

Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse Bill to be gazetted on Friday

The Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse Bill will be gazetted on Friday (June 2) and introduced into the Legislative Council (LegCo) on June 14.

A spokesman for the Labour and Welfare Bureau said, "To protect children, the Chief Executive announced in the 2022 Policy Address that we would take forward at full steam the setting up of a mandatory reporting regime for child abuse cases and provide training for relevant practitioners to facilitate their early identification and reporting of child abuse cases."

The Bill defines a child as a person under the age of 18, and specifies professional practitioners in the social welfare, education and healthcare sectors as mandated reporters. They must make a report as soon as practicable if there is a reasonable ground to suspect that a child has been suffering or is at real risk of suffering serious harm. The maximum penalty for non-compliance is three months' imprisonment and a fine of \$50,000. The Bill will also provide a statutory defence and legal protection for mandated reporters.

To dovetail with the commencement of the ordinance, the Government will provide training for mandated reporters and draw up a practice guide to assist them in identifying target cases for early identification, reporting and intervention, as well as reducing over-reporting. In addition, the Government will increase the number of residential child care places to provide emergency placement when necessary, and enhance public education and publicity activities to raise public awareness of child protection.

The Bill will be introduced into the LegCo for first and second readings on June 14. The spokesman stressed that the Government would fully complement the work of the LegCo in scrutinising the Bill, with a view to seeking the LegCo's support and passage of the Bill.

CHP investigates case of Legionnaires' disease in hospital

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (May 31) investigating a case of Legionnaires' disease (LD) in United Christian Hospital (UCH).

The male patient, aged 86 with underlying illnesses, was admitted to UCH on May 16. His condition later became stable and he was discharged on May 25. He had shortness of breath on May 26 and was admitted into UCH again on the

same day. His clinical diagnosis was pneumonia. He is currently in stable condition.

His urine specimen tested positive for Legionella species upon laboratory testing. Initial enquiries revealed that the patient had no travel history during the incubation period. As the patient was admitted to UCH throughout the incubation period, it was initially suspected to be a nosocomial infection.

"Epidemiological investigations with UCH are ongoing to identify potential sources of infection, high-risk exposure and clusters, if any. Relevant water samples and environmental swabs will be collected from potential sources for laboratory testing," a spokesman for the CHP said.

Tracing of contacts including staff and in-patients in the relevant wards is ongoing and those identified will be put under medical surveillance. The CHP has provided health advice against LD to staff and in-patients, including those with weakened immunity who should use sterile or boiled water for drinking, tooth brushing and mouth rinsing. The water supply system of the subject floor will be disinfected urgently. An investigation is ongoing.

Legionellae are found in various environmental settings and grow well in warm water (20 to 45 degrees Celsius). They can be found in aqueous environments such as water tanks, hot and cold water systems, cooling towers, whirlpools and spas, water fountains and home apparatus which support breathing. People may become infected when they breathe in contaminated droplets (aerosols) and mist generated by artificial water systems, or when handling garden soil, compost and potting mixes.

Immunocompromised persons should:

- Use sterile or boiled water for drinking, tooth brushing and mouth rinsing;
- Avoid using humidifiers, or other mist- or aerosol-generating devices. A shower may also generate small aerosols; and
- If using humidifiers, or other mist- or aerosol-generating devices, fill the water tank with only sterile or cooled freshly boiled water, and not water directly from the tap. Also, clean and maintain humidifiers/devices regularly according to manufacturers' instructions. Never leave stagnant water in a humidifier/device. Empty the water tank, wipe all surfaces dry, and change the water daily.

The public should observe the health advice below:

- Observe personal hygiene;
- Do not smoke and avoid alcohol consumption;
- Strainers in water taps and shower heads should be inspected, cleaned, descaled and disinfected regularly or at a frequency recommended by the manufacturer;

