

MEMORANDUM CIRCULARNo. 12
Series of 2025

SUBJECT : REVISED DSWD PROTOCOL FOR SOCIAL WORKERS AND ALLIED PROFESSIONALS IN HANDLING CHILDREN IN SITUATIONS OF ARMED CONFLICT (CSAC)

I. RATIONALE

The Philippines recognizes the importance of protecting Children in Situations of Armed Conflict (CSAC). It is a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and an advocate for children's rights. The UNCRC was signed by the Philippines on 26 January 1990, which was then ratified by the Philippine Senate on 21 August 1990. (United Nations, 1990) The same international covenant gave rise to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC-OP-AC) on the involvement of children in armed conflict, which was signed on 8 September 2000 and ratified on 26 August 2003. (UN Human Rights, 2000)

In the 2024 UN Security Council Report of the Secretary General on Recruitment and Use of Children by Armed Groups in the Philippines, 21 children were recruited in non-state armed groups, 17 of which are boys while 4 are girls. Children were used in combat and support roles, including as informants for the armed groups and for sexual purposes.

Also, the UN Security Council Report stated that there were 58 grave violations against 43 children (33 boys and 10 girls). As reported in previous years, killing and maiming, recruitment and use and attacks on schools remained the three most verified grave violations. After killing and maiming (43%, recruitment and use remain prevalent, accounting for 38% of the total number of violations. In addition, four grave violations, against three children (2 boys, 1 girl), that had occurred in previous years, were verified in 2022.

Meanwhile, the Inter-Agency Committee on Children in Situations of Armed Conflict (IAC-CSAC) in their January 2025 report listed 4 Children Involved in Armed Conflict (CIAC), 763 Children Affected by Armed Conflict (CAAC) and 314 Internally Displaced Children (IDC). (IAC-CSAC, 2025)

The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) is mandated to implement laws and policies related to child protection, such as RA 7610 otherwise known as the Special Protection of Children Against Child Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination Act. Also, by virtue of RA 11188 or the Special Protection of Children in Situations of Armed Conflict Act (RA 11188) and its Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR), the DSWD is also mandated to implement its provisions. Under its Section 6, *"Treatment of children as Zones of Peace shall extend beyond territorial or geographical boundaries and shall focus on the person of the child whose rights shall be promoted and protected at all times, especially in situations of armed conflict or violence. The State and all sectors concerned shall have the responsibility to resolve armed conflict in order to promote the goal of children as Zones of Peace. As such, the community, governmental authority and, if appropriate, religious leadership shall preserve the peaceful integrity of children, exemplify mutual respect and nonviolent behavior in the presence of children, and share their resources to further peace and cooperation."*

In fulfillment of RA 7610 and other mandates at the time, the DSWD issued Administrative Order No. 84, Series of 2002 or the "Procedures in Handling Children Involved in Armed Conflict" the Department Order No. 44, Series of 1994 or the "Guidelines for Implementation of Services to Children in Situation of Armed Conflict."

However, due to the changing political and economic situations of our country as well as the continuous development of various local and international child protection instruments, commitments, and policies, the Philippine Government took an active step in promoting the protection of children in situations of armed conflict. To bolster these efforts, the Inter-Agency Committee on Children in Situations of Armed Conflict (IAC-CSAC) convened an online caravan resulting in the formal adoption of a unified Protocol on 29 September 2020 (hereby referred to as the CSAC Protocol). (IAC-CSAC, 2020).

In consideration of the above, this Memorandum Circular provides the protocols for handling Children in Situations of Armed Conflict and shall be applicable to all CSAC in the Philippines.

II. LEGAL BASES

A. INTERNATIONAL INSTRUMENTS

1. **The International Labor Organization (ILO) Convention 182** calls for the elimination of the worst forms of child labor as the main priority for national and international action, including international cooperation and assistance for all forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, such as the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom and forced or compulsory labor, including forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict; and
2. The Philippines, as a State Party, is mandated to prohibit the recruitment of CSAC and to adopt the **1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)** which provides the minimum standards for state parties to ensure the promotion and protection of the rights of children. The Philippines, as a State Party, and mandated to prohibit the recruitment of children in situations of armed conflict and to adopt feasible measures to ensure the protection and care of children who are affected by armed conflict.

B. NATIONAL LAWS AND POLICIES

1. **Republic Act No. 11188 or the "Special Protection of Children in Situations of Armed Conflict Act"** and its corresponding Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) stipulates that the State shall provide special protection for children in situations of armed conflict from all forms of abuse, violence, neglect, cruelty, discrimination, and other conditions prejudicial to their development;
2. **Section 2 of Republic Act No. 10821 or "Children's Emergency Relief and Protection Act"** stipulates to protect the fundamental rights of children before, during, and after disasters and other emergency situations when children are gravely threatened or endangered by circumstances that affect their survival and normal development. The State shall establish and implement a comprehensive and strategic program of action to provide the children affected by disasters and other emergency situations with utmost support and assistance necessary for their immediate recovery and protection against all forms of violence, cruelty, discrimination, neglect,

abuse, exploitation and other acts prejudicial to their interest, survival, development and well-being;

3. **Republic Act No. 10630 or "An Act Establishing a Comprehensive Juvenile Justice and Welfare System of 2012"** amending **Republic Act 9344 or the "The Juvenile Justice and Welfare Act of 2006"** sets the minimum age of criminal responsibility at above 15 years old as well as a comprehensive system dealing with children in conflict with the law and children at risk, which could be defined as a child who is vulnerable and is at risk;
4. **Republic Act No. 10364 or the Expanded Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act of 2012**, amending **Republic Act 9208 or the "Anti – Trafficking in Persons Act of 2003"** defines and penalizes trafficking in persons which includes recruiting, transporting, and adopting a child to be engaged in armed activities in the Philippines and abroad;
5. **Republic Act No. 10173 or the "Data Privacy Act of 2012"** defines sensitive personal information, responsibilities of agencies and prescribes how to handle the same;
6. **Republic Act No. 10121 or the "Philippine Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act of 2010"** recognizing human-induced hazards such as armed conflict as a form of man-made calamity;
7. **Republic Act No. 9344 otherwise known as the "Comprehensive Juvenile Justice and Welfare System"** states that a "Child at Risk" refers to a child who is vulnerable to and at risk of committing criminal offenses because of personal, family, and social circumstances, such as living in situations of armed conflict;
8. **Republic Act No. 9262 or the "Anti-Violence Against Women and Their Children Act of 2004"** defines violence against women and their children and provides penalties thereof;
9. **Republic Act No. 9231 or "An Act Providing for the elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor and Affording Stronger Protection for the Working Child Amending for this Purpose Republic Act 7610"** defines the recruitment and use of children as well as slavery and trafficking of children to be engaged in armed activities as worst forms of child labor and is punishable by law;
10. **Republic Act No. 8353 or the "New Anti-Rape Law of 1997"** states that rape can be committed by any member of the Armed Forces of the Philippines or para-military units thereof or the Philippine National Police or any law enforcement agency or penal institution when the offender took advantage of his position to facilitate the commission of the crime;
11. **Republic Act No. 7658 or "An Act Prohibiting the Employment of Children below 15 years of age in Public and Private undertaking, amending for this Republic Act 7610"** states the prohibition on the employment of children below fifteen (15) years of age;
12. **Republic Act No. 7610 also known as the "Special Protection of Children Against Child Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination Act"** states that a comprehensive program for children shall be formulated to protect them from any form of abuse that might jeopardize their development. Furthermore, the law declares children as zones of peace and are prioritized during nature and human-induced disasters such as the results of armed conflict as well as the provision of temporary shelter and recognition of their rights as children;
13. **Republic Act No. 7160 or the "Local Government Code of 1991"** recognizes the primary role of the Local Government Units in the development and growth of communities through their vested functions in social service delivery, including the delivery of health services, maintaining

peace and order in the community for the safety of children and including the programs and projects for the rebel returnees and evacuees;

14. **Article II, Section 11 of the 1987 Philippine Constitution** provides that “The State values the dignity of every human person and guarantees full respect for human rights”;
15. **Article XV, Section 3(2) of the 1987 Philippine Constitution** provides that “The state shall defend the right of children to assistance including proper care and nutrition and special protection from all forms of neglect, abuse, cruelty, exploitation, and other conditions prejudicial to their development”; and
16. **Presidential Decree No. 603 or the “Child and Youth Welfare Code”** stipulates in its declaration policy that the Child is one of the most important assets of the nation. Every effort should be exerted to promote their welfare and develop their opportunities to be active members of society.

