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Tuesday, 25 July 2017

Review rules for fostering and adoption

I REFER to the letter “[Enforce strict adoption procedures](#)” (*The Star*, July 19). I agree with OrphanCare Foundation’s view that there is no substitute for rigorous screening, based on standard operating procedures (SOP), of potential families and married couples for fostering or adopting children.

The death of the toddler could have been prevented if a proper SOP had been drafted, adopted and religiously enforced.

The SOP should include background checks on the potential family, checking with their neighbours to get feedback on their behavioural proclivity towards children or parenting skills, an in-depth interview, conducting inspection on the potential family’s home, and training and motivation courses to prepare them mentally for the challenge of parenthood.

This SOP should ensure that the right family has been selected to foster or adopt a child.

And most important of all, follow-up visits by social workers and officers from the Social Welfare Department (JKM) must be conducted to closely monitor the development and wellbeing of the children during the post-adoption period.

Our responsibility does not end once a child has been fostered or adopted. It is our moral duty to be constantly vigilant about their welfare and safety so that the children who are transferred to the selected homes are protected and grow up in a family environment of love, warmth and respect as envisaged in the fostering or adoption programme. We must ensure that their journey to healthy adulthood is not derailed by abuse and violence in their new homes.

The adoption of the SOP is a prerequisite to ensure that the family-based care initiative proposed in the amended Child Act (2016) will be successfully implemented as the new *modus operandi* for childcare in the future. The amendment aims to introduce the concept of family-based care to complement institutional care. It is an integral component of deinstitutionalisation as a new

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environment.

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The underlying philosophy of family-based care is to establish a better environment for these children to grow up, as research has shown that children growing up in institutions are more likely to suffer from poor health, physical underdevelopment and deterioration in mental growth.

The SOP will ensure that the right of a child as enshrined in Article 6 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is protected. It is our moral obligation that all children are entitled to the right of survival and nurturing their full potential into adulthood.

What happened to the unfortunate toddler was a tragedy. Hopefully, this tragedy is a wake-up call to galvanise us to take immediate action to relook and tighten the rules and SOP for fostering and adoption. Let us strive to right a flawed system for the children to have a better tomorrow.

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Tumpat, Kelantan



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