

Ying Wa Girls' School

Guidelines on the Unified Mechanism and

Procedures for Reporting Suspected Child Abuse or Serious Harm

Introduction

The Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse Ordinance (hereinafter referred to as “the Ordinance”) will come into effect on 20 January 2026. The Ordinance stipulates that designated professionals (including teachers) who, in the course of their work, have reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is “being seriously harmed” or “facing a real risk of being seriously harmed” must, as far as practicable, make a report as soon as possible to their supervisor (the school principal), the Police, or the Social Welfare Department. The Ordinance provides legal protection and statutory immunity for designated professionals who make such reports.

A. Basis and Purpose of the Unified Reporting Mechanism and Procedures Guidelines

This guideline is for the reference of schools only, and each school may make amendments as appropriate to suit its own circumstances. The guidelines are prepared with reference to the Guide for Mandated Reporters (“the Guide”) and the Education Bureau’s School Administration Manual. Its purpose is to provide staff members with a simple and easy-to-read working reference. However, the Ordinance and the Guide involve complex concepts and procedures. Staff should attend the training provided by the Government and read the Guide carefully when necessary. If any part of this set of guidelines fails to cover, or even conflicts with, the contents of the Ordinance or the Guide, the provisions of the Ordinance and the Guide shall prevail. The links to the online course, the Ordinance, and the Guide are provided in the section “References.”

B. Scope and Definitions under the Ordinance

The following is intended to provide staff with simplified and easily understood concepts. Detailed definitions should be referred to in the Guide.

1. Scope of the Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse Ordinance

1.1. Physical Abuse

Any injury that endangers a child’s life or physical health and requires urgent medical attention, including:

1.1.1. Loss of any limb or loss of limb function;

1.1.2. Loss of sight or hearing;

1.1.3. Internal organ injury, fracture, surface burns, damage to nerves, muscles, or tendons, or

injury resulting in heavy bleeding;

1.1.4. Bodily injury resulting in loss or impairment of consciousness.

1.2. Psychological Abuse

Any injury that endangers a child's psychological health or development, such as causing mental disorder or long-term psychological trauma.

1.3. Sexual Assault

Any harm caused by coercing or inducing a child to engage in acts such as rape, incest, anal intercourse, sexual intercourse, or serious indecent assault.

1.4. Neglect

Any harm caused by neglect on the part of a person responsible for a child that endangers the child's life or health, such as failure to provide essentials necessary to sustain life or health, or placing the child in situations or environments that endanger the child's life or health.

2. Definitions

2.1. "Child" means a person under the age of 18.

2.2. Serious Harm

Mandated reporters have a statutory duty to report suspected cases of serious harm to a child. Serious harm refers to the injuries prescribed in Schedule 2 to the Ordinance, which lists four categories covering physical abuse, psychological abuse, sexual assault, and neglect, and specifies the elements constituting "serious harm." Please refer to Annex 3 of the Guide.

2.3. Child Abuse

2.3.1. Broad Definition

Abuse refers to acts or acts of omissions towards a person under the age of 18 that harm or endanger the physical or mental health or development of the child. Child abuse occurs when a person (individually or collectively) exploits their special position of power over a child (for example, in terms of age, identity, knowledge, or organisational structure), thereby placing the child in a vulnerable situation. Perpetrators of child abuse are not limited to parents or guardians, but can include anyone entrusted with a child's care or discipline, or who, by virtue of status or position, has a role in caring for or disciplining the child—such as relatives, teachers, child caretakers and elders. In cases of child sexual assault, it may also include adults or other children known or unknown to the victim but who hold a position of power over them. The purpose of this broad definition is to protect the best interests of the child by preventing harm, identifying at-risk families early, and protecting the safety of children who have been or are suspected of being harmed. As cases vary individually, there is no rigid standard to follow. Staff should assess each case individually, focusing primarily

on the harm caused or likely to be caused to the child's physical and mental health and development, rather than on whether the perpetrator intended to cause harm.

2.3.2. Categories of Child Abuse

a. Physical Injury / Abuse

The use of violence or other means that cause injury or pain to a child (e.g. punching, kicking, striking with objects and burning), where there is clear information indicating or reasonably suggesting that such injuries were not caused by accident.

b. Sexual Assault

Coercing or inducing a child to engage in sexual activity for sexual exploitation or violation, where the child does not consent or, due to immaturity of mind, cannot fully understand or comprehend the sexual acts taking place. Such acts include both physical and non-physical sexual activities. Sexual assault may occur at home or elsewhere, and may also take place through online platforms, either individually or in organised forms. It includes inducement by reward or other means, and the grooming of children for sexual purposes—i.e. systematically building relationships and/or emotional connections through various methods (such as via mobile phones or the Internet) to gain the child's trust with intent to commit sexual assault.