C. DEPARTMENT ISSUANCES

1. **DSWD Memorandum Circular No. 09, Series of 2025 or the Guidelines on the Implementation of Social Case Management Service for Former Members of Non-State Armed Groups (FMNSAG) and Individuals and Families Affected by Armed Conflict** which covers CSACs, who are victims of terrorism, as part of their target clientele and adopts the TFA as part of its guiding principles;
2. **DSWD Administrative Order No. 84 Series of 2002 or the “Procedures in the Handling and Treatment of Children Involved in Armed Conflict”** stipulated the protocol and procedures in the protective custody, treatment, rehabilitation, and reintegration of children involved in an armed conflict who are rescued and turned over to the DSWD; and
3. **Department Order No. 44 Series of 1994** provided the guidelines for the implementation of services for Children in Situations of Armed Conflict.

D. OTHER ISSUANCES

1. **Department of Justice: Department Circular No. 017, Series of 2023 “Reiterating the Statutory Immunity in Favor of Social Workers Taking Protective Custody of Children”**; and
2. **Department of Justice: Guide for Media Practitioners on the Reporting and Coverage of Cases Involving Children** reiterates the right to privacy and confidentiality of children as well as upholding the dignity of children at all times.

III. OBJECTIVES

These protocols aim to provide social workers in the Department and Local Government Units (LGUs), as well as allied professionals, with detailed references for handling and treating children in situations of armed conflict. Capacity building and continuing education on handling CSAC matters shall be provided to those covered by this protocol.

Moreover, the reference for interpretation of this guideline is within the provisions of RA 11188, its Implementing Rules and Regulations and the CSAC Protocol to ensure that children shall be protected under this guideline is to be applied in a supplementary manner to ensure comprehensive protection for children within the DSWD program and policies.

IV. DEFINITION OF TERMS

1. **Allied Professional** refers to a person who is trained in social case management to ensure they are fully and properly equipped with the knowledge, skills, and right attitude in handling the CSAC. Health Workers (HWs), as defined in Chapter IV.14 of this protocol are also considered as allied professionals;
2. **Alternative Custodial Facility** refers to a facility or shelter that is determined by the Local Social Welfare and Development Officer (LSWDO), Local Council for the Protection of Children (LCPC) of Regional Committee/Sub-Committee for the Welfare of Children (RC/SCWC) to be, after considering the security risks faced by the CSAC, suitable for the child to receive temporary shelter, care and protection;
3. **Armed Conflict** refers to armed confrontations occurring between government forces and one or more armed groups, or between such groups arising in the Philippine territory. This shall include activities that may lead to or are undertaken in preparation for armed confrontation or armed violence that put children's lives at risk and their rights violated;
4. **Attacks on schools, hospitals, places of worship, child development or daycare centers, evacuation centers, and other public places such as recreation parks, playgrounds, and malls** refer to the occupation, shelling, or targeting for the propaganda of schools, hospitals or places of worship; causing damage to such places, or harm or injury to their personnel; or causing the total or partial physical destruction of such facilities; or disruption of educational activities and health services. These also refer to attacks on such places which have been temporarily abandoned by the community as a result of armed conflict;
5. **Child** – refers to:
 - a. *A person below eighteen (18) years of age; or*
 - b. *A person eighteen (18) years of age or older but who is unable to fully take care of one's self; or protect one's self from abuse, neglect, cruelty, exploitation or discrimination; and unable to act with discernment because of physical or mental disability or condition.*
6. **Child-friendly** - refers to any process and interpretation, attitude, environment and treatment that is humane, considerate and in the best interest of the child;
7. **Child Combatants** refer to children who directly participate in hostilities, meaning they are actively engaged in fighting or combat. They are classified as CIACs, as defined in Chapter IV.10 of this protocol;
8. **Child in Conflict with the Law (CICL)** refers to a child who is alleged as, accused of, or adjudged as having committed an offense under Philippine laws;
9. **Children Affected by Armed Conflict (CAAC)** refers to all children (in the) population experiencing or who have experienced armed conflict;
10. **Children Involved in Armed Conflict (CIAC)** refers to children who are either forcibly, compulsorily recruited, or who voluntarily joined a government force or any armed group in any capacity. They may participate directly in armed hostilities as combatants or fighters; or indirectly through support roles such as scouts, spies, saboteurs, decoys, checkpoint assistants, couriers, messengers, porters, cooks, or as sexual objects;
11. **Children in Situations of Armed Conflict (CSAC)** refers to all children involved in armed conflict, children affected by armed conflict, and internally displaced children. It is the umbrella term covering IDCs, CAACs and CIACs (*see Chapter IV 18, 9 and 10 respectively*);
12. **Grave Child Rights Violation (GCRV)** refers to the crimes committed against children that constitute flagrant violations of their human rights and have severe consequences on their lives. These crimes include those enumerated in Section 9 of RA 11188;
13. **Health Assessment** refers to a thorough examination of a child's physical, mental, and psychosocial state or condition performed by a health worker;
14. **Health Workers (HWs)** refers to all persons who are engaged in health and health related work, and all persons employed in all hospitals, sanitarium, health infirmaries,

- health centers, rural health units, barangay health units, clinics and other health-related establishments owned and operated by the Government or its political subdivisions. For purposes of this Protocol, HWs shall refer to those defined under Section 3 of Republic Act No. 7305 (The Magna Carta of Public Health Workers) and Section 3 of Republic Act 7883 (Barangay Health Workers' Benefits and Incentives Act of 1995). In the best interest of the child, licensed health workers shall be preferred in the implementation of this Protocol. Only in such cases where licensed health workers are not available shall health workers who only had training will be allowed to engage the children;
15. **High-risk Area** refers to an area where it is considered a high level of exposure to safety and life risks due to a war, military tension, hostilities, pirate activity and other circumstances causing immediate danger to the citizens;
 16. **Human-Induced Disaster** refers to the devastating effect of a human-made hazard such as fire, terrorism, war, armed conflicts / social disorganization, industrial accidents, greenhouse effects, deforestation, that result in negative effects on people, property and/or the environment. It involves an element of human intent, negligence or error or a failure of a man-made system;
 17. **Information** in the context of this protocol refer to either of the following:
 - a. *Personal Information under RA 10173 or the Data Privacy Act of 2012: any information relating to a person, including his identity, address, or personal attributes, whether recorded in electronic or physical format; or*
 - b. *Information according to Rule 110 under the Revised Rules of Criminal Procedure in the context of contesting the age of the child under RA 9344 or the Juvenile Justice and Welfare Act of 2006: An information is an accusation in writing charging a person with an offense, subscribed by the prosecutor and filed with the court.*
 18. **Internally Displaced Children (IDC)** refer to children or groups of children, whether separated or together with their families, who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular, as a result of or to avoid the effect of armed conflict and situations of generalized violence;
 19. **Local Council for the Protection of Children (LCPC)** refers to the council in all cities and municipalities created under RA 4881 and Barangay councils under Article 87 of PD 603. The council shall supervise and act as guardian for the health, education and well-being of all the minors within the city or municipality, and for this purpose it shall, among others, have the functions provided for in Article 360 of the Civil Code;
 20. **Local Social Welfare and Development Officer (LSWDO)** for purposes of this Protocol, shall mean licensed social workers duly appointed by the Local Government Unit such as from the City, Municipal, or Provincial Social Welfare and Development Office;
 21. **Parents** refer to any of the following:
 - a. *Biological parents of the child;*
 - b. *Adoptive parents of the child;*
 - c. *Individuals who have custody of the child; or*
 - d. *A duly licensed foster parent, under Republic Act No. 10165, otherwise known as the "Foster Care Act of 2012";*
 22. **Parental Accountability** under Section 9 (e) of RA 11188 refers to the involvement of the child due to parental action or inaction, or the parent directed or ratified the involvement of the child, or the child acted as the parent's agent or servant, or the child was entrusted a dangerous weapon or instrument;
 23. **Psychosocial Support** - refers to local or external support provided that aims to promote or protect the psychosocial well-being of individuals or groups of persons;

