



中華人民共和國香港特別行政區政府
教育局

Education Bureau

The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
of the People's Republic of China

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To: Supervisors and Heads of all Secondary and Primary Schools

23 September 2026

Dear Supervisors / Principals,

**Continuation of the Three-tier School-based Emergency Mechanism
at Upper Primary Level and Related Measures for Strengthening the Promotion of Mental
Health at Secondary and Primary Schools**

This letter aims to inform all primary schools in the territory of the details regarding the continuous implementation of the Three-tier School-based Emergency Mechanism in Primary Four to Six (Upper Primary Level) on a trial basis, and to introduce the related measures in strengthening the promotion of mental health in secondary and primary schools.

(1) The Three-tier School-based Emergency Mechanism (“the Mechanism”)

2. Through the inter-departmental collaboration among the Education Bureau (EDB), the Health Bureau (HKB), and the Social Welfare Department (SWD), the Mechanism has been implemented since December 2023, and regularised in secondary schools and extended on a trial basis to upper primary level in the 2025/26 school year. Schools, parents and relevant stakeholders in the society are encouraged to work collectively by pooling together the schools' multi-disciplinary teams, the off-campus support network and medical services to facilitate early identification of and support for students with higher suicidal risk.

3. After reviewing the implementation of the Mechanism and gauging the views of the sector, it was announced in “The Chief Executive’s 2026 Policy Address” that the Government would continue to implement the Mechanism at the upper primary level on a trial basis in the 2026/27 school year. The key measures of the Mechanism (applicable to secondary schools and upper

primary level) include:

(i) The first-tier mechanism

4. The first-tier mechanism aims to identify students with higher suicidal risk at an early stage, and to provide the students concerned for timely assistance and help them seek professional counselling or treatment services as early as possible.

5. The EDB urges school personnel to refer to “A Resource Handbook for Schools: Detecting, Supporting and Making Referral for Students with Suicidal Behaviours” to preliminarily identify more vulnerable students and pay attention to whether they have warning signs of suicide. If necessary, schools can arrange students with higher risk to conduct a preliminary mental health screening through effective screening tools. After screening, school guidance personnel should launch follow-up services. Schools should first discuss with the school’s inter-disciplinary team (including guidance masters/mistress, guidance personnel, school social workers and school-based educational psychologists) to flexibly deploy its manpower and resources to give priority to take care of and counsel students with higher suicidal risk. The school personnel are recommended to refer to the Guidelines on “How Schools can Help Students with Mental Health Problems” to provide support to students as soon as possible, including meeting regularly with students, providing group training or individual counselling, arranging appropriate school-based support and activities, or providing students with information on relevant community resources and referring students with mental health needs to receive support services. For details, please refer to **Annex 1**.

(ii) The second-tier mechanism

6. The second-tier mechanism is for the “off-campus support network” coordinated by SWD to provide schools with enhanced support to students with higher suicidal risk in the short term. Subsequent to the identification in the first-tier mechanism and school-based intervention, if the school¹ confirms that a student with higher suicidal risk needs further support, the school can directly contact the “off-campus support network” team in its respective regional district (please refer to **Annex 2** for the contact list). When referring a case, the school must first obtain the consent of the parent or guardian and submit the referral form and the parent or guardian consent form (**Annex 3**) to the “off-campus support” team in its respective regional district.

7. Social workers from the “off-campus support network” team² will contact the students concerned as soon as possible and arrange follow-up services, including emergency intervention

¹ Starting 1 November 2024, under the enhanced second-tier mechanism, even publicly-funded schools that have participated in the Student Mental Health Support Scheme or non-newly identified cases with a higher risk of suicide can seek additional support from the “off-campus support network” team.

² The responsible social worker has received professional training on how to support students at high suicide risk and can provide appropriate intervention services to students in need.

services such as assessment, support and counselling through individual, group, or online mode. They will also match students with community support services according to their needs, providing diverse and appropriate follow-up services, such as Integrated Family Service Centres, Integrated Children and Youth Service Centres, and Integrated Community Centres for Mental Wellness. If a student is assessed by the “off-campus support network” team to have a high risk of suicide after contact and assessment, they will discuss with the parents whether it is necessary to refer the student to the Hospital Authority’s (HA) psychiatry specialist services for follow-up treatment through the third-tier mechanism.

