

Central Co-ordinating Referral Mechanism

Upon parents' consent, ordinary schools may refer their students with emotional and behavioural difficulties to the Central Co-ordinating Referral Mechanism (CCRM), which is jointly managed by the Education Bureau (EDB) and the Social Welfare Department (SWD), for vetting and arrangement of appropriate services in schools for social development (SSDs)/residential homes (RHs). The Vetting Committee under CCRM vets the referrals to decide on their suitability for placement in SSDs/RHs. Details are as follows:

1. Referrers

Referrals can be made by social workers, student guidance personnel, educational psychologists, clinical psychologists, psychiatrists and officers of the Correctional Services Department (CSD), with the endorsement of the countersigning officer (i.e. for referrers being the school personnel, social workers or officers of CSD, the countersigning officers will be the school principals, centre-in-charge of the respective organisations or Chief Correctional Officer). Referrers should submit the email addresses of the countersigning officers via the "Electronic System for Application for Placement in School for Social Development/ Residential Home (eAppSSD)"¹ for receipt of messages related to the applications.

2. Referral Procedures

- (i) With reference to the latest information uploaded to the EDB SENSE website², referrers should have given the students and parents appropriate professional assessment and counselling services to ascertain their need for placement before the referrals are made.
- (ii) Referrers should submit, via the eAppSSD, the application form (CRM-F1) and related information, e.g. latest school report, medical report, reports from psychologist, counsellor or psychiatrist for processing by the Vetting Committee under the CCRM. Referrers must inform the report issuing agencies and parents/guardians in advance of the aforesaid referring procedures and obtain their consents before submission of the documents to the Vetting Committee. Copies of the related documents for the successful cases will be sent to the receiving SSD/RH.
- (iii) For students in need of residential service, the referrers who are not their family caseworkers should refer the cases as soon as possible to the Integrated Family Services Centres/Integrated Services Centres serving the respective districts of the students' families. This is to ensure that appropriate and adequate support services are rendered to the families for the students to resume normal family life early.

¹ The "Electronic System for Application for Placement in School for Social Development/ Residential Home (eAppSSD)" can be accessed via <https://eappssd.edb.gov.hk/home> or the EDB SENSE website (sense.edb.gov.hk): [Home > Special Education > Common Administrative Issues](#).

² The EDB SENSE website (sense.edb.gov.hk): [Home > Special Education > Common Administrative Issues](#).

- (iv) For students applying for Short-term Adjustment Programme, referrers and the ordinary schools (original schools) the students are attending should understand the objectives of the programme, the service period³ and the mode of collaboration with SSDs/RHs. If the referrer is not the school social worker, he/she should communicate with the original school to obtain its written consent for maintaining the student's registration and the arrangement and follow-up for the student to attend the programme, as well as to complete the part on "Declaration" in the application form.
- (v) Referrers should, to the best of their knowledge, provide comprehensive and accurate information in order to avoid any delay in the process of vetting and referral. Applications will not be accepted if referrers fail to submit supplementary information within 14 days from the date of request by the Vetting Committee without justified reasons.
- (vi) When the application has been approved and put on the waiting list of SSDs/RHs, referrers should comply strictly with the requirement for timely updating of the latest service need of the students waitlisting for day and boarding placement by submitting the standard form "Updating of the Application for Residential Placement" (CRM-F3B) to CCRM on a monthly basis. In the event that a referrer fails to submit the standard form for more than three months, CCRM will send a written request to the referrer for providing the latest information of the student within seven working days. This is to avoid keeping those students who had already withdrawn their application on the waiting list. Besides, CCRM will only proceed the cases with updated information on the waiting list. For other waitlisted cases, CCRM will re-activate them after receiving their updated information from the referrers.
- (vii) SSDs/RHs are required to provide updates at least once a month by phone and the standard form to CCRM on the existing and estimated day and boarding vacancies available within a month⁴. In accordance with the order on the waiting list, CCRM will refer cases to SSDs/RHs for admission as soon as possible. Under special circumstances, if no immediate day and boarding places can be provided for the students, SSDs/RHs should contact CCRM for arrangement of alternative arrangements for the students.
- (viii) In the course of registration for admission, the referrers should work closely with the SSD/RH concerned. Unless there is no vacancy, the admission procedures should be completed within 14 working days upon receipt of the admission notification (starting from the date of issue of the admission notification from the EDB to the SSD/RH). If a student fails to turn up for

³ Short-term Adjustment Programme normally lasts for three months to one year.