24. **Registered Social Worker** under Section 3 (b) of RA 9432 refers to a graduate of Bachelor of Science in Social Work or Master's Degree in Social Work and who has passed the social work licensure examination;
25. **Social Worker** refers to a practitioner who by accepted academic training and social work professional experience possesses the skill to achieve the objectives as defined and set by the social work profession, through the use of the basic methods and techniques of social work (case work, group work, and community organization) which are designed to enable individuals, groups and communities to meet their needs and to solve the problems of adjustment to a hanging pattern of society and, through coordinated action, to improve economic and social conditions, and is connected with an organized social work agency which is supported partially or wholly from government or community solicited funds;
26. **Total Family Approach (TFA)** is a comprehensive framework used in various contexts, particularly in healthcare, education and social service. It emphasizes involving all family members rather than focusing solely on helping FMNSAGs. The TFA involves both the FMNSAG and their families identify their needs, set goals, create plans, and achieve those goals. While unique individuals compose families, their challenges are interconnected and their successes interdependent; and
27. **Zone of Peace** refers to a site with sacred, religious, historic, educational, cultural, geographical, or environmental importance, which is protected and preserved by its community. It is not merely a "Demilitarized Zone", but a sanctuary that operates within ethical principles of nonviolence, free from weapons, acts of violence, injustice, and environmental degradation. The recognition of the Zone of Peace expresses commitments on the part of its community, governmental authority, and, if appropriate, religious leadership to preserve the peaceful integrity of the designated site. Its custodians, members, participants, and visitors exemplify mutual respect and nonviolent behavior while on the site, and share their resources for furthering peace and cooperation.

V. COVERAGE

This enhanced guideline covers all **Children in Situations of Armed Conflict (CSAC)**, including children involved in, affected by, or displaced by armed conflict in the Philippines.

Thus the guidelines are intended for, but not limited to, the following personnel or organizations handling child protection:

1. **Social Workers and other allied service providers:**
 - a. The DSWD Central Office and the Field Offices, including the Social Welfare and Development (SWAD) Teams and DSWD-managed residential care facilities;
 - b. Local Social Welfare and Development Offices (Provincial, City and Municipal Levels); and
 - c. DSWD Licensed and Accredited Social Welfare and Development Agencies (SWDAs);
2. **Other National Government Agencies and government instrumentalities handling CSACs**, in conjunction with their own protocols, if any, to include, but will not be limited to: the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP); the Philippine National Police (PNP) including personnel handling Violence Against Children (VAC) and Violence Against Women and their Children (VAWC); other law enforcement agencies handling CSACs;
3. **Local Councils (City/Municipal/Barangay) for the Protection of Children (LCPC/CCPC/MCPC/BCPC)**. In addition, Health Workers (HWs) shall assist in the rehabilitation efforts of CSACs particularly in cases where the child suffers physical injuries and/or show signs of trauma; and

4. **Civil Society Organizations (CSO) and Non-Government Organizations (NGO)** involved in child protection. CSOs and NGOs involved with child protection may collaborate with government agencies and LGUs for the furtherance of child protection.

All personnel and agencies listed above must undergo appropriate training on the proper management and handling of Children in Situations of Armed Conflict (CSAC), in line with Section 10 of RA 11188 and relevant DSWD guidelines.

VI. GENERAL GUIDANCE

The following are the procedures and principles that will guide the social workers and other allied service providers in handling children in situations of armed conflict:

A. CASE MANAGERS FOR CHILDREN IN SITUATIONS OF ARMED CONFLICT

1. The City and Municipal Social Welfare Development Officers (C/MSWDO) shall serve as the primary case managers for CSACs. The C/MSWDOs shall lead in handling CSAC cases and are duty-bound to request additional support from their respective LGUs under the following conditions:
 - a. If the C/MSWDO lacks the necessary resources to fulfil its mandate, the PSWDO shall augment their capacity; or
 - b. If both the C/MSWDO and PSWDO have limited resources, the DSWD, through the SWAD, may provide technical assistance and resource augmentation.
2. The social worker from Provincial Social Welfare Development Office (PSWDO) shall assume case management responsibilities in the following scenarios:
 - a. When both the victim and the alleged offender are minors;
 - b. When no licensed social worker is available in the concerned LGU; or
 - c. When the assigned LGU social worker inhibits themselves from the case due to political interference or conflict of interest.
3. In cases where no licensed social workers are available at the LSWDO level, the DSWD, through the SWAD Team, may serve as the case manager, in accordance with DSWD protocols.

B. MONITORING AND REPORTING OF GRAVE CHILD RIGHTS VIOLATION

1. The DSWD, in collaboration with the IAC-CSAC, led by the Council for the Welfare of Children (CWC), shall continue to implement a monitoring, reporting, and response system for unlawful acts of GCRV in situations of armed conflict which are described in Chapter IV.13 of this protocol and Section 9 of the RA 11188.
2. All indications of GCRV that can be inferred from the physical condition and demeanor of the child by the LSWDO or SW/allied professional shall be included in the case file of the child.
3. The DSWD, through its Field Offices or the LSWDOs shall report any incident of GCRV to the Council for the Welfare of Children within 24 hours from the time the incident happened. (*see Annex D*)
4. The LSWDO or SW/allied professional is considered a government representative when they are the ones first approached by the child for help in an area of armed conflict. In these cases, said LSWDO or SW/allied professional must follow:
 - a. If the CSAC in custody is a Children Affected by Armed Conflict (CAAC) or an Internally Displaced Child (IDC):

- i. Within twenty-four hours from the time that physical custody of the CAAC or IDC is taken, the government representative shall notify the parents or guardian of the child, LSWDO through the City or Municipal Social Welfare and Development Office where the child is first taken into custody, LCPC (any of the barangay, city or municipal council for the protection of children and CWC through the RC/SCWC;
 - ii. The 24-hour period referred under this section begins from the hour the agency gets physical custody of the child; or
 - iii. If the CAAC or the internally displaced child is also determined to be a victim of GRCV, such a fact shall be reported in accordance with this Chapter.
 - b. If the CSAC is determined to be a CIAC:
 - i. Within twenty-four (24) hours from the time that physical custody of the child is obtained, the government shall report the incident to the LSWDO through the city or municipal social welfare and development office where the child surrendered, is released or rescued, or is first taken into custody, LCPC any barangay, city or municipal council for the protection of children and CWC through the RC/SCWC in accordance with Section 9 of the CSAC Protocol and this Chapter;
 - ii. If there is no available LSWDO in the LGU, the government representative shall report the incident to the nearest DSWD office; and
 - iii. The 24-hour period begins from the hour the agency obtains physical custody of the child.
 - c. The LSWDO or SW/allied professional shall treat the child exclusively as a victim insofar as their status as a member, recruit, or affiliate of an armed force or group is concerned.
 - d. The LSWDO or SW/allied professional shall treat the child as having the classification of a CSAC and not a CICAL until proven otherwise.
 - e. Upon determination of the classification of the child as a CIAC, the LSWDO or SW/allied professional shall ensure the child's safety and security. They shall observe a child-, culture- and gender-sensitive process in handling the CIAC, particularly by:
 - i. Taking actions that prevent the labeling of said child as a member of an armed group;
 - ii. Preventing situations that will promote discrimination against the child;
 - iii. Not charging the child classified as a CIAC with any violation of the law unless the alleged offenses are unrelated to the child's status as a CIAC;
 - iv. Protecting the identity and maintaining the confidentiality of any information about the child;
 - v. Not using the child for any political propaganda; and
 - vi. Not unnecessarily exposing the child classified as a CIAC to the media (e.g., use of pictures of children during rescue). Press conferences or media coverage, including social media, if necessary and in the child's best interest, shall be conducted by existing media guidelines on reporting and coverage of cases.
5. All reports on GCRV shall be submitted to the appropriate Regional/Provincial/City/Municipal Peace and Order Councils

(R/P/C/MPOC) for their information and perusal subject to the confidentiality of the children involved.