- If a fresh-water plumbing system is properly maintained, it is not necessary to install domestic water filters. Use of water filters is not encouraged as clogging occurs easily, which can promote growth of micro-organisms. In case water filters are used, the pore size should be 0.2 micrometres (μm) and the filter needs to be changed periodically according to the manufacturer's recommendations;
- Drain and clean water tanks of buildings at least quarterly;
- Drain or purge for at least one minute infrequently used water outlets (e.g. water taps, shower heads and hot water outlets) and stagnant points of the pipework weekly or before use;
- Seek and follow doctors' professional advice regarding the use and maintenance of home respiratory devices and use only sterile water (not distilled or tap water) to clean and fill the reservoir. Clean and maintain the device regularly according to the manufacturer's instructions. After cleaning/disinfection, rinse the device with sterile water, cooled freshly boiled water or water filtered with 0.2 μm filters. Never leave stagnant water in the device. Empty the water tank, keep all surfaces dry, and change the water daily; and
- When handling garden soil, compost and potting mixes:
 1. Wear gloves and a face mask;
 2. Water gardens and compost gently using low pressure;
 3. Open composted potting mixes slowly and make sure the opening is directed away from the face;
 4. Wet the soil to reduce dust when potting plants; and
 5. Avoid working in poorly ventilated places such as enclosed greenhouses.

â€‹The public may visit the CHP's [LD page](#), the [Code of Practice for Prevention of LD](#) and the [Housekeeping Guidelines for Cold and Hot Water Systems for Building Management](#) of the Prevention of LD Committee, and the CHP's [risk-based strategy](#) for prevention and control of LD.

[Open auctions for public market stalls to be held in June](#)

The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) announced today (May 31) that in order to put public market stalls to more effective use and to provide job opportunities for members of the public, open auctions for a total of 35 stalls in 13 public markets will be held in June.

The retail commodities allowed for sale in these stalls cover non-food related dry goods and wet goods, food-related dry goods, fresh meat, fish, fruits, vegetables, cooked food, tradesman/service trade, etc. The tenancy agreement is a three-year fixed term from July 1 or September 1, with no right of renewal upon expiry of the tenancy agreement. The upset prices of the monthly rent of the stalls vary depending on the sizes and locations of

the individual stalls, and the information is available on the FEHD website.

A spokesman for the FEHD said, "Bidders for the market stalls must be at least 18 years old and ordinarily reside in Hong Kong. To allow more people to bid for the stalls and increase customer choices by enhancing the diversity in terms of the variety of stalls, there will be a restriction on the number of stalls to be rented in the same market by a single tenant. Any person who is currently a stall tenant is not allowed to bid in the first round of auction for any stall in the same market, but will only be allowed to bid for one stall in the second round of auction, while no existing tenant under the new three-year fixed term tenancy scheme (i.e. those persons who became the stall tenant through the market open auctions after August 2022) shall be allowed to bid for a stall in the same market in any event. The terms and conditions of the auctions have been uploaded to the FEHD website, with details of qualifications of the bidders listed."

The date and venue of the auctions and the number of stalls are as follows:

Hong Kong Island and Islands District (except Aberdeen Market)

Auction date: June 7 (Wednesday) (am)

Auction venue: Room 410, 4/F, Food and Environmental Hygiene Department Nam Cheong Offices and Vehicle Depot, 87 Yen Chow Street West, Kowloon

Number of stalls: 9

Aberdeen Market

Auction date: June 7 (Wednesday) (pm)

Auction venue: Room 410, 4/F, Food and Environmental Hygiene Department Nam Cheong Offices and Vehicle Depot, 87 Yen Chow Street West, Kowloon

Number of stalls: 5

New Territories

Auction date: June 20 (Tuesday)

Auction venue: The Assembly Hall, 1/F, Tai Po Community Centre, 2 Heung Sze Wui Street, Tai Po

Number of stalls: 21

Limited seats are available on a first-come, first-served basis. The admission tickets will be issued 30 minutes prior to the commencement of each auction. Persons who want to attend the auctions must wait at the waiting area of the auction venue and produce their Hong Kong identity card or passport for registration. The registered person will then be provided with an admission ticket for the auction. In addition, eligible bidders after verification will be issued with a bidding paddle for the auction. The FEHD has also invited representatives of the Police, the Independent Commission Against Corruption and the Competition Commission to monitor the auctions at the auction venues, in order to ensure that the open auctions are conducted in an orderly and fair manner.

Details of the open auctions as well as of the public market stalls concerned have been uploaded to the FEHD website (www.fehd.gov.hk/english/pleasant_environment/tidy_market/open_auction_coming.html). Bidders interested in the auctions may visit the department's website or contact the respective District Environmental Hygiene Office.

Hong Kong Customs combats unfair trade practices at online toy shop

Hong Kong Customs yesterday (May 30) arrested a male online toy shop owner suspected of engaging in wrongly accepting payments when selling toy models at his online shop, in contravention of the Trade Descriptions Ordinance (TDO).

