



ROYAL COLLEGE
RED CROSS SOCIETY

LAWS RELATED TO CHILDREN IN SRI LANKA



HealthFirst

Contents

1.	The HealthFirst Magazine Series	01
2.	Laws related to children in Sri Lanka	02
3.	Children's rights	04
4.	Awareness on child abuse	06
5.	Organizations helping children	09
6.	Acknowledgement	12

THE HEALTHFIRST MAGAZINE SERIES

The HealthFirst Magazine series is a set of publications which are published by the Royal College Red Cross Society as a free of charge publication. This Magazine series includes 5 magazines under the topics of First Aid in Emergencies, Importance of Mental Health, Laws related to children in Sri Lanka, Importance of Physical Health and Non Communicable Diseases.

This project is being concluded to provide good knowledge about non-identical health related topics as mentioned above for students, teachers and parents in Sri Lanka as the country is going through a global pandemic. The main intention of this magazine series is to generate a new link for the community to have a healthy life. Healthy living means maintaining a healthy lifestyle and introducing habits that improve your health. It might be difficult for you to change the usual habits at once but you can always take new steps to become more healthier. An important first step is identifying less healthy habits and learning new, positive ones to replace them. The HealthFirst Magazine which consists of 5 different magazines will create a new path to be healthy for not only the students alone but also for each and every individual in the country.

HealthFirst Magazine series consists of Health tips, Health-related articles from doctors, articles from the members of the Royal College Red Cross Society and many more important health-related information and facts which will be useful for all the readers. We cordially invite you to refer to these magazines.

**Nethul Tennakoon,
Editor,
HealthFirst Magazine.**

Laws related to Children in Sri Lanka

It is important that every child get to know:

1. Their rights,
2. What laws in the country, are there to protect them,
3. What are the offences committed against children commonly in the society,
4. How to prevent or protect from those crimes
5. What are the offences children may commit
6. Laws related to it and also the punishments.

Knowledge about the laws will help the child to protect himself from crimes and various wrong doings and abuses and also, he can play very important role in protecting or helping other unfortunate children in the school, village, or society who suffer from various abuses and wrong doings of adults.

1. Who is a child in Sri Lanka?

For common purpose child is a person below the age of 18 years. This is the age at which a person gains the legal status of an adult.

2. What is the age for legal marriage?

In Sri Lanka for males and females marriageable age is 18 years.

3. What is the minimum age for employment or work?

Currently, it is at 16 years. No child under 16 years can be employed. 16 to 18 years also there are some restrictions like cannot do dangerous or life-threatening works, no night duties, needs regular intervals in between works etc.

4. What is the minimum age for selling liquor and tobacco?

Liquor and tobacco cannot be sold to any person below 21 years of age in Sri Lanka.

5. What is the age of consent for sexual intercourse for a girl child?

In Sri Lanka no male can have a sexual contact with a girl below 16 years of age, even with her consent. This will constitute an offence of rape.

Child rights in Sri Lanka:

Every Sri Lankan child has the right to

1. Life
2. Freedom
3. Well being
4. Development
5. To be recognized in everywhere in Sri Lanka as a child before the law

6. Right to Equality, Diversity and Non-Discrimination irrespective of any form of socioeconomic status, religion, caste, race, color, language, gender, sexuality, disability and legality etc.

7. Best interest of the child: Best interest of the child shall be the primary considerations in all decisions affecting the lives of children.

8. Participation of children in the process of Decision making.

All children have the right to express his or her opinion and to participate in decisions that affect their lives.

Child Abuse:

Child maltreatment is called child abuse. It may be,

1. Physical
2. Sexual
3. Psychological
4. Neglect

Child abuse may include any act or failure to act by a parent or a caregiver that results in actual or potential harm to a child and can occur in a child's home, or in the organizations, schools or communities the child interacts with.

Child abuse includes:

1. Physical and emotional cruelty to children
2. Exposure and abandonment of child
3. Indecent publications and exhibitions relating to children
4. Causing children to beg
5. Hiring children for sex
6. Hiring children to transport or traffic illegal goods (drugs, weapons)
7. Sexual exploitation of children, Rape, Grave sexual abuse
8. Bullying of children in schools is also a punishable offense.

If you see or know any child who have been abused, please inform to Police, National Child Protection Authority or responsible adult or government officer. **IT IS YOUR DUTY. BE YOURSELF FREE FROM ABUSE AND HELP OTHER CHILDREN TO BE FREE OF ABUSE AND VIOLENCE.**

**Dr. Ajith Tennakoon,
Chief Consultant Judicial Medical Officer, Colombo
President, RCDA**

Children's Rights

Children's rights include the right to health, education, family life, play and recreation, an adequate standard of living and to be protected from abuse and harm. Children's rights cover their developmental and age-appropriate needs that change over time as a child grows up



There are four general principles that underpin all children's rights:

- Non-discrimination means that all children have the same right to develop their potential in all situations and at all times. For example, every child should have equal access to education regardless of the child's gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, disability, parentage, sexual orientation or other status
- The best interests of the child must be "a primary consideration" in all actions and decisions concerning a child, and must be used to resolve

conflicts between different rights.