C. AGE OF CHILDREN IN SITUATIONS OF ARMED CONFLICT

In verifying the age of children in situations of armed conflict, social workers may collaborate with law enforcement officers or government officials concerned to determine the age of the child involved in armed conflict. The following will be observed in the determination of the age of the CSAC:

1. **Presumption of Minority-** The child involved in, affected by, or displaced by armed conflict shall enjoy the presumption of minority and shall enjoy all the rights of a child recognized in Section 18, Chapter VI of RA 11188 and other applicable laws unless such child is proven to be at least eighteen (18) years of age or older.
2. **Age Verification-** The age of the child may be determined from the child's birth certificate, baptismal certificate, or any other pertinent document such as but not limited to, the child's school records, medical records, travel papers, etc. In the absence of these documents, age may be based on the information from the child, testimonies of other persons, the physical appearance of the child, and other relevant evidence such as dental records. In case of doubt as to the age of the child, it shall be resolved in favor of the child.
3. **Coverage of persons eighteen (18) years of age and older but fall under the definition of a child-** If a person in the age of majority falls under the definition of a child, as provided by RA 11188, determined by a professional medical authority, they shall also be covered under the provisions of this protocol granted, they will be placed in a separate facility based on their special needs.
4. **Contesting the Age of a Child-** As provided under Section 7 of RA 9344:
"Any person contesting the age of the child in conflict with the law prior to the filing of the information in any appropriate court may file a case in a summary proceeding for the determination of age before the Family Court which shall decide the case within twenty-four (24) hours from receipt of the appropriate pleadings of all interested parties. If a case has been filed against the child in conflict with the law and is pending in the appropriate court, the person shall file a motion to determine the age of the child in the same court where the case is pending. Pending hearing on the said motion, proceedings on the main case shall be suspended. In all proceedings, law enforcement officers, prosecutors, judges and other government officials concerned shall exert all efforts at determining the age of the child in conflict with the law."

D. IDENTIFYING CHILDREN IN SITUATIONS OF ARMED CONFLICT

1. Under Section 2.1 of the CSAC Protocol, the LSWDO or any SW or allied professional who has initial custody of the child is required to immediately classify if they are a child situated in armed conflict using information from the child and other sources:
 - a. The document/report containing the information of the child from the government representative, who has the custody of the child, shall be reviewed and verified by the LSWDO or SW/allied professional

- which fact and contents shall be included in their Assessment Report/Social Case Study Report;
- b. If the report of the above-mentioned government representative does not state any initial findings regarding the classification of the child, the LSWDO or SW/allied professional shall inquire with the said government representative before classifying the child themselves. Such a fact shall be reflected likewise in their report; and
 - c. The LSWDO or Social Worker/allied professional shall coordinate with the PNP if Violence Against Children (VAC) or Violence Against Women and their Children (VAWC) is involved in the child's case.
2. Following the CSAC classification, the LSWDO or SW/allied professional is further required to ascertain if the child was involved in armed conflict (CIAC), a child affected by armed conflict (CAAC), or an internally displaced child (IDC) as defined under Chapter IV of this Protocol:
 - a. If the child classified as a CAAC or IDC, is also determined to be a victim of grave child rights violations (GCRV), such fact shall be reported to the LSWDO for proper intervention; and
 - b. In the event of conflicting classification of CSACs, verify with the security sector (Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and Philippine National Police (PNP)) to avoid misclassification. These agencies shall issue a certification verifying the classification of the CSAC as well as to fill the turnover report (*Annex B*) of this protocol.
 3. In all cases, the case intake shall solely focus on establishing the name and birth information of the child as a CSAC to avoid subjecting the child to excessive questioning. Furthermore, if necessary, consent must be obtained through a consent form in the language understood by the CSAC, their parents or guardians which must be signed by the same before obtaining the information needed (*see Annex F*);
 4. It is understood that the turned-over CSAC case shall belong to the LSWDO and not to the personnel who turned over or received the case itself; and
 5. In cases where intervention, rehabilitation, and reintegration programs are put in place and the child is temporarily transferred to a facility in another local government unit, the social worker managing such facility shall be the case handling officer of the child classified as a CSAC. Upon return to the LSWDO, the latter shall resume their duties as the case-handling officer of the said child.

E. HANDLING AND TREATMENT OF CHILDREN

1. Upon turnover of a child classified as a CSAC (CIAC/CAAC and IDCs) to the Local Social Welfare and Development Office (LSWDO) or Social Worker (SW)/allied professional the latter shall treat the child in the following manner:
 - a. The child classified as a CSAC shall be treated as a zone of peace as provided under Rule 7, IRR of RA 11188;
 - b. The LSWDO or SW/allied professional should establish rapport with the child and provide an explanation on the purpose of the turn-over and intervention for CSAC
 - c. Gather information using the intake sheet which shall be the basis in preparing the Social Case Study Report (SCSR) (*see Annex E*);
 - d. The LSWDO or SW/allied professional should come-up with the initial assessment focusing on the risks, possible support system, and coping mechanisms of the child;
 - e. Determine the initial interventions that should be provided, such as medical or psychosocial/trauma informed care, and referral to

- temporary shelter;
- f. Prepare necessary documents for the child's referral, including but not limited to, referral letter, turn-over/transfer report, and intervention plan. Agree on a regional case-conference where;
 - i. The LSWDO shall report on the preparation of the family/community on the reintegration of the child with the family and mainstreaming of the child in the community Involving the LCPC;
 - ii. The case manager of the child in the facility shall report on the progress of the child in the center;
 - iii. Other duty bearers shall also report and provide updates on their committed actions indicated in the intervention plan;
 - iv. LCPC to provide an update/report, if needed; and
 - v. Discuss further actions and ways forward on the child's case.
 - g. The child classified as a CSAC, who was turned over to the LSWDO or SW/allied professional and temporarily sheltered in a facility, shall be kept separate from adults and persons of the opposite sex, unless such persons are shown to be family members or relatives of the child;
 - h. The LSWDO may refer them to the DSWD for assistance, provided that a comprehensive SCSR (*see Annex E*) is submitted to the DSWD Field Office. To assess the needs of the CSAC, the LSWDO or SW/allied professional should refer to the SCSR and may conduct a case intake with the CSAC if more information is needed. It is important that the social case manager avoids asking for information already covered in the SCSR to prevent re-victimization and avoid making the child repeatedly recount their experiences;
2. LSWDOs and SWs/allied professionals shall handle and treat children in a child-friendly and sensitive, as well as culture and gender-sensitive, manner. In addition, taking into consideration the best interests of the child, the LSWDO, SW or allied professional shall:
- a. Engage the child in a child-friendly area, preferably a separate room, or in any available room that will ensure the confidentiality of the process;
 - b. Properly treat the child especially during the conduct of a case intake;
 - c. Secure the assistance of an individual who understands and speaks both languages of the child and the LSWDO or SW/allied professional if the former does not speak the language of the LSWDO or SW/allied professional;
 - d. Secure the assistance of a sign language expert, mental health professional, child psychologist, or other appropriate professional with specialized training to assist in the case intake of a child with special needs or disabilities;
 - e. Immediately attend to the child's basic needs such as food, water, clothing, shelter, rest, and others that will stabilize the child's physical and psychological state;
 - f. Immediately refer the child to a psychologist or a counselor for proper intervention if the child exhibits trauma, shows extreme emotions, or becomes violent; and
 - g. Conduct the necessary debriefing sessions to CSAC or any activity that will restore their social, spiritual, and moral confidence in the community.
3. For CSACs with special needs, the following will be observed by the LSWDO or SW/allied professional:

- a. CSACs suffering from mental disabilities, psychological trauma or fall under the provisions set in Chapter VI.C.3 of this protocol shall be referred to trauma specialists for immediate care before the provision of interventions from this protocol;
- b. CSACs who have experienced rape, sexual harassment or similar forms of gender-based violence, or show signs of such abuse, shall be referred to the appropriate LSWDO, SW, CSO allied professional specialized in handling child abuse cases, in line with existing laws and guidelines related thereto; and
- c. The LSWDO or SW/allied professional shall closely coordinate with the trauma specialist for proper handling of the CSAC with special needs.

F. REHABILITATION, REINTEGRATION AND AFTER-CARE PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

All programs and services will be provided based on the assessment of the LSWDO or SW handling the CSAC following the best interest of the child.

