

Protecting children during COVID-19

Tips for social workers and social welfare practitioners

#1 - Identifying children and families at risk

Seek an agreement with those who usually identify children at risk at community level and those who are the first responders (for example police and emergency services) to ensure appropriate immediate response and referral.

Maintain regular communication and information exchange with local Helpline and community partners, e.g., through weekly calls over phone, WhatsApp or other social media platforms to:

Share updates on changes in national/ local guidance e.g. protocols relating to lockdown, new public health measures

Share updates on actions to protect families and children

Agree on standard procedures for documenting and referring children's cases that may need follow-up

- Specifically, children with heightened protection or mental health needs and those at increased risk of separation
- E.g., children at risk due to disabilities, death or illness in the family, intimate partner violence in the family

Agree with partners who should follow up to assess the child and/or family situation by typology of child protection risk, i.e.: cases

- to be assigned to the social work professional
- requiring follow up of the mental health professional
- requiring police intervention with a social worker, and
- requiring support of local partners.

Agree with Helpline and local partners to note the contact information of children and families at risk that they identify, to enable follow up and assessment, and where the information will be kept.

- name, telephone number, address of child and family

Review, update, synchronize key protection & COVID-19 messages

List all services that children and families could access in the community and ensure all partners have this list

Identify possible linkages and collaboration opportunities between partners and services and coordinate efforts

Next:

- Categories of children with heightened protection needs
- Timely & appropriate follow up of each identified child / family



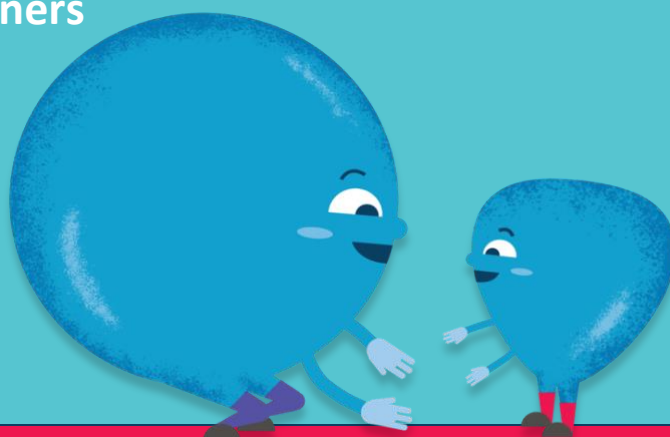
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Tips for social workers and practitioners

#1 - Identifying children and families at risk

Social workers and practitioners, you deserve praise!

Thank you for continuing to support children and families in need, even in these difficult times. You are heroes.



Categories of children with heightened protection needs

Children already known to be at risk of family separation before the pandemic

- social work professionals should provide continued support and follow up through regular phone or other virtual contact to monitor their situation and enable a response should they be separated
- see TIPS for virtual monitoring (#7) for further guidance.

Children and families who have been exposed to or survived the illness and may be at risk of stigma & exclusion

Children in families where a caregiver or other adult may be ill

Children in families where there is known or suspected domestic violence/GBV/IPV

Children cared for by grandparents/ older adults, as these older adults are at increased risk for COVID-19

Children or young adults who have recently been released from a child care institution and were rapidly reunited with their family or are living independently

Migrant, refugee, stateless and internally displaced children and families, including those without documentation

Children in street situations

Children reporting a situation of risk and possible abuse or violence through the following helplines:

WAO Hotline (03 7956 3488), TINA WhatsApp (018 988 8058), Talian Kasih (15999 or WhatsApp 019 261 5999) or Befrienders KL (03 7956 8144 or 03 7956 8145)

Timely & appropriate follow up of identified children/families

Any partner identifying a child and/or family with heightened protection needs or at increased risk of separation will immediately contact the agreed-upon service provider for follow-up assessment and support. In the event the partner is not sure who to contact, they will refer to the social work professional

The social work professional, in collaboration with the mental health professional and police, will respond to the case notification within 24 hours, initially by telephone and as needed through a visit while maintaining appropriate social distance, to assess the child and/or family's situation and thereafter refer to a community-based partner for continued support

- see Tips for Assessing Children and Families at Risk (#2)