c. Neglect

Serious or repeated neglect of a child's basic needs that endangers or impairs the child's health or development. Neglect may take place in various aspects:

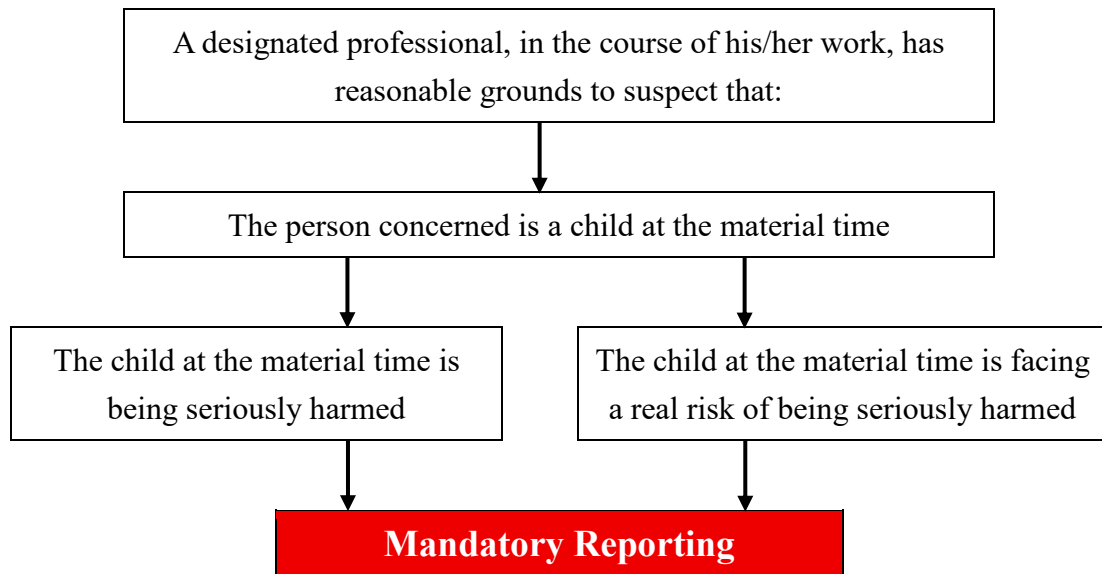
- Physical aspect: Failure to provide adequate food, clothing, or shelter; failure to prevent physical injury or suffering; lack of proper supervision; leaving a young child unattended; unsafe storage of hazardous substances leading to accidental ingestion or exposure to dangerous drugs.
- Medical aspect: Failure to provide necessary medical or mental health treatment.
- Educational aspect: Failure to provide education or to address the educational or training needs arising from a child's disability.

d. Psychological Injury / Abuse

Repeated behaviours and/or patterns of interaction between a caregiver and a child—or extreme incidents—that harm or impair the child's mental or physical health, including emotional, cognitive, social, or physical development.

C. Reporting Procedures

Flowchart 1: When a Mandatory Report Must Be Made

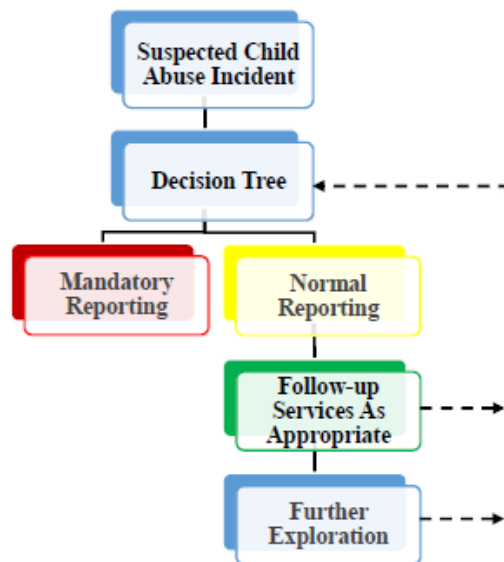


Note:

According to Section 4(1) of the *Ordinance*, if a designated professional has reasonable grounds to suspect that a child at the material time is being seriously harmed or is facing a real risk of being seriously harmed, the professional must make a mandatory report.

Sections 4(2)(a), (b), (c), and (d) of the *Ordinance* specify the exemptions from the reporting duty. For details, please refer to Section 1.3.4(b) of the *Guide for Mandated Reporters*.

Flowchart 2: Inter-relationship of Decision Points



The Decision Flowchart and Supporting Analytical Framework are designed for various categories of abuse or neglect — namely physical abuse, psychological abuse, sexual assault, and neglect — to serve as reference tools for mandated reporters when making reporting decisions based on comprehensive analysis and professional judgment.