⁴ If SSDs/RHs anticipate that vacancies may be available in more than one month's time (e.g. during June/July before the summer vacation, SSDs may be able to estimate more accurately the vacancies available in September), they should set out in the standard form the estimated time for available places to enable filling of the places as appropriate.

admission to the SSD/RH within the aforesaid period, the referrer is required to provide acceptable reasons and apply to the SSD/RH for an additional 14 working days to complete the procedure. If the student still fails to turn up for admission within the aforesaid 28 working days to complete the admission procedure, the place will be allocated to another applicant. Unless there are acceptable reasons, the application will be treated as a withdrawn case.

- (ix) For SSDs/RHs reported to have more day and boarding vacancies, CCRM will refer cases based on the reported number together with “extra case(s)” to the SSDs/RHs. The SSDs/RHs must strictly adhere to the request of Item (viii) above and complete the admission procedures for the students no later than 28 working days. For any cases who failed to complete the admission procedures within the time limit, the day and boarding places reserved for them will be given to the “extra case(s)”.
- (x) For urgent cases with genuine needs justified by professional assessment, heads of SSDs/RHs may contact the Vetting Committee under CCRM for special consideration. Upon the Vetting Committee’s consent, SSDs/RHs may give priority to the students for admission.

3. The Vetting Committee

(i) Functions

- (a) To vet all referrals for placement in SSDs/RHs, so as to ensure that the educational and residential placement meets the needs of each student; and
- (b) To keep statistical records, to facilitate the EDB and the SWD to understand the students’ need for SSDs/RHs service, and to consider if other modes of service are required.

(ii) Composition

The Vetting Committee comprises:

- (a) one educational psychologist (EP) of the EDB;
- (b) one inspector from Educational Psychology Service Section of the EDB;
- (c) one inspector from the EDB responsible for referral and placement; and
- (d) one Senior Social Work Officer from the Corrections Section of the SWD.

(iii) Duties

- (a) The Vetting Committee meets regularly and at least once a week.
- (b) The inspector from Educational Psychology Service Section of the EDB will hold discussion with the referrers about the educational needs of the students

and alternative placement as appropriate. The inspector responsible for referral and placement will contact the referrers for additional case information if needed.

- (c) EDB members are responsible for vetting referrals for day placement and assessing the educational needs of the cases applying for residential service. The SWD member is responsible for vetting referrals for residential service.

4. Referral to SSDs/RHs/other services

- (i) Students assessed by the Vetting Committee to be suitable for placement in SSDs are referred to SSDs by the EDB.
- (ii) Students assessed to be suitable for placement in both SSDs and RHs will be referred by the EDB to SSDs/RHs concerned when the SWD has confirmed vacancies in relevant residential homes and has provided the EDB with the referral list. SWD will send in parallel the referral list and contact details of the referrers to the SSDs/RHs concerned. On receipt of the referral list and contact details of the referrers, the SSDs/RHs can contact the referrers as soon as possible to arrange interview for the students. When the SSDs/RHs receive the comprehensive information of the students from the EDB, they can then contact the referrers to proceed the admission procedures.
- (iii) For students considered more suitable for other types of schools or specialist services (e.g. psychiatric treatment), their cases are returned to the referrers for follow-up actions.

5. Appeal Board

- (i) An Appeal Board will be convened whenever necessary to review cases encountering placement difficulties after the approval of the Vetting Committee and the referral issued to SSDs/RHs. The main task of the Appeal Board is to ensure that all students in need have access to appropriate services for students with moderate to severe emotional and behavioural difficulties.
- (ii) Depending on the nature of the case, the EDB and the SWD will invite representatives from the SSD and RH to form an Appeal Board with EDB and SWD officers. The Appeal Board will meet at the earliest possible time to explore possible means of helping the students in need to receive appropriate service as soon as possible.

