

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.