1. The programs and services that CSACs can avail of whether residential or community-based, depending on the assessment of the LSWDO or SW/allied professional include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - a. Psychological First Aid;
 - b. Art and Play-Based Therapy;
 - c. Safe Spaces and Community Support;
 - d. Disaster Relief Services;
 - e. Recovery and Reintegration for Trafficked Persons;
 - f. Group Home Life Service;
 - g. Medical and Psychological Services;
 - h. Dietary Service;
 - i. Character Building and Life Skills;
 - j. Educational Service;
 - k. Sports, Socio-Cultural and Recreational Service;
 - l. Livelihood and Productivity Skills Training / Job Placement for adult family members;
 - m. Agro Farming; and
 - n. Foster Placement/ kinship care / group home.
2. The LSWDO or SW/allied professionals, shall coordinate with LGUs, national government agencies, CSOs and NGOs for other rehabilitation and reintegration programs and services available for CSACs in compliance with Chapter VI.I.7 of this protocol.
3. The LSWDO or SW/allied professional shall ensure that the rehabilitation and reintegration services for the child will involve the latter's family, community, learning centers, and other social support mechanisms that will provide a smooth transition towards reintegration.
4. The LSWDO or SW/allied professional shall make sure that the child will be provided with services for psychosocial support, health (including mental health) and nutrition, education, livelihood opportunities for their families, and other basic or legal services, as may be necessary.
5. In cases of rehabilitation, the LSWDO or SW/allied professional shall coordinate with the civilian national or local government agencies, CSOs and NGOs to facilitate the post-involvement phase for the CSAC.
6. The LSWDO or SW/allied professional shall also include in their program, such services that will provide therapeutic counseling, security and protection, educational assistance, and livelihood opportunities to the parents, relatives, and guardians of the child or the victims when they

become of age. The educational needs of the CSAC may be referred to the Department of Education (DepEd), Commission on Higher Education (CHED), Technical Education, Skills Training Authority (TESDA) and other non-government agencies for the provision of educational assistance and other skills training available to the child.

7. Community-based interventions for the rehabilitation and reintegration of children (reintegration programs are applied to CIACs) shall be established by the LSWDO and shall be preferred over the placement of children in facilities.
8. The LSWDO or SW/allied professional shall involve the LCPC in providing interventions for the child and in monitoring these interventions. The LSWDO or SW/allied professional shall also refer to Section 8 of the CSAC Protocol regarding the reintegration of CIACs.
9. The LSWDO or SW/allied professional shall ensure that survivors of violence, especially gender-based violence such as rape and other forms of sexual violence shall have access to immediate life-saving interventions. The LSWDO will coordinate with the public health practitioner for this purpose.
10. Survivors mentioned in the preceding paragraph shall be ensured of their safety, right to confidentiality, and informed consent with due respect to their person, religion, and culture.
11. Program interventions shall be designed by the LSWDO or SW/allied professional with due respect to the culture of each child, their family, and community. Regardless of the perceived association of the child to one of the sides of the conflict, they shall benefit from all available medical, psychosocial, legal, shelter, and educational response mechanisms and services for the victims of armed conflict.
12. The LSWDO or SW/allied professional shall conduct an assessment based on their needs to identify the services to be given to the child according to their specific classification as a CSAC with the consent of the parents, guardian, or custodian of the child. It shall be child-focused and based on the best interest of the child.
13. Finally, the duration of these services shall be determined by the LSWDO or SW/allied professional handling the case of the child. Said LSWDO or SW/allied professional shall monitor and make a report on the child's progress.
14. During the reintegration and after care phase, a case manager shall be assigned to determine the progress of the CSAC.

G. PROCEDURES AND TIMEFRAMES FOR SAFE AND SECURE HANDOVER OF CSAC CASES

In handling all cases pertaining to CSACs, the Total Family Approach (TFA) as defined in Chapter IV.26 shall be employed in order to ensure that the family is involved in the Social Case Management Process.

1. When a child classified as a CSAC is turned over to the LSWDO or SW/allied professional, the personnel or agency initiating the turnover must accomplish the Turnover Report and Acknowledgement for reference and use by the receiving LSWDO or SW/allied professional. A certified true copy of these documents shall be issued by the LSWDO or SW/allied professional to the personnel or agency that turned over the child: (see *Annexes B and C*)
 - a. Ascertain the date and time the government representative took custody of the child;
 - b. Ascertain the date and time the government representative notified or informed the LSWDO and family of the child of such custody;

- c. The LSWDO or SW/allied professional shall include in their report the date and time that the government representative handed over the custody of the child to them; and
 - d. The LSWDO or SW/allied professional shall also indicate in their report the reason/s why the child was turned over to them beyond the 24 to 72-hour period as required by the law. Moreover, it should be reiterated that the communication regarding the custody of the child shall be transmitted within twenty-four (24) hours.
2. In the event a child expresses refusal to be turned over or is showing signs of trauma and/or uncooperativeness, the LSWDO or SW/allied professional shall coordinate closely with the parents, legal guardian or community of the child to determine the best approach in provisioning intervention and assistance to the child.
3. In the event that the parents, legal guardian or community of the child cannot be found, or if the parent was found to fall under the provisions of Chapter VII.B.1.c.iv of this protocol, the LSWDO or SW/allied professional shall determine the best approach in providing intervention and assistance following the best interest of the child.
4. The LSWDO or SW/allied professional may ask the child who they are most comfortable being reunited temporarily with, either a relative or friend in the event the parent, legal guardian or community cannot be reached or if the child expresses refusal to be turned over or is uncooperative granted that the person identified by the child will closely coordinate with the LSWDO or SW/allied professional to ensure the provision of intervention and assistance to the child.
5. A child classified as a CAAC or IDC shall be physically handed over to their parents or guardian. This shall be done within 24 hours of knowledge of the LSWDO or SW/allied professional that the child's custody is with a government representative.
6. If the parents or guardians of the child classified as a CAAC or IDC is unavailable or the physical handover to them is not feasible within the time allowed above, the custody may be handed over to the DSWD or DSWD-accredited center in the LGU for temporary shelter.
7. In cases where the physical turn-over of the child to the LSWDO or SW/allied professional is not feasible, the LSWDO or SW/allied professional shall:
 - a. Accept the report and other documents that the government representative will submit (constructive turn-over);
 - b. Include in their report such acceptance of documents and reports including the time and date thereof;
 - c. State the reasons in their report why physical custody of the child was not given or surrendered to them; and
 - d. Exert efforts in obtaining physical custody of the child by coordinating with the concerned agencies with the help of the Local Council for the Protection of Children (LCPC).
8. In cases where the physical turn-over of the child to the LSWDO or SW/allied professional is not feasible due to confinement or when the child is undergoing medical procedure or treatment, the LSWDO or SW/allied professional shall:
 - a. Accept the report and other documents that the government representative will submit;
 - b. Include in their report such acceptance of the documents and reports including the time and date thereof;
 - c. State the reasons in their report why physical custody of the child was not given to them;

- d. Allow the health worker to perform their duties in caring for the child; and
 - e. Coordinate with the health worker to ensure that the rights and privileges of the child classified as a CSAC are respected until physical custody of the child is transferred to them by the health worker.
9. When the LSWDO or SW/allied professional accepts the turn-over of the child, the latter's custody is deemed formally transferred to them.
 10. The party that turns over the child to the LSWDO or SW/allied professional shall sign the Acknowledgement as evidence of the latter's receipt of the child. (*Annex C*)

H. SAFETY AND SECURITY

1. The LSWDO or SW/allied professional shall ensure the safety and security of the children in their custody. Towards this end, the LSWDO or SW/allied professional shall seek assistance and involve the Local Government Units (LGUs) where they are located with the help of the LCPC.
2. To ensure the safety and security of the CIAC, actions must be taken to avoid the labeling of a CIAC as a member of an armed group or that in any way may cause discrimination against the child.
3. The LSWDO shall keep the CIAC in a custodial facility separate from adults and persons of the opposite sex, unless such persons are shown to be family members or relatives of the child.
4. The LSWDO or SW/allied professional shall ensure that the facility to which the child classified as a CSAC will be sheltered is not a high-risk area and that no police or armies are deployed at such facilities or areas.
5. The CIAC should not be charged with any violation of the law, unless the alleged offenses are unrelated to the status of the child as a CIAC.
6. The identity and confidentiality of the information of the CIAC shall be upheld. Furthermore, the CIAC shall not be used for any political propaganda nor be subject to unnecessary exposure to media in compliance with existing media guidelines on reporting and coverage of cases.
7. The LSWDO or SW/allied professional may also seek the assistance of the Philippine National Police or the Armed Forces of the Philippines if the risk to the safety and security of the child is high.
8. The LSWDO or SW/allied professional shall assess if the safety and security of the child is at risk if returned to their parents or community and shall propose alternatives in coordination with the parents based on the best interest of the child.

I. CASE INTAKE

1. The LSWDO or SW/allied professional conducting a case intake of the child shall ensure that they are accompanied at all times by their parent/guardian, and counsel.
2. The case intake shall be conducted in a child-friendly manner and the child shall be treated in a sensitive, as well as culture and gender-sensitive, manner.
3. The data/information obtained from the CSAC shall be strictly confidential and cannot be disclosed to any person, unless there is an express and written consent of the child or their parents.
4. The LSWDO or SW/allied professional shall also secure the assistance of an individual who understands and speaks both the languages of the child and of the LSWDO or SW/allied professional if the former does not speak the language of the LSWDO or SW/allied professional. The interpreter shall

sign a non-disclosure agreement to ensure confidentiality of the information given.

