

# When a good heart is not enough

Summary of a research project "A Comparative Analysis between the Practice of Chiang Mai Children's Homes and The United Nations Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children" by the CRC Coalition Thailand

This research and report were conducted in Thai language and have subsequently been translated to English.

The key principles of the United Nations Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children were summarized by the research team, as shown in the following diagram. References in brackets are to the paragraph numbers of the guidelines.

## Instruments for Provision of Alternative Care for Children (based on International Standards)

Procedure for vulnerable children

Procedure for children in alternative Care

Procedure for aftercare and family reintegration

### Gatekeeping

Family separation should be the measure of last resort, temporary and for the shortest possible duration. Removal decisions should be regularly reviewed to determine if the original causes of removal have been resolved or have disappeared (14). Thorough reviews of the suitability of care treatment and its necessity should be carried out at least every three months. (67)

### Care Plan

Decision-making on alternative care for each individual child should be based on evaluation, planning, and revision by qualified professionals (57). Planning for care provision and permanency should be carried out from the earliest possible time before the child enters care. (61)

### Family&Community Reintegration

Aftercare should be prepared as early as possible in the placement and well before the child leaves the care setting. (134)  
Appropriate aftercare and follow-up should be ensured for children leaving care as young adults. (131)

### Family Support

When approached by a parent or caregiver wishing to place a child in care for a short or indefinite period, the State should ensure the availability of counselling and social support to encourage and enable him or her to continue to care for the child.. (45) Access to social, legal and health services, together with appropriate financial support, should also be provided to young people leaving care and during aftercare. (136)



Alternative Care  
Thailand



# Suggestion for providing services in the best interest of children

18 semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted in 2018. The research covered 3 large and 3 small randomly selected registered private children's homes. 6 key informants were children's home operators and 12 key informants were the parents of children in those children's homes who had either sent their child to or received them back from the children's home.

During the study, it was found that the practices of registered private children's homes both corresponded to and contradicted the United Nations' Guidelines for Alternative Care. The guidelines were launched in 2009, however the children's homes in this study still lack understanding of its content. The practices which follow the guidelines, such as encouraging children to visit home during their school break, were only coincidental practices which do not reflect the true intention of the Guidelines for Alternative Care. While the practices which directly contradicted the Guidelines, such as the lack of gatekeeping processes and regular reviews of decisions determining if children should continue living in alternative care or start the family reintegration process, were likely the result of unfamiliarity with the guidelines as well as the lack of skill to implement them.. Please follow links below to see the full findings of this research.

## Recommendations

### 1. For government

**1.1 Government's role towards the public:** Awareness campaign of the family's importance and the consequences of separating children from their families, in order to change the attitude and create new value in society.

**1.2 Government's role towards practitioners:** Training of knowledge and skills and ensure that their practice will be based on the Alternative Care Guidelines in the following areas:

- Family support
- Gatekeeping
- Individual care planning
- Family reintegration

**1.3 Government's role towards children at risk**

- Provide family support services so that families can raise their own children whenever possible.
- Provide more support for family-based care for children without parental care.

**1.4 Government's role towards children's homes in Thailand**

- Review, update, and enforce the law to fulfil the expectation of the UN Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children
- Transfer resources currently used for institutional care towards providing family support services (Deinstitutionalization: DI)

### 2. For children's home executive

Consider and identify the true needs of children and family, such as education scholarship support or income support, and adjust the forms of support by focusing on the actual cause of problems rather than separating children from their families.

### 3. For faith-based organisations (FBOs)

Be aware that "the provision of alternative care should never be undertaken with a prime purpose of furthering the political, religious or economic goals of the provider" (United Nations, 2009, article 20) but all provision must be based on the principle of "non-discrimination" and "the best interest of children".

### 4. For volunteers

Short-term volunteers in children homes should do work which does not directly relate to children, such as fundraising or facilities improvement, etc.



This document is also available in Thai. If you would like to discuss any of the points in this summary handout, or if you would like to receive the full report by email, please contact us at [oneskythailand@gmail.com](mailto:oneskythailand@gmail.com), or visit [www.alternativecarethailand.com](http://www.alternativecarethailand.com)



The child in this image is not the child living in the institution or related to the above content. One Sky already received the child and the parent's written permission to use the image for the foundation's campaign.