Problem:
The government policies has been using
piece-meal strategies in tackling the issues of
children and youth

**The Government will ignore the issues if
there are no public noises**



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The government only takes care of children and youth problem when there complaints. And when the complaints subsides, the matter will be put aside

Lead in Water



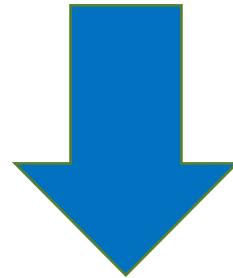
Students
suicide



Binge
drinking



Without a comprehensive Child Health Policy for Hong Kong



**The interest of children has never been the
priority in government policy**



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Effective Solution

Establish the **Child Health Policy** ASAP



Appoint a **Children's Commissioner**
to lead the independent **Children's Commission**

To supervise and evaluate the implementation of
the **Child Health Policy**



For the best interests of children

1. Establish the Child Health Policy for Hong Kong

- Implement with a clear timetable & roadmap

2. Appoint a Children's Commissioner to lead the Children's Commission

- With resources and power
- With regular evaluation to ensure effective implementation of the policies (e.g. conceptual change of correctional system for juvenile inmates)
- Report to the Chief Executive of HKSAR directly
- Coordinate the bureaus and departments
- Child-focused



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Improve Child Health
Advocate Children's Right

“Strike for the right of every child”

<http://hkpf.org.hk/tc/home/>

<http://www.medicine.org.hk/hkps/>