5. LSWDO or SW/allied professional shall refer to Memorandum Circular No. 09, Series of 2025 - Guidelines on the Implementation of Social Case Management Service for Former Members of Non-State Armed Groups (FMNSAG) and Individuals and Families Affected by Armed Conflict for the comprehensive procedures on social case management.
6. Coordinate with the Department of Health or Ministry of Health if located in the BARMM region or Public Medical Practitioner in securing the services of a sign language expert, mental health professional, child psychologist, or other appropriate professional with specialized training to assist in the case intake of a child with special needs or disabilities.
7. When receiving, handling, withholding and/or disclosing any information of CSACs to allied professionals, CSOs or NGOs for the best interest of the child, Section 13, Chapter III of RA 10173 or the Data Privacy Act must be strictly observed.

J. REPLACEMENT OF LOST OR MISSING DOCUMENTS

1. The LSWDO or SW/allied professional shall endeavor to ascertain if documents or records of the child exist to help them in compiling the basic information about the child.
2. The documents or records shall also be used in aiding the LSWDO or SW/allied professional in determining if the child is a minor for them to classify the child as a CSAC.
3. The LSWDO or SW/allied professional shall secure the help of the LCPC in coordinating with the proper agencies to facilitate the issuance of obtaining new or replacement documents of the child, if the latter's documents were lost or cannot be properly obtained because of the armed conflict and documents needed for the enjoyment of their legal rights.
4. The LSWDO or SW/allied professional shall use the new or replacement documents (i.e., birth certificates) to protect and promote the child's rights.

K. ASSESSMENT

1. The LSWDO or SW/allied professional to whom the custody of a child classified as a CSAC was transferred or to whom a child directly sought refuge shall make an initial health, psychosocial, and risk assessment before referring the child to a nearest public health office or public health practitioner.
2. The LSWDO or SW/allied professional shall evaluate the child's physical, emotional, mental, and psychological state before referring them to a health worker. Such evaluation shall be included in the child's case file. Other needs of the child shall also be assessed and included in the report.
3. If the child is classified as a CIAC, the LSWDO or SW/allied professional shall also perform a risk assessment. If the risk to the safety of the child is high, the LSWDO or SW/allied professional is required to coordinate with the LCPC, DSWD, the LGU where the child is located, the PNP, and the AFP as needed. The same assessment may be used as a basis to determine whether or not the child is eligible for placement during intervention and/or reintegration.
4. The LSWDO or SW/allied professional shall conduct a Parental Capability Assessment Report (PCAR), as provided for in DSWD Memorandum Circular No. 35, Series of 2024 otherwise known as the "Guidelines on the Conduct of Parenting Capability Assessment and Use of PCAR in the Social Case Management of Child Victim-Survivor of Abuse, Exploitation,

Abandoned, or Neglect in DSWD Field Offices, Local Government Units, and Registered Licensed Accredited Social Welfare Development Agencies (SWDAs)" to determine if it is in the best interest of the child to be reunited with the family, if they fall under the provisions of Section 9 (e) of RA 11188 or if it is not possible for the child to be reunited with their parents or guardian.

L. RIGHTS OF CHILDREN IN SITUATIONS OF ARMED CONFLICT

The Philippines, as a signatory to the 1989 UNCRC, commits to provide the minimum standards for state parties to ensure the promotion and protection of the rights of children. Among these include establishing guidelines to ensure the protection of children.

In all phases of contact with children subject to this Protocol, the rights mentioned in Section 7 of RA 11188 shall be respected and protected by the LSWDO or SW/allied professional, which include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. The right to life, survival and development;
2. The right of special respect and protection against any form of abuse, neglect, exploitation, and violation, especially in the context of armed conflict;
3. The right to be treated as victims;
4. The right to be accorded with special respect and to be protected from any form of direct or indiscriminate attacks and acts of violence, especially protection from the grave child rights violations as enumerated in Section 9 of RA 11188;
5. The right to be protected from recruitment into government forces or armed groups and from participation in armed conflict;
6. The right to be protected from maiming, torture, abduction, rape and killing, especially extrajudicial killing;
7. The right to be immediately provided and have safe access to essential, adequate and culturally appropriate food and nutrition; basic shelter and housing; culturally appropriate clothing; water, sanitation and hygiene; basic health services including essential drugs, medicines and vaccines, minimum initial service package for reproductive health, and health professional evaluation and appropriate intervention; education, including religious and moral education; early childhood care and development programs, psychosocial support and social services. All services provided for them must be child-specific and gender sensitive and responsive;
8. The right to be treated humanely in all circumstances, without any adverse distinction founded on race, color, religion, or faith. Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and Expression (SOGIE), birth, wealth, or any other similar criteria;
9. The right not to be interned or confined in camp;
10. The right of the injured, the wounded and the sick, those with disabilities, those who are separated and unaccompanied, and expectant and lactating mothers, to care, protection, and assistance required by their condition and treatment which takes into account their special needs such as their health needs, reproductive health care, appropriate counseling, prevention of infectious diseases and Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Services;
11. The right to be with their families, especially with their mothers, during evacuations and in evacuation centers.
12. The right to be reunited with their families in case of separation due to armed conflict;

13. The right to privacy and confidentiality in all proceedings; and
14. The right especially of internally displaced children and their families to: leave the country; seek safety in another part of the country; seek other service providers; seek asylum in another country; and be protected against forcible return to resettlement in any place where their life, safety, liberty or health would be at risk.

VII. PROCEDURAL GUIDELINES

A. SPECIFIC PROCEDURES FOR CHILDREN AFFECTED BY ARMED CONFLICT AND INTERNALLY DISPLACED CHILDREN

The steps outlined in handling a child classified as a CAAC under this Protocol shall also be observed in handling a child classified as an IDC.

1. Internally Displaced Children are allowed to leave

- a. A child classified as an IDC by the LSWDO or SW/allied professional are allowed to leave and reunite with their parents and shall not be held against their will unless if there is reason to believe that the child's safety will be compromised if allowed to leave or would be contrary to the best interest of the child;
- b. The LSWDO or SW/allied professional shall extend to IDCs all the rights, privileges, and programs granted under RA 11188 whenever applicable;
- c. If the child wishes to leave after seeking refuge and/or assistance from the LSWDO or SW/allied professional, they shall be allowed. However, the LSWDO or SW/allied professional shall make sure that the child is returned safely to their family. The child shall be escorted on their way home;
- d. IDCs shall not be prevented from leaving the country, seeking safety in another part of the country, seeking other service providers, or seeking asylum in another country; and
- e. The LSWDO or SW/allied professional shall take steps to reunite the child with their family in line with RA 10821 or the Children's Emergency Relief and Protection Act.

2. Children Affected by Armed Conflict

- a. The LSWDO or SW/allied professional shall perform the duties mentioned in this Protocol in handling cases of a child who is classified as a CAAC; and
- b. A child classified as a CAAC shall be given all the benefits and treatment bestowed upon them by law.

3. Children Handed Over to the LSWDO / SW / DSWD

- a. Once a child is handed over by a government representative to the LSWDO or SW/allied professional, they shall determine if the proper period provided in law/rules (Refer also to Sec. 24 e, RA 11188) for notifying the family, the LCPC, and CWC were observed;
- b. The LSWDO or SW/allied professional shall then determine and verify the age of the child as provided under Chapter VI.C of this protocol;
- c. The LSWDO or SW/allied professional shall make an initial assessment regarding the child's health, as well as a risk assessment, before referring the child to a public health worker or public health facility;

- d. The findings of the health worker, local health office, or medical practitioner who attended to the child shall be included in the report of the handling case officer; and
- e. In building the documentation of the child, the LSWDO or SW/allied professional shall also endeavor to have the needed documents of the child replaced to which above mentioned clauses shall be followed.

4. Family Tracing

Family tracing shall be conducted by the LSWDO or SW/allied professional from receipt of the child per RA 10821. The following must be observed:

- a. The LSWDO shall take all appropriate steps to facilitate the reunion of the child with their family who are temporarily separated due to armed conflict;
- b. In cases where the family of the CAAC or internally displaced child cannot be located, the LSWDO where the child was identified, with the assistance of the LCPC shall facilitate the family tracing, coordinate with parents, relatives, or guardians of the child to inform them of the handover; and
- c. If applicable, coordinate with the indigenous peoples' community where the child belongs.

