

ACA News

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Verbal abuse just as hurtful to kids

Instances of psychological abuse against children have doubled, according to concern group Against Child Abuse.

The group called upon the government to introduce a "Cinderella Law", criminalizing psychological abuse of children.

With yesterday marking Universal Children's Day, the group issued a report on the 1,289 cases they received between April 1 in 2017 and March 31 this year.

Among them were 20 cases of suspected psychological abuse.

Donna Wong Tsui-ling, Acting Director of the group, said society is less aware of psychological abuse and often neglects its potential impact.

Psychological abuse would impair a child's emotional or intellectual development, causing the child to have low self-esteem, Wong said.

Common examples include spurning, terrorizing, isolating, and denying emotional responsiveness.

Wong reminded parents to be careful of the words they use and avoid conveying to children that they are useless.

"It's better to give birth to a piece of barbecue pork than you" is a Cantonese slang commonly used by Hong Kong parents to accuse their children of being stupid or useless, but Wong said the slang tops the chart in a survey about the worst things parents said.

In one case, single mother Ah Yi, who suffers from emotional problems, severely scolded and used a knife to threaten her six-year-old son.

The son, overweight due to an inherited disease, also had low self-esteem because he was teased for being too fat. Their situation improved after intervention from social workers and volunteers.

Among all cases handled by the group, 53 percent were inquiries about child management and 17 percent were suspected child abuse.

Physical abuse accounted for 61 percent of the 214 suspected abuse cases.

A majority of abusers were family members, with mothers making up 34 percent and fathers 20 percent.

There were also 25 cases of child neglect, and 19 cases of sexual abuse.

Reference: <http://www.thestandard.com.hk/section-news.php?id=202464&sid=4&sid=4>