

CHILDREN AND YOUTH SOCIAL SERVICES IN HONG KONG

Background Information

- According to the statistics released by the Census and Statistics Department at the Mid-2008, there were 1,806,400 young persons aged 0-24 (25.9% of total population) in Hong Kong. When compared with the figure in 1991, the children and youth population had dropped from 36.1% of total population to 25.9%. Refer to the government projection, in 2033, the population of 0-24 age group will further drop to 1,659,800, only 19.8% of the total population.

Age Group	2001	2004	2006	2008
0-14	1,109,417 (16.5%)	1,025,200 (14.9%)	939,200 (13.7%)	902,300 (12.9%)
15-24	920,445 (13.7%)	900,200 (13%)	908,600 (13.3%)	904,100 (13%)
Total	2,029,862 (30.2%)	1,925,400 (27.9%)	1,847,800 (27.0%)	1,806,400 (25.9%)

- School attendance rates of 3 – 16 age group is over 97%, while aged 17-18 is 71%. When compared with the figures in 1991, the rates for the former age group were similar and yet there was an increase of 13% for the latter age group. Education and Manpower Bureau announced that in 2005/06 academic year, the number of students attending primary and secondary school were 425,864 and 478,440 respectively (44.7% and 44.9% of youth population). While the school dropout rate of 6-15 age group was 0.186% (1,200).
- According to the latest labor force statistics released by the Census and Statistics Department, in February to April 2009, the overall number of labor force is 3,502,100 and the unemployment rate is 5.3%. The unemployment rate of aged 15 –24 and age 15 –19 is 9.6% and 18.3% respectively, that is two and three times higher than the total unemployment rate.
- According to the registration record for using psychiatric outpatient clinic, age group of 6 to 12 and 13 to 19 in 2006/07 are 4,840 and 4,673 respectively. In comparing with the figures in 2001/02, they had increased by 56% and 32 % respectively in the past six years.

Children and Youth Services

The objective of children and youth service in Hong Kong is to provide opportunities, counseling service and support for young persons who are with different abilities and facing different situations, so that they may develop their potentials, actualize their ideals, prepare for adulthood, and become mature and contributing members of our society. The focus of work can be concluded in the following three directions:

- Enhance their capacities and foster harmonious interpersonal relationship;
- Promote volunteerism and enhance their commitment to the community and one's country;
- Provide support to disadvantaged youth and young persons in need.

Service Types	Services Provided	Accommodation
Crèche and Nursery	Child care and education services are provided for those who are aged 0-3. Some crèches and nurseries will provide occasional child care service or extended hours service when necessary. Services for age 3-6 are arranged and coordinated by Education And Manpower Bureau after harmonization.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 30,078 places
Residential Child Care Services	Services are provided for children and young persons under the age of 21 who cannot be adequately cared for by their families because of various reasons such as behavioral, emotional or family problems. Institutional care and non-institutional care are available.	
	Non-institutional care includes:(as at 1 April 2009) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Foster care - for children under 18 years of age ▪ Emergency Foster Care Service (Below 18) ▪ Small group homes for children from 4 to 18 years of age ▪ Emergency/Short term Small Group Home for Age 4 to 18 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 875 places ▪ 75 places ▪ 864 places ▪ 22 places
	Institutional care includes:(as at 1 April 2009) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Residential crèches and nurseries - for babies to children under 6 ▪ Children's reception centres - for children aged under 18 years of age whose families are facing emergency ▪ Children's homes - for those who are aged 6-21 ▪ Boys' / girls' homes and hostels - The homes are for children or young persons between 7 and under 21 years of age with behavioral or emotional problems. The hostels are for those who are aged 14-21. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 271 places ▪ 95 places ▪ 398 places ▪ 962 places
After School Care Service	Half-day after school care service is provided for those who are aged 6-12, including tutorial service, meals, group activities and parent education, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 6,000 subverted places
Children and Youth Centres (CYCs)	One CYC will be established for every 6,500 youth population, to provide them with individual and group counseling, developmental programmes and activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 26 centres

Service Types	Services Provided	Accommodation
School Social Work Service	Each secondary school will have one social worker stationed to provide counseling service, group work, support service and parent work. Student Guidance Officers from the Education Department will undertake counseling work at primary schools.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 486 social workers are now providing school social work in secondary school and student guidance service is provided in 601 primary schools.
Outreaching Social Work Service	Starting from September 2002, the existing Outreaching Social Work Teams will be restructured to form 16 District Youth Outreaching Teams to reach out to street youth.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 16 teams
Integrated Children & Youth Service Centres (ICYSCs)	One IT will be established for every 12,000 youth population. Most of the teams are formed by merging CYCs, school social work service and outreaching social work teams. ITs will provide centre-based services. They will also outreach to and work closely with school, family and the community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 136 Cysts
Services for Young Night Drifters	The service is attached to ITs. Services are provided for young night drifters or youth at risks. Service hours start from 11:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 18 teams
Community Support Service Scheme (CSSS)	CSSS is designed for young persons under the Police Superintendents' Discretion Scheme. Individual and group counseling, employment service, counseling on further study, as well as activities to facilitate personal growth will be provided.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 5 teams at 5 districts
Child and Adolescent Mental Health Community Support Project	The Project is a new initiative specially developed by the Social Welfare Department and the Hospital Authority to provide early identification and early intervention services to children and adolescents with mental health problems (e.g. depressed mood, anxiety).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 5 teams at 5 districts
Other Services	Uniformed Group Service, Hong Kong Award For Young persons, Temporary Residential Service, Hotline Service, Probation Service, etc.	

Future Trends and Challenges

Youth mental health

Childhood and adolescence are stages of transition and reorganization. There is chance for them to develop any kinds of mental disorders or mental health problems. Community education, training for teachers and social workers are both essential for early identification and intervention.

Youth Unemployment

Though the unemployment rate has decreased, the youth unemployment rate is still four times higher than the overall unemployment rate. Amongst the unemployed youth, some experienced particular difficulties and are least competitive in the job market. Special service, for example intensive coaching in the open market and social enterprises, should be developed in order to cater their needs.

Cross-sectoral partnership

Children and youth are having different kinds of needs. Social workers alone cannot meet all the needs, and so, cross-sectoral partnership, such as with school, police and the medical sector, is strengthened to assess the overall needs of young persons and provide the support they need.

Parent Work

Family education and happy family life can foster self-confidence and self-image of young persons, equip them to face challenges and facilitate their growth. The sector in general recognizes that family problems generate youth problems, and so, strengthening support to the family and parent work (such as public education on parenting, and activities to facilitate communication between parents and children) will help prevent youth problems.

Holistic Care for Child Development

Childhood is the important stage of development. The more effort we put to care and nurture our child, the more positive outcome for the development of our next generation. However, our families are facing the challenge of socio-cultural changes, nuclear family structure and economic turmoil. Families need support in order to strengthen their roles and functions. Comprehensive review on existing education, physical and mental health, family care quality, community facilities and participation channel can help to formulate long-term policies on holistic care for child development.