

**For Information
10 January 2012**

**Legislative Council
Subcommittee to Study Issues Relating to Mainland-HKSAR Families**

**Arrangement for Mainland Single Mothers
Visiting Hong Kong to Take Care of their Children**

Approval of One-Way Permits and Exit-Entry Permits

Pursuant to Article 22 of the Basic Law, for entry into the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR), people from other parts of China must apply for approval. Mainland residents who wish to settle in Hong Kong must apply for One-Way Permit (OWP) from the Exit and Entry Administration Offices of the Public Security Bureau (PSB) of the Mainland at the places of their household registration. On the other hand, Mainland residents may, depending on their purposes of visiting Hong Kong, such as visiting relatives or visits, apply for Exit-Entry Permit (EEP) (commonly known as “Two-Way Permit”) and relevant exit endorsement from the Mainland authorities.

2. To facilitate the reunion of Mainland and Hong Kong families, the Mainland authorities have from time to time adjusted and refined the arrangements for OWP, EEP and relevant exit endorsements. For example, in 2009, the Mainland authorities shortened the waiting time of applications from separated spouses from five years to four years, and starting from 25 December 2009 issue “one-year multiple exit endorsement for visiting relatives” to eligible Mainland residents. We learn that Mainland residents of the category of separated spouses who have minor children with their Hong Kong spouses, as well as those of other circumstances for visiting relatives and with special family difficulty may apply for that type of exit endorsement from the Exit and Entry Administration Offices of the PSB of the Mainland.

3. On the other hand, starting from 1 April 2011, individuals may apply for OWP to come to Hong Kong if they were below the age of 14 when their natural fathers or mothers, on or before 1 November 2001, obtained their Hong Kong identity card, as long as their natural fathers or mothers still reside in Hong Kong on 1 April 2011. The phased submission of applications by “overage children” to the Mainland authorities will be scheduled chronologically according to the order in which their natural fathers or mothers obtained their Hong Kong identity cards. For details, please refer to the Administration’s information paper to this Subcommittee on the same date entitled

‘Implementation of Application for One-Way Permit for “Overage Children” of Hong Kong Residents’.

4. The application, approval and issue of OWP, EEP and exit endorsements are not within the remit of the HKSAR Government. However, the HKSAR Government keeps reflecting to the Mainland authorities the views of various sectors in Hong Kong. Indeed, the Immigration Department (ImmD) has been reflecting to the Mainland Exit and Entry Administration Offices individual cases with special family difficulty (including Mainland single mothers of minor children in Hong Kong) and provide special circumstances and background information of the cases. The Mainland authorities have exercised discretion and issued OWP or “one-year multiple exit endorsement for visiting relatives” to some of these applicants.

5. Under the existing policy, visitors holding EEP must leave Hong Kong before the expiry of limit of stay. Extension of stay will not be approved in normal circumstances. Nevertheless, if a visitor with special circumstances needs to extend his stay in Hong Kong, he may apply to the ImmD before the expiry of his limit of stay. The ImmD will consider the individual circumstances of the applications. If Mainland single mothers lodge such applications, the ImmD will thoroughly consider all relevant factors and make appropriate arrangements according to the circumstances of the cases.

Assistance to Mainland Single Mothers and their Children in Hong Kong

6. Regarding assistance to Mainland single mothers and their children in Hong Kong, the 62 Integrated Family Service Centres (IFSCs) and two Integrated Services Centres (ISCs) operated by the Social Welfare Department (SWD) and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) over the territory provide a continuum of preventive, supportive and remedial welfare services to Hong Kong residents and their families in need (including children of Mainland single mothers in Hong Kong). Services provided include family life education, parent-child activities, enquiry service, outreaching service, support / mutual help groups, counselling, referral service, and so on. Social workers will thoroughly assess the needs of service users and provide appropriate services according to individual circumstances.

7. The SWD also provides through NGOs various day and residential child care services to children whom the families cannot take care of due to various reasons, and subsidises service users in need. These services and subsidies are also available to children of Mainland single mothers in Hong Kong.

8. In addition, the SWD provides funding to the International Social Service Hong Kong Branch to operate the Cross-boundary and Inter-country Casework Service, which helps individuals and families in need, including Mainland single mothers and their children in Hong Kong, cope with problems arising from geographical separation. Services provided include intake enquiries, counselling, emergency assistance, various groups and activities, referral, etc.

Conclusion

9. The HKSAR Government values the views of various sectors on assisting single families. The HKSAR Government will appropriately reflect to the Mainland authorities, and provide appropriate assistance to single families.

Security Bureau
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