(iii) The third-tier mechanism

8. The third-tier mechanism is for schools to refer students with high suicidal risk (as opposed to those only with severe mental health needs) to the HA to receive psychiatric specialist outpatient services. Schools may refer eligible students to the HA with reference to the guide at Annex 4. After discussing with the students’ parents, the school may issue a designated school principal referral form (Annex 5) for the parents to accompany the students to the psychiatric specialist outpatient clinics for triage assessment, and to receive the necessary treatment and support services. School personnel may also accompany the students and their parents to the psychiatric specialist outpatient clinics as needed to provide relevant information during the triage process, with a view to facilitating a more comprehensive assessment of the students’ condition by healthcare professionals. After the triage assessment, the HA will prioritise the follow-up of students with urgent conditions that necessitate prompt treatment. Before making referrals, schools must carefully evaluate whether the students concerned have high suicidal risk, so as to avoid compromising the chances to receive treatment of other patients who are on the waiting list of HA’s psychiatric specialist services. For students assessed by the HA as routine (stable) cases, while waiting for psychiatric specialist outpatient services, schools can arrange school-based support from the first-tier mechanism and the off-campus support network services from the second-tier mechanism for them. If the mental conditions of the students have changed, they may return to their respective psychiatric specialist outpatient clinics for re-assessment to determine whether there is a need to advance their consultation appointment or seek treatment from the accident and emergency services.

9. Meanwhile, the HA has set up a round-the-clock telephone consultation hotline specifically for school principals (telephone number: 2742 4508) to provide them with professional advice. If a student is severely injured, in a life-threatening situation or requires immediate support, the school should immediately activate the crisis management mechanism and take prompt action, including calling the police for help or sending the student to hospital for treatment.

10. For related information on the Mechanism, please refer to the annexes or visit the

designated webpage on the “Mental Health @School” website.

“Three-tier School-based Emergency Mechanism” designated webpage:

<https://mentalhealth.edb.gov.hk/en/support-at-the-indicated-level/supporting-students-with-suicidal-risk.html>



(2) Related Measures in Strengthening the Promotion of Mental Health at Schools

(i) Training for Teachers and School Professional Personnel

11. To equip schools with the capacity to take care of students with mental health needs (especially those with suicidal risk), EDB will further enhance the training for teachers and school professional personnel. Starting from October 2026, EDB will conduct a series of training related to student suicide prevention for school professional personnel, including school social workers, school guidance personnel, and school-based educational psychologists. Topics include how to identify and assess students with suicidal risk and intervention strategies for students with suicidal risk. To enhance the knowledge and capability of school personnel in secondary and primary schools to take care of students with mental health needs, EDB will also organise around 40 courses and workshops related to student mental health this school year. These include emotion regulation workshops, internet addiction, depression and anxiety and the related support strategies, and courses related to mental health first aid. Details of the training will be available on Training Calendar System in due course.

(ii) Other Measures in Supporting Students with Mental Health Needs

12. EDB has launched the “Forging Relationships, Nurturing Well-being” School Campaign (“Campaign”) and strengthen the promotion of the 4Rs Mental Health Charter³ (“4Rs Charter”) in the 2026/27 school year. A series of activities will be organised to support schools in the implementation of strategies of preventing and handling school bullying, and enhance students’ mental health, empowering them to face various challenges positively in the course of their development. Please refer to the EDBCM No. 163/2026 for details.

13. To enhance students’ awareness of mental health, foster a positive attitude towards mental illness, and promote mental health in themselves and their peers, EDB has launched the “Mental Health Literacy Resource Package” (“Resource Package”), and uploaded it to the “Mental Health

³ The “4Rs” in the 4Rs Charter cover four elements and objectives for promoting mental health, which include: Rest, Relaxation, Relationship, and Resilience.