5. Handover of CAAC or IDC

- a. The LSWDO or SW/allied professional shall only cause the handover of a child classified as a CAAC or IDC when:
 - i. The parents or guardian cannot be found or if handover of custody to them is not feasible within the period allowed by law; and
 - ii. There is no immediately available DSWD facility or DSWD-accredited center in the LGU.
- b. The LSWDO or SW/allied professional will coordinate with the LCPC or the RC/SCWC and cause the handover of custody to other residential care facilities accredited by the DSWD in the same or another LGU or alternative custodial facilities suitable for children where the child can be given temporary shelter, care, and protection;
- c. The LSWDO or SW/allied professional shall also coordinate with the proper educational agencies to ensure that the child's educational needs are met; and
- d. The LSWDO or SW/allied professional shall at all times ensure that guidelines for the treatment and handling of children under this Protocol are followed.

6. Rehabilitation Interventions

- a. Rehabilitation interventions formulated by the LSWDO or SW/allied professional shall be done following Chapter VI.F of this protocol as well as Section 3.4 of the CSAC Protocol;
- b. The LSWDO or SW/allied professional may refer to the existing rehabilitation indicators based on DSWD Administrative Order No. 35 Series of 2003 as a framework for recovery, healing, normal functioning, and reintegration of the child; and
- c. Such rehabilitation interventions shall be based on the assessment of the child by the LSWDO or SW/allied professional or handling case officer.

7. Report

- a. The LSWDO or SW/allied professional shall prepare a report containing all information about the child classified as CAAC or IDC from the time the child was handed to them until the termination of the child's rehabilitation program;
- b. The report shall be kept updated by the LSWDO or SW/allied professional as the child progresses in the program;
- c. The report will also include the needs of the child during their adjustment and transition as well as their overall after release from the program;
- d. Upon termination of the program and release of the child, the report shall be submitted to the DSWD Regional Office for safekeeping; and
- e. The LSWDO or SW/allied professional may use a report form prescribed by the DSWD.

B. SPECIFIC PROCEDURES FOR CHILDREN INVOLVED IN ARMED CONFLICT

1. **Duties of the LSWDO or SW/Allied Professional-** in addition to duties already outlined in this Protocol, the LSWDO or SW/allied professional shall:
 - a. Manage the case of the CIAC and perform family tracing with the assistance of the LCPC;
 - b. Observe the 24- or within 72-hour period provided by the law before family tracing;
 - c. Conduct risk assessment as required under Chapter VI.K.1 and 3 of this protocol. This is critical in determining the involvement of the child in armed conflict. The LSWDO or SW/allied professional may be guided by the following in determining the risk level:
 - i. If the child took an active role in the conflict as a child combatant, further assessment of the child is necessary in the interest of the safety of the child, their family, community and all personnel involved as well as to assist the LSWDO or SW/allied professional in identifying the most appropriate intervention and assistance;
 - ii. If the child suffered physical, psychological and/or gender-based violence, trauma specialists and other health professionals may be needed to address any form of trauma as provided for in Chapter VI.E of this protocol;
 - iii. If the child participated in the armed conflict but outside of combat such as cooking, cleaning and other forms of labor and support, this can be used as supporting evidence to determine that the child is low-risk; and
 - iv. If the child is related to parents involved in armed conflict such as Members of Non-State Armed Groups (NSAGs) or fall under Section 5.5.2 of the CSAC Protocol is present:
 - The involvement of the child was due to parental action or inaction;
 - The parent directed or ratified the involvement of the child;
 - The child acted as the parent's agent or servant; or
 - The child was entrusted with a dangerous weapon or instrument.

Further risk assessment of the child in relation to their parents will be needed. However, in the event that the aforementioned parents choose to return to the folds of the law and cooperate with the government, utilize the

TFA under Chapter VI.G for a holistic reintegration of the child alongside their family.

- d. The LSWDO or SW/allied professional shall formulate and implement the programs for intervention, rehabilitation, and reintegration of the child with the assistance of the LCPC;
- e. The LSWDO or SW/allied professional shall include in their report all information regarding the child including any indications of abandonment, neglect, or abuse; and
- f. In cases where the CIAC is under protective custody, the consent of the parents, guardian, or custodian of the child, especially about community-based or center-based interventions, shall also be obtained upon an order of the court.

2. Handover of CIAC

- a. Custody of a child classified as a CIAC shall be handed over to the following within 24 hours if the circumstances of the child fall under the provision of Chapter VII.B.1.c.iv:
 - i. DSWD for immediate protection in facility for CIACs;
 - ii. DSWD-accredited center in the LGU for temporary shelter; or
 - iii. Other residential care facilities accredited by the DSWD identified by the LSWDO, LCPC or the RC/SCWC.
- b. The security risks faced by the child shall be considered by the LSWDO or SW/allied professional.
- c. In cases where the risk is high, the child will be handed over by the LSWDO or SW/allied professional to alternative custodial facilities suitable for children. In such cases, the PNP and AFP may be called to ensure the child's safety unless the same may be immediately provided for by the AFP in the area;
- d. If the safety of the child cannot be assured, the LSWDO or SW/allied professional shall coordinate with the family of the child for them to voluntarily commit them to an appropriate facility for temporary placement. Should the family refuse, the LSWDO or SW/allied professional shall initiate the filing of a petition for involuntary commitment with the family court after the LSWDO or SW/allied professional has assessed that the child shall be placed in a residential care facility for CSACs or facilities run by civil society groups, including religious organizations, if the aforementioned groups and organizations agree and are able to meet the needs; and
- e. In all instances of handover, the safety and security of the child shall be observed, protected, and promoted. In no case shall custody of the child be retained in a military camp, police detention jail facility, or any location similar to it.

3. Handling of Child

The LSWDO or SW/allied professional shall treat the child in accordance with or as provided in Chapter VI.E of this protocol, Section 4.4 of the CSAC Protocol, and Rule 27 (c) (3) of the IRR of RA 11188.

4. Rehabilitation

- a. Further interventions outside of the maximum period for CIACs will be subject to the assessment of the LSWDO or SW/allied professional following the best interest of the child;

- b. Involve the family and community to which the child belongs in formulating and implementing the rehabilitation program of the child. Said program must facilitate the normal development of the child victims in their post-involvement phase;
- c. The LSWDO or SW/allied professional shall endeavor to immediately bring the child classified as a CIAC to their family or community while undergoing the rehabilitation program;
- d. The rehabilitation program that will be formulated and implemented by the LSWDO or SW/allied professional shall involve services that include the provision for alternative parental care as provided under Rule 25(c) of the IRR of RA 11188;
- e. For community-based rehabilitation, the LSWDO or SW/allied professional shall involve the LCPC in providing the necessary interventions as well as the monitoring of the child's progress in the program;
- f. Rehabilitation services formulated by the LSWDO or SW/allied professional, the child shall be provided with the appropriate services that may include psychosocial support, health and nutrition, therapeutic counseling, security and protection, life skills training including values education, nationalism, patriotism and financial literacy, educational assistance and livelihood opportunities and shall ensure that the child's family, community, and school or learning center are consulted except in a special cases and the consent is not needed if any of the circumstances in Chapter VII.B.1.c.iv of this protocol are present;
- g. The child classified as a CIAC is deemed to have completed the rehabilitation program upon recommendation of the social worker handling the case and with the approval of the LCPC (if rehabilitation is community-based) or the head of the center where the center-based rehabilitation program is implemented;
- h. The LSWDO or SW/allied professional shall obtain the consent of the parents, guardian, or custodian of the child before commencing the rehabilitation program for the child; and
- i. If consent cannot be obtained but the LSWDO or SW/allied professional recommends that the rehabilitation program be implemented, they shall coordinate with the LCPC and DSWD in filing the appropriate legal action to get a court order.

5. Reintegration

The child's reintegration into their family and the community is the culmination of the CIAC's rehabilitation. Before reintegration, the LSWDO or SW/allied professional shall conduct consultations by Section 8.3 of the CSAC Protocol to wit:

- a. In the process of formulating and implementing the preparation for community reintegration for the CIAC, the LSWDO shall consult the child as well as the families, communities and schools or learning centers to which these children shall eventually return;
- b. When conducting the consultation at the community level, the LSWDO shall, together with the LCPC, ascertain the:
 - i. Preparedness of the community in the reintegration of the CIAC; and
 - ii. Role that the community and school or learning center can play in facilitating the reintegration process.