For example, when making national budgetary decisions affecting children, Government must consider how cuts will impact on the best interests of the child.

- The right to survival and development underscores the vital importance of ensuring access to basic services and to equality of opportunity for children to achieve their full development. For example, a child with a disability should have effective access to education and health care to achieve their full potential.
- The views of the child mean that the voice of the child must be heard and respected in all matters concerning his or her rights. For example, those in power should consult with children before making decisions that will affect them.

Children and young people have the same general human rights as adults and also specific rights that recognize their special needs. Children are neither the property of their parents nor are they helpless objects of charity. They are human beings and are the subject of their own rights.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child sets out the rights that must be realized for children to develop to their full potential.

The Convention offers a vision of the child as an individual and as a member of a family and community, with rights and responsibilities appropriate to his or her age and stage of development. By recognizing children's rights in this way, the Convention firmly sets the focus on the whole child. The Convention recognizes the fundamental human dignity of all children and the urgency of ensuring their well-being and development. It makes clear the idea that a basic quality of life should be the right of all children, rather than a privilege enjoyed by a few.



The Importance of Children's Rights

Children are individuals.

Children are neither the possessions of parents nor of the state, nor are they mere people-in-the-making; they have equal status as members of the human family.

Children start life as totally dependent beings.

Children must rely on adults for the nurture and guidance they need to grow towards independence. Such nurture is ideally found from adults in children's families, but when primary adult caregivers cannot meet children's needs, it is up to the State as the primary duty bearer to find an alternative in the best interests of the child.



The actions, or inactions, of government impact children more strongly than any other group in society.

Practically every area of government policy – from education to public health – affects children to some degree. Short-sighted policymaking that fails to take children into account has a negative impact on the future of all members of society.

Children's views should be heard and considered in the political process.

Children generally do not vote and do not traditionally take part in political processes. Without special attention to the opinions of children – as expressed at home and in schools, in local communities and even in governments – children's views go unheard on the many important issues that affect them now or will affect them in the future.

Many changes in society are having a disproportionate, and often negative, impact on children.

Transformation of the family structure, globalization, climate change, digitalization, mass migration, shifting employment patterns and a shrinking social welfare net in many countries all have strong impacts on children. The impact of these changes can be particularly devastating in situations of armed conflict and other emergencies.

The healthy development of children is crucial to the future well-being of any society.

Because they are still developing, children are especially vulnerable – more so than adults – to poor living conditions such as poverty, inadequate health care, nutrition, safe water, housing and environmental pollution.

The costs to society of failing its children are huge.

Social research findings show that children's earliest experiences significantly influence their future development. The course of their development determines their contribution, or cost, to society over the course of their lives.

By: Sumudu Abeywickrama–After O/L

Awareness on Child Abuse

Child abuse and neglect is one of the most prevalent and significant social problems in the world. In general, abuse refers to (usually deliberate) acts of commission while neglect refers to the acts of omission.

According to the World Health Organization, child abuse and child maltreatment can be referred to as “all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power.” Different rules are applicable to different cultures regarding acceptable parenting practices. The views on child-rearing across cultures might diverge to such an extent that some researchers have suggested that the agreement on what practices are abusive or neglectful can be extremely difficult to reach.



There are five subtypes of child maltreatment which can be distinguished as physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect and negligent treatment, emotional abuse, and exploitation.

1. Physical abuse of a child can be defined as an action that results in actual or potential physical harm. It is in the form of an interaction, which is reasonably within the control of a parent or person in a position of responsibility, power, or trust. It may be of single or repeated incidents.

2. Child sexual abuse is the sexual activity which involves a child in which the child does not fully comprehend, is unable to give informed consent to, or for which the child is not developmentally prepared, or that violates the laws of the society. Child sexual abuse is evidenced by an activity between a child and an adult or another child who by age or development is in a

relationship of responsibility, trust, or power; the activity being intended to gratify or satisfy the needs of other person.

This may include but is not limited to the inducement or coercion of a child to engage in any unlawful sexual activity, the exploitative use of a child in prostitution or other unlawful sexual practices, and the exploitative use of children in pornographic performances and materials.

3. Emotional abuse can be defined as the failure of a caregiver to provide an appropriate and supportive environment and includes acts that have an adverse effect on the emotional health and development.

4. Neglect refers to the inattention or omission to provide for the proper development of the child by the parent or caregiver including all aspects such as health, education, emotional development, proper nutrition, shelter, and safe living conditions, which in the context of the family or caretakers are reasonably available resources and causes, or has a high probability of causing harm to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development. This includes the failure to properly supervise and protect children from harm as much as is feasible.

5. Exploitation refers to commercial or other exploitation of child in work (child labor), or other activities for the benefit of others, such as child trafficking.



