

The Hong Kong Council of Social Service
Family Service and Child Care Division

Paper submitted to the
Legislative Council Panel on Welfare Services
For Discussion on June 12, 2000

Review of Family Services

1) **Introduction**

It is important to constantly update the community needs and review the service delivery for serving the community better. It is also important to run services in a cost effective way. With such objectives in mind, the NGOs are ready to participate in this Review of Family Services.

2) **The Contemporary Family**

2.1 Despite the sweeping changes that have occurred in the Hong Kong society in the past decades, the family has remained our most basic social unit of solidarity and sentiment. At the same time, we witness the increasing trend in the various family problems: the divorce, the extra-marital affairs, the abuse and neglect of children, the spate of family tragedies that involve neglect of, cruelty to and even murder of family members etc.. If we still believe in the system of family, we have to take actions to minimize the happenings of these family problems.

2.2. It is necessary to point out that the well-being of any family is affected not only by its own characteristics such as the size, structure, stage of development and interactional pattern, but also by factors in the outside world such as employment, income, housing, education and media.

2.3 To strengthen the family, we must pay attention to the characteristics of families and to the environment in which the family functions, and identify those internal and external factors that may adversely affect family functioning.

3) **Expectation on the Review**

3.1 A wider perspective to analyse and tackle the family problems

- we agree that there is a need to look into how better could the welfare services serve the needy families. However, the more we look into the problems of the family, the more we find that the welfare of the family is closely related to different public policies, as aforementioned. By design or

by default, different public policies continue to touch on the family life. While the role of welfare services is important, in many cases, it takes up a remedial role. **The government should have an overall view on the family: the policy on supporting the family and how could different public policies echo each other in supporting the family etc..**

- **it is recommended that while the Review of Family Services should go on, the administration should seriously consider the need to work out an overall view on family. Such an examination could take place parallel to this Review or subsequent to the Review**

3.2. Philosophy on Family

- we believe that it is important to make clear at the outset our philosophy on family. It is recommended that the **Review should review our view on family: its functions, its problems and government's role in supporting the family**. This will form the direction and objectives of family services and the basis of the Review.

3.3. Involvement of the users and potential users

- while the views from the service operators, related professionals will be collected, it is important to have the views of the users as well. **Users should be consulted on how could the existing services be improved etc.. Views from the potential users are also important** e.g. why the needy ones not come forward for services etc.

4) Points for consideration in the Review

4.1 Re. Services covered

- while this Review will just cover family services, many family problems are related to child care. Child care services are important supportive services to the family, hence, the Review might touch on the development of these services as well
- it is specified in the Consultancy Brief that one of the services covered is family casework service provided by the family service centres; however, **the family service provided by the Family and Child Protective Services Units of the SWD on family violence cases (child abuse and battered spouse cases) is not included. This service actually forms part of the continuum of the services to the family and therefore should be covered in the Review.**

4.2 Re. Interfacing of services

- the Review should not just examine the integration of different family services, but **should also identify and make recommendations on areas where interfacing of different welfare services and services under different government departments relating to families is needed.**

4.3 Re. Areas of Concern

4.3.1 Cost-effective and focused service delivery mode (para. 21 of the Consultancy Brief refers)

- while the Review should look into how best the existing resources are to be used/re-prioritized etc., **it should not be confined to the usage of the existing resources.** If the Review proves that there is a need to input additional resources to serve the needy families, the administration should seek for these resources. This stance should be made clear to the Consultants.

4.3.2 Long-term strategy and future direction in providing family services (para. 29 of the Consultancy Brief refers)

- as both the SWD and the NGOs are providing the family services, we would **presume that the identified long-term strategy in developing and delivering family services would cover services in both sectors.**

4.4 Re. Duration of the consultancy study

- the Review covers a wide spectrum of issues, the period of 8 months for completing the task seems to be too short. **It is recommended to extend the duration to 10 to 12 months instead.**