

Government extends and enhances Three-tier School-based Emergency Mechanism

The Government announced today (November 1) the enhanced measures of the Three-tier School-based Emergency Mechanism to enhance the support for students with suicidal risk. The Mechanism will be extended to December 31, 2025.

A Government spokesperson said, "Through interdepartmental collaboration of the Education Bureau (EDB), the Health Bureau and the Social Welfare Department (SWD), the Government has implemented the Three-tier School-based Emergency Mechanism in all secondary schools since December last year for early identification of and support for students with higher suicidal risk. After reviewing relevant circumstances and gauging the views of the sector, the Government announced to extend and enhance the Mechanism in "The Chief Executive's 2024 Policy Address" to reinforce support for the mental health of children and adolescents."

The major enhanced measures of the Three-tier School-based Emergency Mechanism are as follows:

*First-tier mechanism: The Government will strengthen the training for school personnel and parent education to enhance their capability in identifying and supporting students with higher suicidal risk;

*Second-tier mechanism: Support services will cover new and existing cases of students with higher suicidal risk in all publicly funded secondary schools. Schools can contact the "off-campus support network" team in their district directly. The team will match and refer the students or their families to other community support services as needed, and strengthen communication with the schools' multidisciplinary teams to ensure continuous support for the cases; and

*Third-tier mechanism: The Government will provide clear guidelines for schools to clarify the criteria for considering cases that are suitable for referral to the psychiatric specialist services of the Hospital Authority, so that the needs of different students can be catered for in a more precise way. Students who are considered to be in stable condition after triage and screening may also receive first-tier in-school support and services from the second-tier "off-campus support network" arranged by their schools while waiting for psychiatric services.

The spokesperson said, "Responsible personnel at each tier will maintain close communication with school personnel and parents to enhance collaboration among the tiers for building a stronger safety net for students."

To strengthen school personnel's knowledge and skills of promoting students' mental health, the EDB will organise a number of thematic training

courses this school year, provide lesson plans and short videos on students' mental health, and continue collaboration with the SWD to arrange non-governmental organisations to visit secondary schools in need to organise mental health activities and introduce different counselling methods, handling skills and intervention strategies.

To assist parents to further acquire the methods of fostering children's healthy development and protecting children's mental health, the EDB will regularly organise thematic parent education workshops and seminars. It will also hold the Positive Parent Education Film Gala Presentations this month and in December to promote the importance of positive parenting.

The EDB has issued a circular letter to inform all secondary schools of the above arrangements and measures. The Government will continue to strengthen interdepartmental collaboration, building an effective support network for students and fostering an accepting and caring culture in the community, to help students embrace the challenges of personal growth.