

LegCo Panel on Home Affairs
Subcommittee to study discrimination
on the ground of sexual orientation

Role of School Social Workers in Handling
Issues of Homosexuality at Schools

Purpose

This paper aims to inform Members of the role of school social workers, with particular reference to handling issues of homosexuality at schools.

Overall Role

2. The Social Welfare Department has reviewed the school social work service in 1996 through the set up of a multi-disciplinary working group comprising representatives from the Health and Welfare Bureau, Education Department, Hong Kong Council of Social Service, non-governmental organizations, secondary school principals and medical practitioner etc. According to the **Report on Review of School Social Work Service** released in June 1999, the roles of school social workers are defined as counselor, consultant, coordinator and community and social educator. Their functions include:

- ◆ providing guidance and counseling to students and their families with needs arising from family and social issues and running supportive groups and programmes to better equip students in meeting life challenges;
- ◆ providing consultation to school personnel, parents and students on way to address the needs of students;
- ◆ coordinating and mobilizing community resources for the benefit of students, families and schools and strengthening the linkage among different social services to support schools; and
- ◆ enabling students and their families to develop positive social values and attitudes in facing their life situations, promoting harmonious family relationship, and providing support to student groups and Parents-Teachers Associations.

3. Recognizing that school social workers must work in close collaboration with related professionals in meeting the needs of students and their families, the Social Welfare Department had consolidated and released **A Guide on Multi-disciplinary Collaboration in School Social Work Service** in July 2000 through a multi-disciplinary task group. The Guide aims at enhancing collaboration and cooperation among school social workers, school personnel, community-based youth services as well as other related professionals.

Role in Handling Issues of Homosexuality

4. Taking into account their roles and functions, school social workers would provide counseling to students and their families in handling issues of homosexuality and mobilize relevant community resources to provide group and programme service to students and their parents. School Social Worker may also refer students to receive group and / or programme service in community-based service settings. In addition, they would provide professional advice to school personnel as well as Parents-Teachers Associations on helping students on issues relating to sexual orientations with a view to assisting students achieve healthy personal growth.

Social Welfare Department
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