Physical, behavioral, and emotional manifestations of abuse vary between children, depending on the child's stage of development when the abuse occurs, the severity of the abuse, the relationship of the perpetrator to the child, the length of time over which the abuse continues, and other factors in the child's environment.



How Is Child Abuse Prevented?

Prevention efforts build on family strengths. Through prevention activities such as parent education, home visitation, and parent support groups, many families are able to find the support they need to stay together and care for their children in their homes and communities. Prevention efforts help parents develop their parenting skills, understand the benefits of non-violent discipline techniques, and understand and meet their child's emotional, physical, and developmental needs. Prevention programs also can help parents identify other needs they may have and offer assistance in getting that additional support.

By: Yuvin Wimalaratne – After O/L

Organizations which helps children

Children are in need of assistance all over the world, and many non-profits have dedicated their missions to help those children.

They focus on a variety of ways to help, such as improving literacy rates and providing food to hungry children. Efforts are being made on an international level to positively impact children living in poverty or war zones.



International Literacy Association

This global organization focuses on improving literacy for children everywhere. Educators and researchers work together to promote the habit of reading and address how children can improve their skill set to do so. The International Literacy Association has more than 300,000 people working across 86 different countries to set a standard for children's literacy.



International Child Art Foundation

This foundation is focused on preserving arts programs in schools. With more and more of education turning to technology, it is imperative to keep creativity present for children. The organization runs several programs to encourage children to nourish their empathy through creative paths. The International Child Art Foundation hosts the World Children's Festival every four years to honor and celebrate art.



Make a Wish Foundation

The Make-a-Wish foundation does exactly that. It's dedicated to fulfilling the wishes of sick children. The wishes can be anything, but most are either, "I wish to: go, be, meet, have, give." The organization receives referrals for children and works closely with the medical staff involved in the child's case to determine the best time to grant their wish.

The Make-a-Wish foundation fulfills wishes that often involve children getting a chance to meet their heroes or experience something for the first time, such as riding in a fire truck.



UNICEF

UNICEF is the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund. The agency works to provide both humanitarian and developmental assistance to children. UNICEF strives to promote policies that will protect children's rights worldwide. The organization often works with well-known public figures. For the #ENDviolence campaign, UNICEF partnered with K-Pop group BTS to share a message of love and to promote anti-bullying efforts in schools



Save the Children

Save the Children operates in more than 120 countries, with a mission to offer emergency aid to children in need during wars or natural disasters. In times of crisis, Save the Children raises money to provide children with food, clean water, and other necessary supplies. In times of peace, Save the Children fights for children to have better education and better health care everywhere in the world



Children International

This non-profit humanitarian organization works to help children in poverty. To overcome living in poverty, Children International focuses on early intervention for kids. It provides health services, nutritional needs, counseling, and other avenues of care. The organization also offers training programs so that children and youths can learn skills to earn employment. Children International accomplishes this by working through community centers already established in the area to help break children out of the cycle of poverty



SOS Children's Villages

SOS Children's Villages help children in need of a family. The organization has housing where children of different ages live together with a parent, and the parent's sole responsibility is the proper care of the kids. SOS Children's Villages also works to protect the rights of children in governments around the world.



World of Children

World of Children raises funds to help vulnerable children. Whether the kids are experiencing sexual abuse, bullying, or illness, the organization offers assistance to protect children who have had a traumatic occurrence in their lives. At-risk children are supported through World of Children programs that offer care, education, and guidance. The goal is to help every child feel happy and healthy.



Global Fund for Children

This nonprofit operates at a global level to find funding for local organizations. The funds are used to help kids in need. Community organizations that offer services and programs that benefit kids can apply for grants through the Global Fund. The funds have supported solar-powered schools and the publishing of children's books. More than \$40 million has been provided in grants to 600 organizations in 80 different countries since the fund first began.



Feed the Children

Feed the Children wants to end hunger for children everywhere. The nonprofit organization delivers food, clean water, vitamins, and other supplies to children. These are children living in poverty or who have experienced a natural disaster or who are living in a war zone. Feed the Children distributes the supplies through centers that have been established in various locations both nationally and internationally. The organization currently works in all 50 states and 10 countries, with the hope of expanding its reach to more countries to end childhood hunger.



By: Sachira Amarasinghe – 12ME

Acknowledgement

- To our Principal, Mr. M.V.S. Gunathilaka, Senior Games Master, Mr. M.A.M. Riyaz, Senior Master of Clubs and Societies, Mr. T.D.C.P. Amaratunga, Teacher in Charge, Mrs. Jasmine Wickramatillake and Assistant Teacher in Charge, Mrs. Saranga Rajapakshe for their guidance.
- To Dr. Ajith Tennakoon, President of the Royal College Doctors' Association, Dr. Wajantha Kotalawala, Col. Dr. Champika Abeysinghe, Dr. Manola Nanayakkara, Dr. Mahesh Kumbukage and the Royal College Doctors' Association for their assistance.
- To the Royal College Prefects' Council 2020/21, Deputy Head Prefect of Clubs and Societies and Clubs Committee for thier guidance and support.