6. Information to be submitted by SSDs/RHs and Referrer to the EDB and the SWD

Subsequent to the admission of students or pursuant to any changes of the students' placement, SSDs/RHs should use the following forms to notify the EDB and the SWD of the details by fax as soon as possible. Referrers should regularly provide update on the details of the students' applications approved and referred to the services of

SSDs/RHs:

(i) Forms to be used by SSDs/RHs

- (a) Progress on admission to SSDs/RHs: Form **CRM-F 2A**
- (b) Notification for discharging from SSDs/RHs: Form **CRM-F2B**
- (c) Change of service for students in SSDs/RHs: Form **CRM-F2C**

(ii) Forms to be used by Referrers

- (a) Updating of application for day placement: Form **CRM-F3A**

In case of withdrawal of the application for a day placement, the referrer should notify the EDB and SSD immediately by a duly completed CRM-F3A.

- (b) Updating of the Application for Residential Placement: Form **CRM-F3B**
The referrer should provide updates on the application for a residential placement by completing CRM-F3B on a monthly basis starting from the approval date of the application. In case of withdrawal of the application in the admission process, the referrer should notify the EDB, the SWD and the SSD/RH concerned immediately by completing this form.

7. Criteria for discharging students and arrangements

(i) Criteria for discharge

Whether a student is suitable for discharge should be based on professional judgment. An SSD/RH should refer to the following areas for assessing the suitability for discharging a student:

- (a) Behavioural condition - To assess whether there is improvement in the student's behaviour and emotion as compared with the conditions right after his/her admission by making reference to the information on the application form and the welfare plan provided by the referrer.
- (b) Family condition - To assess whether the family support is stable and appropriate, whether family acceptance and support are adequate and whether there is improvement in the student's self-care ability.
- (c) Academic condition - To assess whether there is improvement in the student's motivation and initiative to study and whether there will be any negative influence on the student's succession upon changing school.

Different professionals, including teachers and social workers of the SSD/RH, the referrer, the case worker of the student, parents or guardian, original school teachers/professional team (for students attending Short-term Adjustment Programme), etc. should be involved in the assessment. When there are long-stay cases, the EDB

will look into them based on the information provided by the SSD. If necessary, the EDB will follow up and review the cases.

(ii) Discharge arrangements

(a) Day students and boarders

Upon admission the students, the SSDs/RHs should review regularly their progress as well as their education and welfare plans. When a student has stayed for about one and a half years, the SSD/RH should conduct a comprehensive review on his/her progress and discuss discharge arrangements with time frame to help the student return to ordinary school and/or re-integrate into the community as early as possible.