Literacy Resource Package” designated webpage. The Resource Package covers class-based learning activities tailored for lower primary, upper primary, junior secondary, and senior secondary students. We encourage schools to teach or integrate relevant content of the Resource Package into the school-based curriculum of personal growth lessons, life education or healthy living, to systematically cultivate students’ mental health literacy. To enable teachers to gain a deeper understanding of the contents of the Resource Package, EDB will organise training workshops to assist teachers in mastering related teaching and application strategies, thereby facilitating the implementation of mental health education in schools to build students’ resilience and foster their mental health. Details of the training workshops will be available on Training Calendar System in due course.

*“Mental Health Literacy Resource Package” designated webpage
(Chinese version only):*

<https://mentalhealth.edb.gov.hk/en/promotion-at-the-universal-level/mental-health-literacy-resource-package.html>



14. EDB will continue to organise parent education courses or seminars for parents of primary and secondary school students this school year, with reference to “Curriculum Framework on Parent Education”. Some of these courses or seminars will cover topics related to student mental health. In addition, upper primary students face numerous challenges as they grow up. To enhance parents’ understanding of their children’s mental health and strengthen parental support, EDB will organise a 4-session “Online Workshop on Parent Gatekeeper Training” for parents of Primary Four to Six students in October this year. Schools are encouraged to invite parents to enrol in the course. The application deadline is 2 October 2026. Please refer to “Parent Gatekeeper Training” designated webpage for details.

“Parent Gatekeeper Training” designated webpage:

<https://mentalhealth.edb.gov.hk/en/support-programmes/parent-workshop-on-gatekeeper-training.html>



15. The Government will continue to strengthen inter-departmental collaboration to establish an effective support network for students and foster an accepting and caring culture in society, as well as to enhance the mental health literacy of parents, teachers and students to help students embrace the challenges of personal growth.

16. For enquiries, please contact the Educational Psychology Service (Kowloon 1) Section at 3698 4311.

Ms Vickie LI
for Secretary for Education

- Annex 1: Early identification of and support for students with suicidal risk
- Annex 2: Contact List of “Off-campus Support Network” Team
- Annex 3: “Off-campus Support Network” Team Referral Form and Parent/Guardian Consent Form
- Annex 4: Reference Guide for Assessing and Managing Suicidal Risk
- Annex 5: Designated School Principal Referral Form to Psychiatric Services of the Hospital Authority

Early Identification of and Support for Students with Suicidal Risk
(Applicable to Secondary Schools and Primary Four to Six)

To complement the “Three-tier School-based Emergency Mechanism” to early identify and support students with suicidal risk, school teachers and social workers can refer to “A Resource Handbook for Schools: Detecting, Supporting and Making Referral for Students with Suicidal Behaviours” published by the EDB, to identify students at higher risk through the following channels and provide appropriate support and referrals based on their circumstances and severity:

A Resource Handbook for Schools: Detecting, Supporting and Making Referral for Students with Suicidal Behaviours:

<https://mentalhealth.edb.gov.hk/en/early-identification-at-the-selective-level/resources-and-guidelines/147.html>



(1) Preliminary identification of more vulnerable students

Identify students who may be more vulnerable, such as those with the following risk factors:

- Social support: Poor family or peer relationships, or weak support network
- Emotional regulation: Emotions are more sensitive, more reactive, or easier to lose control of
- Coping skills and attitudes: Tend to use negative and avoidant coping style to cope with significant events or traumatic events
- Need to face recent major stressful events: such as repeating a grade, changing schools, parental divorce or relationship deterioration, or experiencing the death or suicide of someone close to them
- Repeated self-harm behaviours or past suicide attempts

Pay attention to warning signs of suicide

Pay attention to the possible suicide warning signs of these more vulnerable students through daily observation, for example:

- Physical aspect: e.g., fatigue, increasing symptoms of physical discomfort, and abnormal inattention to personal hygiene or appearance
- Behavioural aspect: e.g., increased absenteeism, sharp decline in grades, and becoming socially isolated
- Emotional aspects: e.g., mood changes or remarkable unstable emotions, loss of interest and motivation in daily activities
- Cognitive aspect: more difficult to stay focus than before or keep their mind clear, and have frequent self-critical thoughts

(Updated in September 2026)

- Words or behaviours related to death and suicide: such as mentioning negative or hopeless thoughts in conversation or on social media, sending beloved items, and saying goodbye to family or friends as if they were saying goodbye

(2) Use mental health screening tools

If necessary, schools can also arrange mental health screening for students in need after discussing with school guidance personnel (including school social workers, school-based educational psychologists or relevant mental health professionals). Before conducting a mental health screening, it is advisable to carefully plan the entire process in conjunction with school guidance personnel. When selecting screening tools, factors such as the student's age, developmental stage, cognitive and language abilities, and cultural background should be considered. It is recommended to also gather data from different adults familiar with the student, including parents, teachers, and other caregivers, in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the student's behaviour and emotional state, accurately identify students in need for further assessment and follow-up. School teachers and social workers can refer to the following commonly used mental health screening tools and arrange the students concerned to complete the self-test scales:

- Student Health Service “Self-Test Station: Depressive Mood”:
https://scics.one.gov.hk/forms/dhs005/dhs005_en.html
- Student Health Service “Self-Test Station: Anxiety”:
https://scics.one.gov.hk/forms/dhs006/dhs006_en.html
- “Shall We Talk” Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K10):
<https://www.shallwetalk.hk/en/mental-health-information/psychological-distress-testing/>
- The Spence Children's Anxiety Scale

School personnel can refer to “Early Support for At-risk Students” designated webpage for more information.

“Early Support for At-risk Students” designated webpage:

<https://mentalhealth.edb.gov.hk/en/early-identification-at-the-selective-level/early-support-for-at-risk-students.html>



(3) Provide follow-up services

Schools should note that the scores of mental health screening tools are only used as one of the references. School guidance personnel should consider students' responses to individual items on

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the scale, their background, and behavioural patterns to make decisions on prioritising individual interviews and follow-up actions. School guidance personnel must conduct individual interviews with these students for further preliminary assessment of suicidal risk. For details, please refer to Chapter 3 “Responding to Suicidal Behaviours” in “A Resource Handbook for Schools: Detecting, Supporting and Making Referral for Students with Suicidal Behaviours”, and “Reference Guide for Assessing and Managing Suicidal Risk” in Annex 4, to arrange support services for students according to the level of their suicidal risk.

Schools should first discuss through the school’s inter-disciplinary team (including guidance masters/mistress, guidance personnel, school social workers, school-based educational psychologists) to flexibly deploy manpower and resources within the school to help and provide counselling to students who have been identified and need support. We recommend that school personnel refer to the guidelines on “How Schools can Help Students with Mental Health Problems” to support students with suicidal risk.

Guidelines on “How Schools can Help Students with Mental Health Problems”:

https://sense.edb.gov.hk/uploads/page/types-of-special-educational-needs/mental-illness/ENG_Guidelines_to_help_MI_students_20200717.pdf



The school’s multi-disciplinary team must give priority to care for and counsel students who are at higher risk of suicide, such as guiding students to consider coping skills for overcoming difficulties and the support available for them, meeting with students regularly and providing group training, conducting individual counselling on relaxation techniques and coping methods and arranging appropriate school-based support and activities, or providing students with information about relevant community resources. Schools must conduct continuous and close monitoring on students’ conditions and make good use of community resources, the “Off-campus Support Network” Team services, and telephone consultation hotline of HA specifically for principals to refer students with different levels of suicidal risk to receive appropriate support services. Through mental health educational activities or promotional leaflets, let all students aware of different help-seeking channels, including community helplines and counselling platforms.