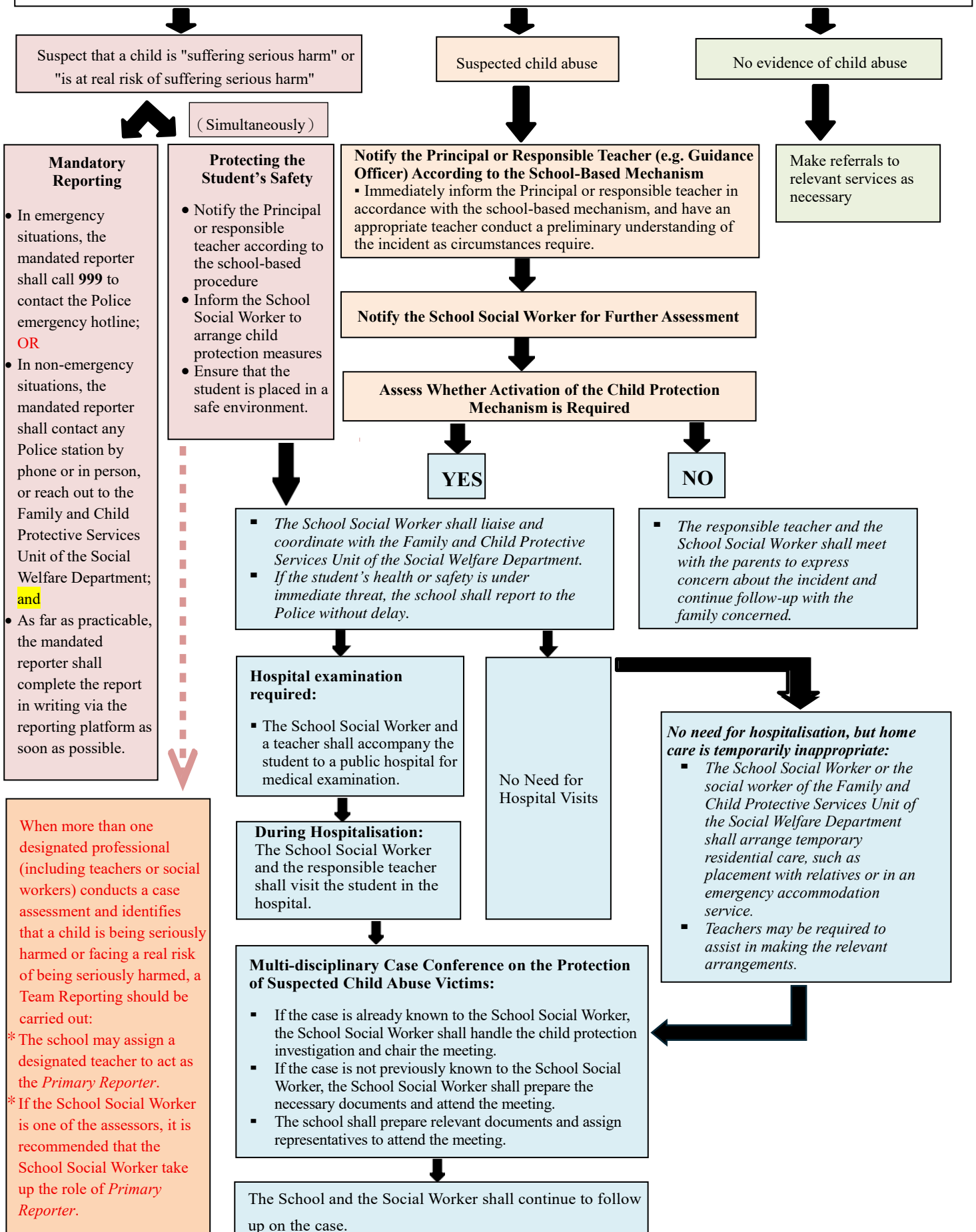
Mandated reporters **are not required** to use the Decision Flowchart before making a report. **If a child is being seriously harmed or facing a real risk of being seriously harmed, a mandatory report should be made immediately.**

Identification of incidents and initial assessment*

If a teacher or designated professional in the school learns of an incident or discovers physical or behavioral signs of abuse in a student*

Refer to "Definition and Types of Child Abuse" in Chapter 2 of the "Procedural Guidelines"

*Refer to Appendix 2 of the Mandatory Reporters' Guide – Serious Harm²



References

- Online Course on Child Protection
<https://www.childprotectiontraining.hk/>
- Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse Ordinance
<https://www.elegislation.gov.hk/hk/2024/23!zh-hant-hk>
- Guide for Mandated Reporters
https://lwfiles.mycourse.app/630f91fe70e7826017235e0f-public/publicFiles/20250718%20Guide%20for%20Mandated%20Reporters_Chi_Full%20Version.pdf
- Protecting Children from Maltreatment - Procedural Guide for Multi-disciplinary Co-operation
https://www.swd.gov.hk/tc/pubsvc/family/fcw_info/fcwprocedure/fcwp_mdco/