(b) Students of Short-term Adjustment Programme

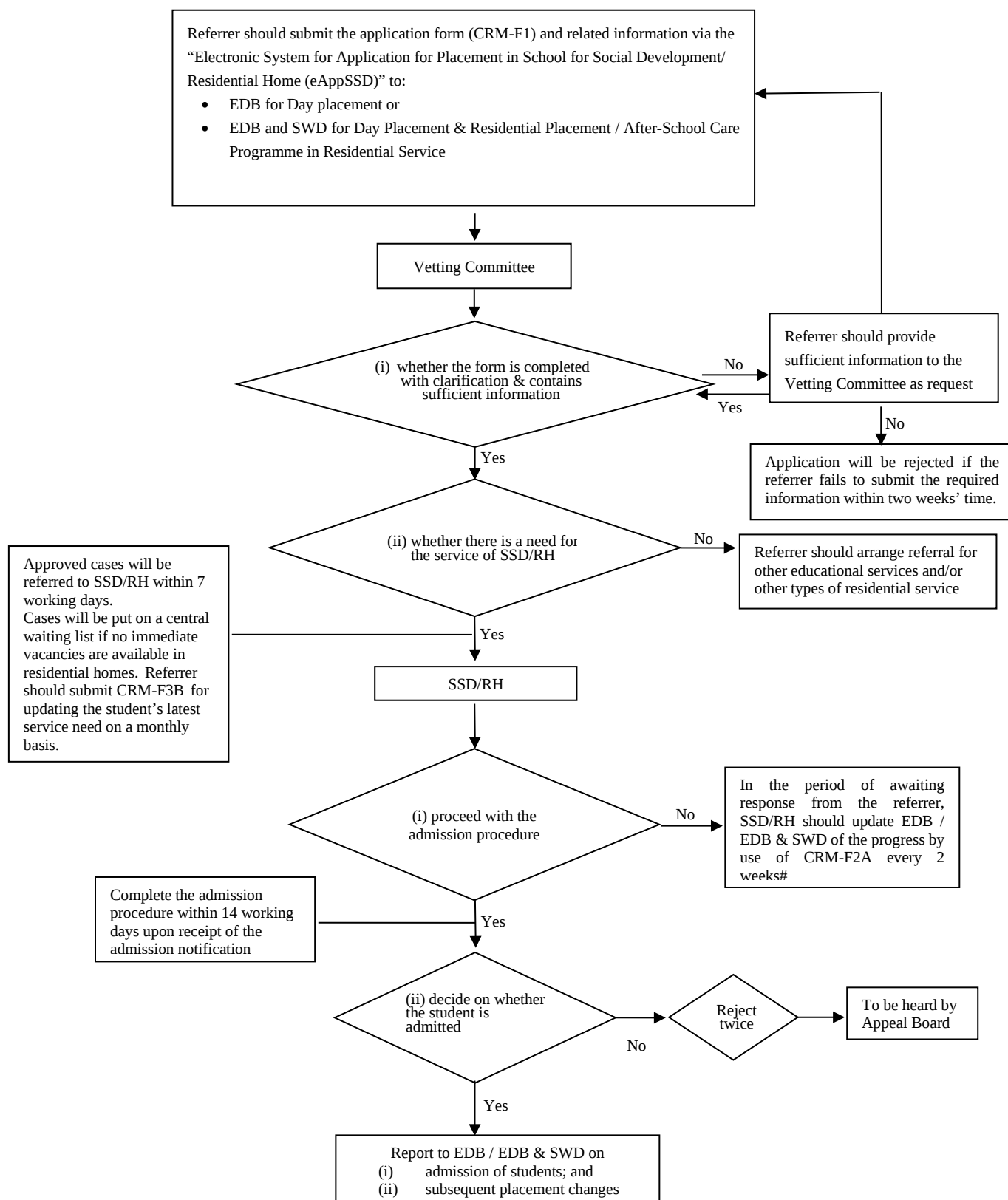
SSD/RH should maintain close communication with parents and the original school teachers /professional team and review the progress of improvement and effectiveness of the support plan of the students in the regular review meetings in order to revise/refine the related objectives and implementation strategies. When the emotional and behavioural problems of the students have improved, and the students are ready to return to the original school, the SSD/RH should discuss with the original school teachers /professional team, parents and students in the last review meeting the concrete transition plan for the students to reintegrate and continue their learning in the original schools.

8. Review on long-stay cases

According to experience of SSDs/RHs and statistics, most students in SSDs are able to achieve apparent improvement and leave school within two school years. As such, the EDB, the SWD and SSDs/RHs have agreed to take two school years as a reference point for follow up on the long-stay cases in SSDs.

For students having stayed in SSDs/RHs for two school years, SSDs are required to provide explanations for their long stay and the discharge plans for them in September, November, January, April and June every school year. SSDs/RHs are required to keep records of every case for examination by the parties concerned when necessary. Based on the information provided by SSDs, the EDB will study the reasons of individual long-stay cases. If necessary, the EDB will conduct school visits to check records and observe the students for review and follow-up purposes.

9. Flow-chart on Central Co-ordinating Referral Mechanism



For students who fail to turn up for admission to the SSD/RH within 14 working days and even after an additional 14 working days is granted by the SSD/RH, their applications will be treated as withdrawn cases unless there are acceptable reasons. SSD/RH will inform CCRM to allocate the places to other applicants.