Community Resources and Helplines:

<https://mentalhealth.edb.gov.hk/en/early-identification-at-the-selective-level/helplines-and-community-resources.html>



Contact List of “Off-campus Support Network” Team

If schools have provided assistance and counselling for students with suicidal risk through their inter-disciplinary team and flexible deployment of internal manpower and resources but still consider that it is necessary to refer students with higher suicidal risk to the “off-campus support network” for follow-up, they can refer those students to respective regional “off-campus support network” teams through direct contact by telephone, facsimile or email.

Region	Non-governmental Organisation (NGO) operating “Off-campus Support Network” Team
Hong Kong Island (including Central and Western, Eastern, Southern, Wan Chai and Islands Districts)	NGO : St. James’ Settlement Service Unit : 6 PM Cyber Youth Support Team Tel. No. : 2609 3228 Fax No. : 2817 8910 Email : cyberyouth@sjs.org.hk
East Kowloon (including Kwun Tong, Wong Tai Sin and Sai Kung Districts)	NGO : Caritas Hong Kong Service Unit : Caritas Infinity Teens - Cyber Youth Support Team Tel. No. : 2117 0321 / 9377 3666 Fax No. : 2117 1190 Email : ycsteens@caritassws.org.hk
West Kowloon (including Kowloon City, Sham Shui Po and Yau Tsim Mong Districts)	NGO : The Boys’ & Girls’ Clubs Association of Hong Kong Service Unit : Nite Cat Online – Cyber Youth Support Team Tel. No. : 2396 9447 Fax No. : 3462 3294 Email : nitecat@bgca.org.hk
New Territories East (including North, Tai Po and Sha Tin District)	NGO : Hong Kong Children & Youth Services Service Unit : eSmile Cyber Youth Support Team Tel. No. : 3615 8331 Fax No. : 3020 6224 Email : esmile@hkccys.org.hk
New Territories West (including Tsuen Wan, Kwai Tsing, Tuen Mun and Yuen Long District)	NGO : The Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups Service Unit : uTouch Cyber Youth Outreach Service Tel. No. : 2788 3444 Fax No. : 2715 6086 Email : utouch@hkfyg.org.hk

To: Off-campus support network team ()

The Three-tier School-based Emergency Mechanism
“Off-campus Support Network” Team Referral Form
(Applicable from December 2025)

[*Schools should submit **this form and parent or guardian consent form** to respective “off-campus support network” team]

Our school _____ (name of school), after conducting preliminary mental health screening and school-based intervention, would like to refer the student with higher suicidal risk to the “off-campus support network” team arranged by the Social Welfare Department. Our school has obtained and enclosed with this form the parent consent form signed by the parent or guardian of the student concerned for this referral. Our school will help arrange the “off-campus support network” team to meet with the student concerned at school, including finding venues suitable for in-person or online interviews.

Student Name	Gender / Age	Class	Contact phone no.	Areas that require special attention (Please tick the appropriate box(es))	Name & contact no. of student's guardian in case of emergency
1.				☐ Learning performance ☐ Family situation ☐ Special educational needs ☐ Interpersonal relationship ☐ Emotional/mental health needs ☐ Others (please specify):	

Remarks: This referral form contains personal data of the student, which shall be properly kept by the school and ensure that the purpose and manner of data collection, use of data, data security, access, etc. comply with the requirements of the personal data (Privacy) ordinance.

School Chop:

Signature of school
 personnel in charge : _____
 Name : _____
 Post : _____
 Contact no. : _____
 Date : _____

The Three-tier School-based Emergency Mechanism

“Off-campus Support Network” Team

Parent / Guardian Consent Form

I _____ (Name of Parent / Guardian*) give consent to
_____ (Name of School) to refer my child / ward*
_____ (Name) _____ (ID No.) to receive services
rendered by the “off-campus support network” team arranged by the Social Welfare Department.

