

## Social Safety Net is Launched to Let Each Child Grow Up Healthily and Safely

(Courtesy of Yan-Fei Chen at the Division of Student Affairs and Campus Security)



In view of the frequent incidents of child abuse recently, which has attracted attention from the media and the public, the Ministry of Education invited the representatives of local governments, the Ministry of Health and Welfare, and relevant departments to study and discuss the current laws and future actions. According to the statistics of the Ministry of Health and Welfare, the number of the abused children and youths in the children and youth protection cases from 2014 through 2018 has been decreasing year by year, but the rate of such occurrences in the family is as high as 56.28%. In terms of the age of the abused children and youths, the ratio of the junior high school stage has been higher (23.03%-24.74%) over the years; as for the type of abuses, based on the statistics from the first quarter through the third quarter of 2017 and 2018, the highest ratio fell in improper discipline (40.89%-45.18%); on the

front of factors of abusers, the lack of parenting education occupied the highest percentage (23.33%), which indicated that parenting education indeed needed to be improved. In order to protect children from abuse, the Ministry of Education implements the work of protecting children and youths, strengthens a community care and interaction mechanism, and formulates the following eight advancing strategies; the illustration is as follows:

1. Prompt child abuse report and penalty: When a school is aware of a child abuse incident, it shall file a report no later than 24 hours after the occurrence of the incident in accordance with the provisions of the Domestic Violence Prevention Act and the Protection of Children and Youths Welfare and Rights Act; if the school fails to file a report after finding out the incident, it will be fined in accordance with the Domestic Violence Prevention Act and the Protection of Children and Youths Welfare and Rights Act, to prevent the situation from being concealed.
2. Development of a safe schooling plan for injured children: If a child received a protective order from the court, the school shall study and implement the safe schooling plan to protect the student from being secondary victimized.
3. Assistance provided to high-risk families: Assistance in schooling and support is provided to students who are "suspicious of being abused" from high-risk families (including vulnerable families or families in crisis); when necessary, with the consent of parents, they will be transferred to another school to continue studies, so that the students can grow up healthily in a new environment.
4. Enhancement of kindergartens and teacher to report children and youth protection cases: By enhancing kindergartens' and teachers' the professional knowledge and skills of children and youth protection, they will understand the characteristics of various children and youths protection cases, so as to improve the sensitivity to such cases and file a report accordingly.
5. Home service for parenting education: Local governments plan to deliver "parenting education, psychological counseling, and resource links to home" for high-risk families with "suspected child abuse cases," and file case for follow-up counseling to understand the family

situation in-depth and provide necessary assistance are provided; the funds required are subsidized by the Ministry of Education.

6. Guardian angels in the community and school: Schools shall actively form a social care network by establishing linkages with police, social affairs, and civil affairs units for "suspected child abuse cases," so as to strengthen mutual early warning mechanisms between communities, neighborhoods, and households. With care centered on abused individuals, potentially abused children will have many "guardian angels" to safeguard them.

7. Care beyond vacation: During the winter vacation, each county and city government shall promote the idea of "care beyond vacation" to relevant educators through relevant meetings or chat groups to constantly care for students and detect any anomalies.

8. Development of incentive schemes: Incentive schemes will be launched to enhance educators' enthusiasm and motivate educators at all levels of education to file relevant reports as required; when they become aware of a student's situation in the first place, they shall take timely protective measures and develop a safe schooling and counseling plan, so as to ensure the personal safety of students from high-risk families. Meanwhile, an incentive scheme will be established accordingly.

It is hoped that in the future the central and local governments, schools, and the community will be able to share resources and integrate family education centers and student counseling centers to implement the children and youths protection work as required and strengthen the community care and interaction mechanism as joint whistleblowers, so as to protect children together and enable the country's future leaders to grow in a safe and sound environment.