

Mental Retardation

I. What is Mental Retardation?

Mental retardation (MR) is a developmental problem manifested during a child's years of development (i.e. 0-18 years old). It is a condition whereby a child's intelligence and adaptability are significantly below the average level of his peers.

II. What causes Mental Retardation?

Genetic factors

- Hereditary factors or chromosomal abnormalities

Pregnancy and birth factors

- e.g. misuse of drugs or excessive alcohol intake during pregnancy, complication of birth, prematurity

Infancy and childhood

- Infections and brain injuries, e.g. meningitis, brain trauma, etc.

Unknown factors

- The cause in most cases is unknown

III. How does Mental Retardation affect the child?

Developmental aspects affected by MR:

- Attention
- Memory
- Language ability
- Gross and fine motor coordination
- Learning and problem-solving abilities
- Social and self-care skills
- Ability to control emotion and behaviour

As the child's abilities in the above aspects are significantly lower than children of comparable age, his/her adaptability in daily life would be affected.

- Ability to communicate
- Self-care
- Housework
- Social skills
- Working and learning
- Community life

IV. How is Mental Retardation diagnosed?

The diagnosis of MR should be made through professional assessment by psychologists or paediatricians.

V. What are the different grades of Mental Retardation?

According to the prevailing international classification system, MR can be classified into the following grades according to its severity:

Mild
Moderate
Severe
Profound

- Persons with “mild” to “moderate” MR face relatively fewer obstacles during their development. They can acquire general daily living and self-care skills with proper training and assistance.

- Persons with “severe” to “profound” MR require intensive training and support in various aspects to cope with basic needs in daily life

A “three-tier system” is normally used in Hong Kong for operational classification, i.e. MR is classified into “mild”, “moderate” and “severe” (including severe and profound) grades for the provision of special educational and training services.

VI. What are the general achievements of persons with Mental Retardation?

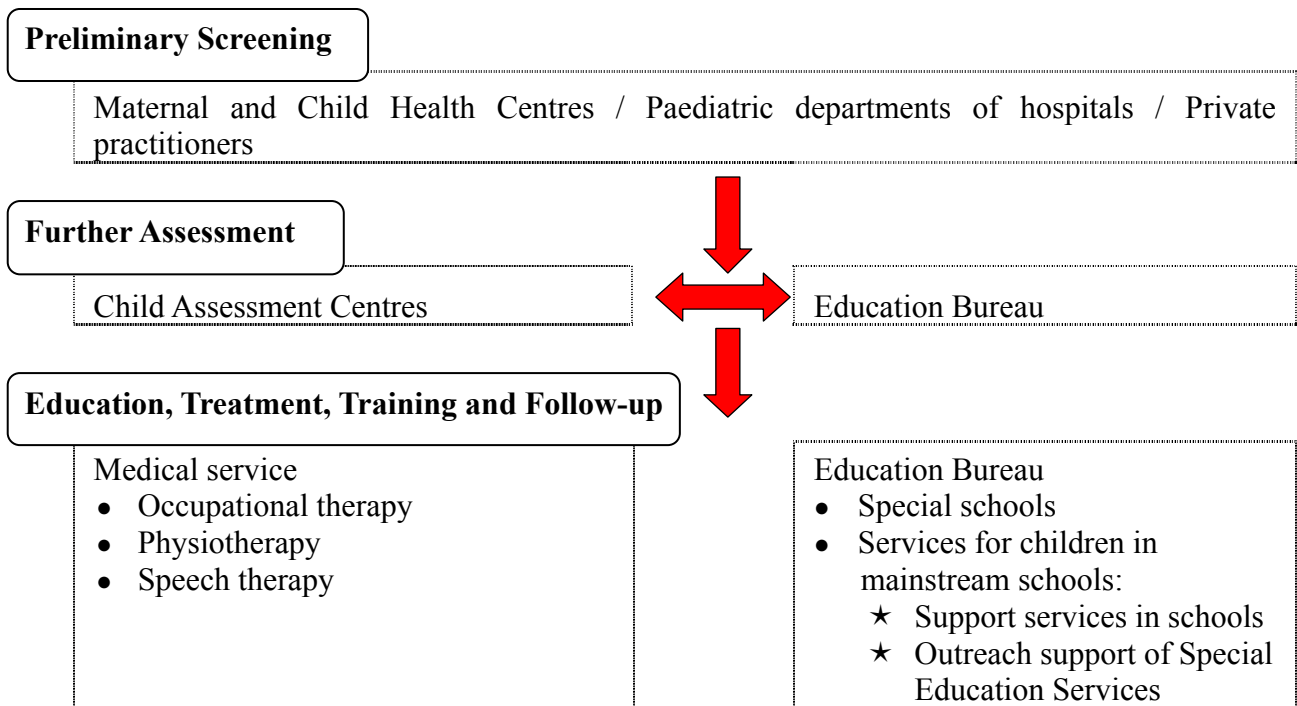
	Pre-school phase (0-5 years old)	School age phase (6-15 years old)	Adolescence and adulthood (16 years old or above)
Mild MR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall development is slower than peers. Developmental problems may not be easily identified until the child starts primary school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can master basic learning skills (e.g. writing, reading and numeracy skills) • Can acquire proper pre-vocational skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can integrate into community with assistance • With assistance, can be employed in simple work, and lead a social life in community
Moderate MR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall development is obviously slower than peers • Can acquire basic communication skills and simple self-care abilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can learn some practical skills for daily living • Can live independently to a certain extent in familiar environment and with proper support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can learn to perform simple tasks in specially designed working environment
Severe / Profound MR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant discrepancy in overall development when compared with peers • Some children may also have physical disabilities • Limited communication abilities and response to the environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delayed development in motor abilities • Can learn limited communication skills and simple self-care tasks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possess simple communication skills • Can master limited basic self-care skills with special support