Signature of Parent / Guardian*: _____

(Contact Phone No.: _____)

Date: _____

*Delete as appropriate

Reference Guide for Assessing and Managing Suicidal Risk
(Applicable to Secondary Schools and Primary Four to Six)

Suicidal Risk*	Suicidal Ideation	Suicidal Plan/ Intent	Suicide Attempt	Emotional Distress	Management Plan[#]
Low	Low frequency and intensity, shorter duration	• No concrete suicidal plan • No obvious suicidal intent	Nil	Mild	Arrange first-tier / second-tier support services
High	More frequent and intense, longer duration	• With more concrete suicidal plan • With more obvious suicidal intent	With previous suicide attempt	Quite distressed	Refer to third-tier support services; and arrange follow-up services at the first-tier and second-tier
Very High/ Imminent	Frequent and intense, enduring suicidal ideation	• With concrete suicidal plan • Preparing for suicide, including tools, after-death arrangements, etc. • Strong suicidal intent	With previous suicide attempt using lethal means (such as hanging, charcoal burning, jumping from height, or overdosing on medication), especially in the recent past	Severe	Consider taking the student to the Accident and Emergency Department for treatment

* The level of suicidal risk is dynamic and may be adjusted based on the prevalence and changes of protective factors (such as adequate problem-solving skills, good social skills, effective stress management, positive self-esteem, support from significant others, and family connections and cohesion) and risk factors (such as self-harming behaviours, previous suicide attempt, mental illness, adverse childhood experiences, negative thoughts / sense of hopelessness, parental discord / family conflict, and poor peer relationships). Protective factors enhance an individual's resilience to cope with setbacks in life, while risk factors increase an individual's suicidal risk.

(Updated in November 2025)

Management plan should be based on the conditions and needs of the students. While arranging the related services, it is not necessary to include all the features under the corresponding suicidal risk level.

(Updated in November 2025)

The Three-tier School-based Emergency Mechanism

Referral of student to receive psychiatric services of the Hospital Authority

Designated School Principal Referral Form (Applicable from December 2025)

Our school _____ (Name of School) would like to refer _____ (Name of Student) _____ (ID No.) who is currently studying in _____ (Class) to receive psychiatric services of the Hospital Authority (HA). Please arrange risk assessment and follow-up services for this student as soon as possible.

I. Reason(s) for referral to the third-tier support services: (Please select one of the following options)

- ☐ High suicidal risk
- ☐ High suicidal risk, and with other severe mental health need(s)

Related information on reason(s) for referral: *(e.g. related suicidal ideation/ threat/ attempt, psychological and mental state, behaviour)*

- History of suicidal ideation/ threat/ attempt: **[Mandatory]**

Nature	Date	Related information
Suicidal ideation/ threat/ attempt*		
Suicidal ideation/ threat/ attempt*		
Suicidal ideation/ threat/ attempt*		

[*Please delete as appropriate]

- Supplementary information regarding the suicidal risk:

[在此鍵入]

*Please use additional paper if necessary and confirm with signature.
(Updated in September 2026)*

- Supplementary information of the severe mental health need(s):

II. The first and / or second-tier support services which the student has received in relation to the above referral reason(s) (including services within schools or outside schools, such as assessment or support services by school social worker and school-based educational psychologist): *(May choose more than one option)*

☐ Utilisation of the first-tier support services:

☐ Individual interview:

☐ Group training:

☐ School-based support and activities:

☐ Others, please specify:

☐ Utilisation of the second-tier support services:

☐ Services of “off-campus support network”:

☐ Services of “Student Mental Health Support Scheme”:

☐ Others, please specify:

III. To the school's knowledge, other medical services that the student has received or is currently receiving / has been referred to in relation to the above referral reason(s) (such as private psychiatrist and clinical psychologist): *(Please select one of the following options)*

☐ No

☐ Yes, please specify:

☐ Not sure

IV. Contact Information:

	School Personnel	Parent / Guardian*
Name:		
Post / Relationship:		
Phone number:		

[*Please delete as appropriate]

[Remarks: If the student's situation is urgent, the school may consider taking the student to the Accident and Emergency Department for treatment.]

Signature of Principal:

Date:

Name of Principal:

School Chop:

*Please use additional paper if necessary and confirm with signature.
(Updated in September 2026)*