Customs earlier received a number of reports alleging that an online toy shop failed to supply a type of renowned bear-shaped brick-style figurine to the customer who made the order within the specified date or a reasonable period after accepting a payment from the customer and no refund was offered. A total of 12 customers and 27 figurines were involved in the reports.

After investigation, Customs officers yesterday arrested a 32-year-old man suspected to be connected with the case. He is the owner of the online toy shop concerned.

An investigation is ongoing and the arrested man has been released on bail pending further investigation.

Customs has all along been concerned about illegal online sales activities. It has strived to combat unfair trade practices on websites to protect consumers' interests.

Under the TDO, any trader commits an offence if at the time of acceptance of payment, the trader intends not to supply the product or intends to supply a materially different product, or there are no reasonable grounds for believing that the trader will be able to supply the product within a specified or reasonable period. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$500,000 and imprisonment of five years.

Customs reminds traders to comply with the requirements of the TDO. Traders should not accept advance payments from consumers if they are uncertain whether the pertinent goods or services can be delivered to consumers within a specific or reasonable time. Before buying a popular product, consumers should pay attention to its supply quantity and supply period, including the announcement made by the brand owners for reference. Also, they should make orders through reputable traders. After purchasing the products, consumers should keep the transaction receipts and related records,

which can become the basic information in case a complaint is lodged in the future.

Members of the public may report any suspected violations of the TDO to Customs' 24-hour hotline 2545 6182 or its dedicated crime-reporting email account (crimereport@customs.gov.hk).

LCQ17: Public dental services

Following is a question by the Hon Chan Kin-por and a written reply by the Secretary for Health, Professor Lo Chung-mau, in the Legislative Council today (May 31):

Question:

Since September last year, the Department of Health (DH) has implemented a "preliminary registration" arrangement at some of its dental clinics that provide general public dental services. Those clinics will preliminarily register personal information for persons in the queue subject to their service quotas starting at 12am on the day of providing general public dental services. Those persons can leave the clinics, and return to the relevant clinics at the original disc-distributing time in the morning on the same day to obtain discs and register formally. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the quotas, the proportions of discs distributed, and the average waiting times of persons in the queue for general public dental services at the various relevant dental clinics since the launch of the "preliminary registration" arrangement, and whether the DH has considered increasing the service quotas to meet the demand; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) whether it will consider enhancing the "preliminary registration" arrangement, including allowing members of the public to obtain discs through telephone or online platform, so that they need not queue up and wait in person;

(3) given that at present, the DH's walk-in emergency dental services only cover relieving pain and extracting teeth for members of the public and do not cover other oral problems, whether the DH will expand the scope of such services; and

(4) whether it has plans to provide more public dental services in the future; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Government's current dental care policy aims to raise public awareness of oral hygiene and health through publicity and education, and to encourage the public to develop good oral hygiene habits. Generally speaking, the need for dental treatment or surgery due to tooth decay and gum diseases can be greatly reduced if good oral hygiene habits are maintained.

Under the current policy, the Government mainly undertakes publicity, education and promotion of oral health, particularly with emphases on nurturing good oral hygiene habits from an early age and providing the comprehensive School Dental Care Service to children.

Apart from the School Dental Care Service, the Government currently provides or subsidises limited dental services, which mainly include provision of treatment for the public for emergency cases and implementation of measures catering for persons with special dental care needs, especially the elderly with financial difficulties or persons who have difficulties in accessing general dental services. Services provided by the Government for persons with special dental care needs include special oral care services (including the Healthy Teeth Collaboration) for persons with an intellectual disability, as well as dental care support for the elderly under the Outreach Dental Care Programme for the Elderly and the Elderly Dental Assistance Programme funded by the Community Care Fund. Also, elderly persons may use Elderly Health Care Vouchers to receive dental services in the private sector, and persons with financial difficulties may receive subsidy to cover dental treatment expenses under the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Scheme. These services for targeted groups are not provided by government dental clinics.

