

International Spank Out Day–End Corporal Punishment of Children
Advocate Positive Parenting
(12/4/2025)

Against Child Abuse (ACA) was established in 1979. It has strived to eliminate all forms of child abuse in Hong Kong. Our mission is to promote a caring and non-violent environment for the optimal growth and development of our children through delivering quality services in the areas of prevention, training, crisis intervention, treatment and advocacy.

According to the Child Protection Registry of the Social Welfare Department, there were a total of 1,504 newly registered child protection cases in 2024, which is a record high. Among them, physical harm/abuse ranked the highest rate, 595 cases accounting for about 40% of the total. Most of the physical harm/abuse cases involve corporal punishment, and they are even caused by corporal punishment accumulated over time. The situation is worrying.

“No Spank • Water with Love” Carnival 2025

Every 30th April is the International Spank Out Day, which aims at arousing society’s attention to ending corporal punishment of children and promoting non-violent parenting methods. Since 2005, ACA has responded to the Spank Out Day by carrying out community education activities and advocating positive parenting every year. Today, 12th April, we held the “No Spank • Water with Love” Carnival at Chuk Yuen (North) Estate, Wong Tai Sin. Through ceremony, children’s talent performances, game booths, parent-child interactive games and panel exhibition, we call for an end to corporal punishment of children, and encourage parents to adopt positive discipline methods so as to build a safe, harmonious and caring environment.

Corporal punishment has far-reaching effects. Many benefits to ending corporal punishment and positive parenting

Many scientific researches have shown that corporal punishment of children does not help discipline, and it will bring profound effects on children’s physical, brain, psychological and social development, and emphasized the importance of establishing a good parent-child relationship and adopting positive parenting methods. Children who are subjected to corporal punishment for a long time are more likely to have learning, emotional, behavioral and social problems, and may even engage in violent, antisocial and aggressive behavior. Any form of corporal punishment easily escalates to child abuse over time.

Raising a child is like seedling, which requires intensive care and proper nutrients. Children

also need unconditional love and nurturing care from their parents and family during their growth stage in order to thrive. We call on parents and caregivers to use positive parenting methods and establish a good parent-child relationship. Positive parenting emphasizes respect and understanding, and helps children develop good behavior and social skills through communication, guidance, encouragement and appreciation. This parenting style not only promotes children's physical and mental health, but also helps them build their self-esteem and self-confidence.

ACA Questionnaire Survey on “Views on Corporal Punishment of Children”

We randomly conducted a questionnaire survey from November 2023 to February 2024 among 605 children and 717 parents on their views on corporal punishment. The survey result shows that parents' childhood experience of corporal punishment affects intergenerational discipline models; parents and children believe that corporal punishment is useless and will have negative impacts; most parents and children believe that good two-way communication, listening to children's voices and learning positive discipline can replace corporal punishment; more than 70% of parents agree to pass legislation to completely ban corporal punishment of children (including at home).

Current legislation prohibiting corporal punishment of children

In 1976, the government enacted “Child Care Service Regulations” stating that no person shall administer corporal punishment to a child in child care centers. Flogging on criminals as a form of corporal punishment was banned in Hong Kong penal system in 1990. In September 1991, the government amended “Education Regulations” to ban corporal punishment on students in schools. However, corporal punishment of children for discipline reasons is still common in home.

Corporal punishment of children is a violent act. Many child abuse cases start with corporal punishment, and the severity often escalates unconsciously and becomes physical abuse. To fulfill the spirit of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, ACA has the following recommendations:

1. Legislation to total ban corporal punishment of children

Children should enjoy basic human rights and grow up in an environment free of fear and violence. ACA urges the government to legislate a total ban on corporal punishment, including the family level. At present, there are 67 countries or states around the world that have enacted

legislation to completely prohibit corporal punishment of children (see the attachment for details). Legislation not only sets a bottom line of zero tolerance for violence, but also has an educational effect, making the public aware the importance that society places on children and families. Corporal punishment is a socially unacceptable method of raising children. How to deal with parents who violate the law can be determined according to the circumstances and severity of the incident, such as mandatory parent education and follow-up by social workers.

2. Promote Positive Parenting

In the process of child growth and development, parents and caregivers need to give them proper nurture and discipline, but must use positive and non-violent methods. If parents and caregivers are equipped with parenting knowledge and skills early, it is believed that corporal punishment or child abuse incidents can be effectively reduced. ACA recommends that the government allocates more resources to promote non-violent discipline and strengthen parent education in the community, so as to equip parents and caregivers with the ability of positive discipline, and provide appropriate assistance to families at risk as early as possible.

3. Strengthen support for families of children with special educational needs

Parents of children with special educational needs face greater pressure to care for and discipline their children, and are more likely to suffer from anxiety and emotional distress. According to the 2023 statistical report of the Child Protection Registry of the Social Welfare Department, among the 1,457 newly reported child protection cases, those with special educational needs ranked third (29.2%) in terms of risk factors related to abused children. ACA recommends that the government provides more appropriate resources and support for children with special educational needs and their families.

ACA strives to provide families with various preventive and remedial services, parent and community education activities, and also provides a parent-child support hotline: 2755 1122 for inquiries about services, seeking assistance or reporting suspected child abuse cases.

We hope that every day is “Spank Out Day”. Let’s create a safe, harmonious and caring society for our children!

Attachment

In the following 67 countries or states, children are protected by law from all corporal punishment:

No.	Country/State	No.	Country/State
1	Sweden	35	Cabo Verde
2	Finland	36	Honduras
3	Norway	37	North Macedonia
4	Austria	38	Andorra
5	Cyprus	39	Estonia
6	Denmark	40	Nicaragua
7	Latvia	41	San Marino
8	Croatia	42	Argentina
9	Germany	43	Bolivia
10	Israel	44	Brazil
11	Bulgaria	45	Malta
12	Turkmenistan	46	Benin
13	Iceland	47	Ireland
14	Romania	48	Peru
15	Ukraine	49	Mongolia
16	Hungary	50	Montenegro
17	Greece	51	Paraguay
18	Togo	52	Slovenia
19	Spain	53	Lithuania
20	Venezuela	54	Nepal
21	Uruguay	55	Georgia
22	Portugal	56	South Africa
23	New Zealand	57	France
24	Netherlands	58	Republic of Kosovo
25	Liechtenstein	59	Japan
26	Luxembourg	60	Seychelles
27	Republic of Moldova	61	Guinea
28	Costa Rica	62	Republic of Korea
29	Albania	63	Colombia
30	Congo (Republic of)	64	Zambia
31	Kenya	65	Mauritius
32	Tunisia	66	Lao PDR
33	Poland	67	Tajikistan
34	South Sudan		

Source: <https://endcorporalpunishment.org/countdown/>