VII. How can parents help their child with Mental Retardation?

- Arrange early assessment for the child so as to understand and accept his/her developmental problems
- Involve in the child's training so as to master the training methods and communicate with the instructors
- Join parent self-help groups and make good use of community resources
- Share feelings with others to relieve negative emotion and stress

VIII. Where can parents seek help if their child is suspected to have Mental Retardation?

During school age:



During adolescence and adulthood:

Employment services for persons with relatively mild retardation

- Occupational performance assessment and training of the Vocational Training Council
- Selective Placement Division of the Labour Department
- Employment service of the Hong Kong Council of Social Service
- Sheltered workshops of the Social Welfare Department or voluntary organisations

Training services for persons with relatively severe retardation:

- Day activity centres of the Social Welfare Department or voluntary organisations

Enquiry Numbers and Related Websites

Government Bureau / Departments

- Department of Health
Child Assessment Service 2246 6633
www.dhcas.gov.hk
Family Health Service 2961 8855
(Maternal and Child Health Centres) www.fhs.gov.hk
Student Health Service 2349 2772
www.dh.gov.hk
- Social Welfare Department 2343 2255
www.swd.gov.hk
- Education Bureau
(24-Hour Hotline) 2891 0088
Special Education and Special Schools <http://serc.edb.gov.hk>
Special Education Resource Centre
- Vocational Training Council 2836 1000
www.vtc.edu.hk

Other Organisations

- Hospital Authority 2300 6555
(General Enquiry) www.ha.org.hk
- The Hong Kong Joint Council of Parents of the www.hkjcpmh.org.hk
Mentally Handicapped
- Caritas Rehabilitation Services 2524 2071
www.caritas.org.hk
- Wai Ji Christian Service 2776 2622
www.wjcs.org.hk
- Fu Hong Society 2745 0424
www.fuhong.org
- Hong Kong Education City www.hkedcity.net
- Parents' Association for Persons with Intellectual www.papmh.org.tw
Disability

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