

**Hong Kong Family Welfare Society**  
**Submission to Welfare Panel on Family Violence**  
**22.4.04**

**1 Family Violence Cases: special needs to be addressed in order to increase the victims' confidence to seek early intervention**

**1.1 Women who stay in the marriage should not be viewed as a “deviant group”. New policies and services are needed so as to motivate people to seek help**

1.1.1 **Non-judgmental attitude and non-victim blaming attitude** is a must for helping professionals when women decided to remain with their partners or not ready to leave.

As reported from the women in shelter (Chan, 2002), 35.9% women wanted to return to their partners after discharged. **Most of them want to stop the violence but not the marriage.** This large group of women is **in need of tailor made policy and services to protect them.**

1.1.2 **Policy and services should be in place to provide choices for the victims**

At present, shelters or crisis centers are available for those who want to leave or have a time out. For those who want the husband to leave can apply for injunction order. However, there is limited protection for those who want to stay in the marriage or not ready to leave. **Protection Order\* is needed for this group of victims.** This Order does not (unless breached) constitute a criminal offense, this make protection more readily accessible to women since this course of action is not a criminal charge of assault.

Remark

In Australia, this is a civil order where women are protected from future violence while they stayed in the marriage. To implement this, police's role has to be effective to take action when someone breaches the order.

**2 Protection of Children: special needs to be addressed**

**2.1 Careful risk assessment and periodic review**

Child protection workers need to understand that women who are often powerless to act because of their own victimization, so child protection work lies greatly on the **careful risk assessment** of the child protection worker. The key worker should **carry out periodic review.** **Collaborative assistance by professional bodies should be solicited** if cases have diversified views.

## **2.2 Professional assessment and recommendation on visitation of children by abusers after parents' divorce**

- 2.2.1 For “normal” divorce case, helping professionals would encourage parent’s contact with children. However in Family Violence Cases where the major issue lies in safety and protection, **we may not encourage such contact without careful risk assessment.**

The myth of suggesting that an individual can be an abusive husband but a good father needs examination. Research findings indicated that 67% of men hitting wife will also hit children as reported by the battered women (Chan, 2002) and trauma children suffer in these circumstances (Sudermann & Jaffe 1999,p73). Post separation violence is also found to be a real threat for many women and children. Approximately 30% of Australian women were killed by their male partners after separation (Easteal 1993; Carcach & James 1998). **Different degree of risk needs different measures to tackle and the main principle is safety.**

Therefore for highly at risk and crisis cases, children should be considered temporary exempted for visitation by the abusers. It is necessary for **social workers or relevant professionals to make assessment and recommendations on the visitation plan. Legal advocate or support to seek legal action should also be available** for battered women when such help is needed.

## **2.3 Multidisciplinary Child Abuse Conference (MDCC) needs detailed follow through even when not established as genuine case**

In clinical observation, adult survivors (especially in child sexual abuse) may take a few months or more before they can reveal their trauma, the possibility of a child not to reveal in the CCTV about what had happened may not be surprising. No evidence does not imply low risk. There should not be any hesitation to call for a 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> follow up meeting when needed. The aim of MDCC is on child welfare and not family reunion.

## **3 Civic obligation to help in creating a no fear living environment should be promoted in the community**

### **3.1 Coordinating community network to increase reporting and motivate people to seek help**

- 3.1.1 **Community participation is of great help in motivating people to seek help.** According to the article of ‘ Help-seeking pattern of battered spouse’, Dr. Wong Tai Wai quoted an oversea survey that an average of 41% women will tell their friends about their abuse, 40 % will tell their families and 21% tell police, leaving 20-30% not telling to anyone. With this understanding, recruiting volunteers from our community as carer will be able to help identify potential clients. These volunteers can help give a caring card with phone numbers to motivate their friends or family members to seek help.

### **3.2 Built in risk assessment tools in different professions for early detection of family violence cases**

3.2.1 As an entry point for early identification of family violence cases, simple and short questionnaires could be designed to tap for potential cases. Women in contact with health services; teachers in contact with students with suspected signs of child abuse; social workers when interviewing marital cases or elderly cases; lawyers, police ...etc. Worker's sensitivity plus the questionnaires are effective for early identification.

### **3.3 Well-coordinated mechanism among different sectors and professionals for information sharing**

3.3.1 There should be a well-coordinated mechanism for Social Welfare Department, non-governmental organizations, police, shelters, doctors, nurses, lawyers, teachers...etc. to share information on suspected family violence cases to facilitate more effective risk assessment

### **3.4 Civic education for children / parents / community**

3.4.1 It is worth taking note that increase in community awareness in violence may not necessarily increase in the actual action of creating a no fear living environment within the community. Specific education package (e.g. parents accepting responsibility kids are safe) has to be designed to actualize this mission.

### **3.5 Mass media could help to mode a positive image of those who are willing to seek help**

## **4 Services for abusers**

**4.1 Abuser services including outreaching service, treatment programmes / groups, psycho educational programmes are needed.**

**4.2 Training for policemen to assess the risk of family violence and to engage the batterer to gain consent for social worker's follow up is needed. It is observed that police's referrals usually increase the chances of abusers being willing to be followed up by social workers.**

### References:

Chan K. L., 2002, Study of Children Who Witness Family Violence. Hong Kong: Christian Family Service Centre and Department of Social Work & Social Administration, the University of Hong Kong (resource paper series No. 47)

Easteal, P.W. 1993, Killing the Beloved: Homicide Between Adult Sexual Intimates, Australian Studies in Law, Crime and Justice, Australian Institute of Criminology, Canberra

Sudermann, M. and Jaffe,P.( 1999) A Handbook for Health and Social Service Providers and Educators on Children Exposed to Women Abuse/Fmily Violence, Family Violence Prevention Unit, Health Canada

黃大偉醫生：從公共衛生角度看如何處理家庭及性暴力