On the other hand, under the civil service terms of appointment, the Government is obliged to provide dental benefits for civil servants/pensioners and their eligible dependents. Dental clinics under the Department of Health (DH) are established primarily for fulfilling this obligation. That said, the Government uses a small fraction of the service capacity of the dental clinics to provide free emergency dental treatment to the general public (commonly referred to as General Public or GP sessions). The DH allocates certain sessions each week in its 11 government dental clinics to provide GP sessions for citizens in need, covering services such as treatment of acute dental diseases, prescriptions for pain relief, treatment of oral abscesses and tooth extraction. The dentists will also provide professional advice with regard to the needs of individual patients. Emergency GP sessions only provide limited emergency services which aim at rendering supplementary support on top of the aforementioned prevailing oral health and dental care services provided by the public and private sectors. Under the existing mechanism, elderly persons and CSSA recipients can receive subsidised dental treatment and hence do not need to queue for emergency GP sessions.

The reply to the various parts of the question raised by the Hon Chan

Kin-por is as follows:

(1) The GP service sessions, actual maximum numbers of discs for allocation per service session and the utilisation rates of the discs allocated in the 11 government dental clinics of the DH under normal circumstances are set out below:

Dental clinic offering GP sessions	Service session	Actual maximum number of discs for allocation per service session	Utilisation rate of discs allocated (from September 1, 2022, to March 31, 2023)
Kowloon City Dental Clinic	Monday (AM)	42	99.2%
	Thursday (AM)	21	
Kwun Tong Dental Clinic	Wednesday (AM)	42	100%
Kennedy Town Community Complex Dental Clinic	Monday (AM)	42	96.5%
	Friday (AM)	42	
Fanling Health Centre Dental Clinic	Tuesday (AM)	25	99.1%
Mona Fong Dental Clinic	Thursday (PM)	21	97.4%
Tai Po Wong Siu Ching Dental Clinic	Thursday (AM)	21	100%
Tsuen Wan Dental Clinic	Tuesday (AM)	42	99.8%
	Friday (AM)	42	
Yan Oi Dental Clinic	Wednesday (AM)	21	99.7%
Yuen Long Government Offices Dental Clinic	Tuesday (AM)	21	99.8%
	Friday (AM)	21	
Tai O Dental Clinic	2nd Thursday (AM) of each month	16	63.4%

Cheung Chau Dental Clinic	1st Friday (AM) of each month	16	83.9%
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Currently, the service capacity of the emergency GP sessions of government dental clinics has been fully used with the utilisation rate of all appointment slots approaching 100 per cent. Since the DH's dental clinics mainly provide dental benefits for eligible persons and only a small fraction of the clinics' service capacity is used for emergency GP sessions to provide limited supplementary support, it is not possible for the DH to allocate more slots for GP sessions on top of the existing GP sessions. The DH does not collect relevant data on the queueing time of citizens.

(2) The 11 designated government dental clinics provide free emergency dental services for the general public. Citizens in need may queue for discs at the clinics, and those who have obtained a disc can generally receive treatment within the same session (AM / PM) on the same day.

Regarding the arrangement of the GP sessions, the DH has studied the feasibility of telephone booking but found that it might be more difficult for the elderly to obtain a disc via this arrangement. It is also possible that, under the booking arrangement, citizens in need of emergency dental services may not be able to receive treatment on the same day. The DH will continue to explore ways to improve the arrangement.

(3) and (4) The Government established the Working Group on Oral Health and Dental Care in December 2022 to advise the Government on the long-term strategy for oral health and dental care, as well as matters including the enhancement of the scope and mode of public or subsidised services. The Working Group comprises non-official members and ex-officio members for a two-year tenure until the end of 2024.

The first meeting of the Working Group was held in February 2023 to discuss the future work as well as key issues for follow-up. The Working Group was of the view that enhancing the overall level of citizens' oral health should be the objective under which the scope and effectiveness of the existing oral health measures as well as dental care services are to be examined and suggestions be made on the long-term strategic development for oral health and dental care. The Working Group also consolidated the following framework to form the basis for discussion on the enhancement of oral health measures and dental care services:

(a) To determine the service scope of primary dental services suitable for different age groups with the premise of preventing oral diseases and enhancing the oral health of the community in line with the Primary Healthcare Blueprint;

(b) To define different underprivileged groups, groups with special needs and those at relatively higher risks, and review the existing needs and service coverage with a view to providing more targeted dental care services;

(c) To review the manpower resources and related training arrangements of various dental professionals to tie in with the strategic development needs of the overall oral health and dental care; and

(d) To review the complementary arrangements for dental services, including the models and financial arrangements under which services provided or subsidised by the public sector are delivered, as well as the use of electronic health records, with a view to ensuring service efficacy.

The Working Group is advancing its work under the above framework, with the aim to put forward concrete proposals in phases during its term.