

Children and Youth and organisations that help them

1 A “child” is a person below the age of 14 years. A “juvenile” is a person seven years old or above and below 16 years old. A “young person” is someone 14 years old or above and below 16 (AGC, 2001)¹. This brief refers to them collectively as “children and youth”. Given their age, children and youth are generally part of a system including their family, peer group, school and neighbourhood. What happens within the system would impact children (SCS, 2005).

2 Issues

2.1 Some children and youth face growing pains. For example, they may need help coping with home and school, arising perhaps from issues with parenting styles, inadequate care from parents (which may arise from marital difficulties or single parenthood, and financial difficulties) or bullying in school.

2.2 In extreme cases, children and youth may be neglected (eg inadequate food, shelter or medical care) or even abused (eg physical, sexual or emotional abuse) (MCYS, undated).

2.3 There are children and youth who, arising from their family circumstances or because of learning difficulties, find it hard to cope with school.

2.4 Selected statistical indicators

An average of about 1,200 children and youths drop out of school each year. Most out-of-school youths (OSYs) drop out usually due to a loss of interest in academic studies. They would need skills to lead meaningful lives and contribute to society (MCYS, 2007).

Youth crime: a total of 3,645 youths were arrested for crime in 2006, accounting for 19% of the total persons arrested. This is a decrease from the 23% in 2005 but still higher than the proportion of youths in Singapore. The most common offences were theft and rioting (NYGR, 2007).

	2005	2006
Youth arrests	5,050	3,645

¹ The Women’s Charter refers to a minor as someone below the age of 21 years.

The number of cases disposed by the Juvenile Justice Division of The Subordinate Courts grew by over 36% between 2006 and 2007:

	2006	2007
Family and Juvenile Justice Division: no. of cases disposed	1,410	1,920

3 Services and solutions

3.1 Children have basic needs such as nutrition, safety, a nurturing environment, and education. Services must thus support their physical, social, emotional and intellectual development. They should also be able to identify children and families at risk and to provide early intervention before full-blown problems emerge (SCS 2005).

3.2 Services available for children and youth include:

- a. School social work helps students improve their home or school life and manage life’s challenges.
- b. Community-based programmes such as mentoring (for those who are disadvantaged or display at-risk behaviour), and out-of-school youth programmes to guide them to return to mainstream education or transit to vocational training or employment (NCSS, undated).

4 Financials

4.1 There are about 40 organisations² serving children and youth. Some of them focus on serving children and youth and their financial statements reflect this. In terms of annual income, these organisations range in size from over a hundred thousand dollars to millions of dollars each. Financial surpluses, if any, are usually in the range of several hundred thousand dollars.

4.2 Some organisations serve children and youth through specific programmes as part of larger “parent” organisations. The financial statements of these specific programmes are consolidated with those of the parent organisations. Many of these parent organisations are multi-million dollar operations in terms of income and expenditure.

² This brief excludes organisations which focus mainly on youth leadership, children’s health or children with special needs, and uniformed groups. It also excludes organisations that serve the public in general. Family service centres which serve children are listed separately. Self-help groups and organisations that have specific programmes for children are included.

References

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