- c. The LSWDO will document the results of these consultations to serve as a reference for the preparation and implementation of the reintegration program; and
- d. In addition to consulting the families and communities of the CIAC, the LSWDO shall also consult the PNP in determining if it is safe for the child to be reintegrated in the community.

6. Commencement

- a. If the reintegration is initiated by the LSWDO or SW/allied professional, the reintegration program shall run parallel to or after the delivery of rehabilitation interventions for the child. The same parallel efforts shall be done if the rehabilitation is being implemented at the community level;
- b. If the completion of rehabilitation intervention is received by the child classified as a CIAC in a residential care facility, the same shall be endorsed to the LSWDO upon completion;
- c. The LSWDO or SW/allied professional shall get the endorsement from the social worker managing the facility and acquire custody of the child. The LSWDO, DSWD, or SW/allied professional shall prepare the receiving family and community in coordination with the community/center social worker managing the child classified as a CIAC before turnover to the community;
- d. An after-care plan shall be formulated by the LSWDO or SW/allied professional to monitor and provide after-care interventions to the child and the family for a minimum of three months;
- e. In formulating and implementing the reintegration program, the LSWDO or SW/allied professional shall consult the child, their family, the community, and the school or learning centers they will be returning to. The LSWDO or SW/allied professional shall coordinate with the LCPC for such consultations with the community;
- f. LSWDO or SW/allied professionals shall consult with the PNP to determine if it is safe for the child to be reintegrated into the community; and
- g. The LSWDO or SW/allied professional shall include in his report the result of such consultations.

7. When a child cannot be returned to their family

- a. For safety and security reasons when a child cannot be returned to their family, the LSWDO or SW/allied professional shall make and arrange provisions for alternative child care arrangements such as foster care, kinship care, or admission to a residential care facility;
- b. The LSWDO and LCPC shall facilitate the reintegration, healing, and reconciliation of the child classified as a CIAC with their community;
- c. The LSWDO and LCPC, assisted by the DSWD, shall periodically secure the assistance of a psychologist and a social worker having specialized training in handling CIAC;
- d. The opinion of the child shall be taken into consideration whenever they cannot be returned to their family. If the child is an Indigenous People (IP), reintegration shall be conducted in recognition of the traditional structures and institutions of the child's IP community;
- e. The LSWDO or SW/allied professional will convene technical working groups guided by an after-care plan; and
- f. Reintegration programs shall be overseen by the LSWDO of the LGU in close coordination with the LCPC even after termination of the

reintegration process, ensuring that no relapse will take place for a period to be determined by the LSWDO or SW/allied professional and LCPC.

C. CIAC WHO ARE ALSO CLASSIFIED AS CHILDREN IN CONFLICT WITH THE LAW (CICL)

If the LSWDO or SW/allied professional classified the CIAC in their custody as CICL also, the following shall be followed:

1. If the LSWDO or SW/allied professional finds, upon investigation, that the child committed GCRV acts as well as acts punishable under the law other than merely being involved in the conflict, they shall handle the child as a CICL and will follow the procedures implementing RA 9344, as amended;
2. The LSWDO or SW/allied professional shall then notify the Public Attorneys' Office or any legal counsel preferred by the child of such findings;
3. The child shall be handled according to the protocols used for children in conflict with the law with the assistance of the parents/guardians and the LSWDO; and
4. Should the child classified as a CIAC who, at the same time, is also classified as a CICL, undergo rehabilitation, the same shall be done following this DSWD Provision Protocol and Section 7.1.5 of the CSAC Protocol.

VIII. SEPARABILITY CLAUSE

If any provision of this Memorandum Circular is declared invalid or unconstitutional, the other provisions not affected thereby shall remain valid and binding.

IX. REPEALING CLAUSE


All other orders, issuances, rules, and regulations, or parts thereof, which are inconsistent with the provisions of this Circular are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

X. EFFECTIVITY CLAUSE

This Memorandum Circular shall take effect after fifteen (15) days from its publication in the Official Gazette or a newspaper of General Circulations. Let copies of this circular be deposited in the Office of the National Administrative Registrar (ONAR), University of the Philippines Law Center.

This Memorandum Circular shall also be published in the DSWD official website and copies of this circular shall be issued to the Central office and concerned Offices/Bureaus/Services/Units (OBSU).

Issued in Quezon City this ____ day _____, 2025.

Certified True Copy

DOLORES C. SAEM
Administrative Officer II
Records and Archives Mgt. Division

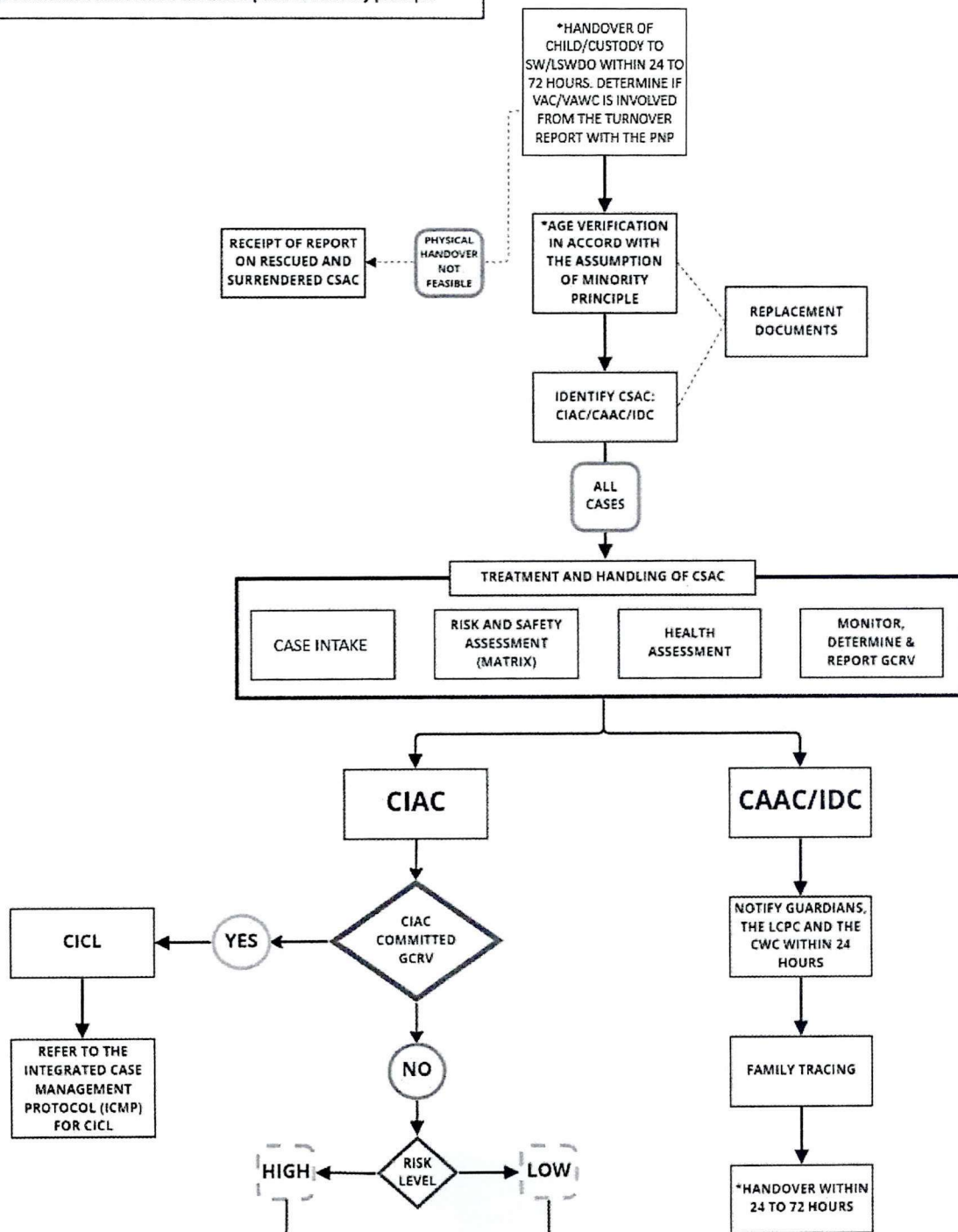
25 JUN 2025


REX GATCHALIAN
DSWD Secretary

18 JUN 2025

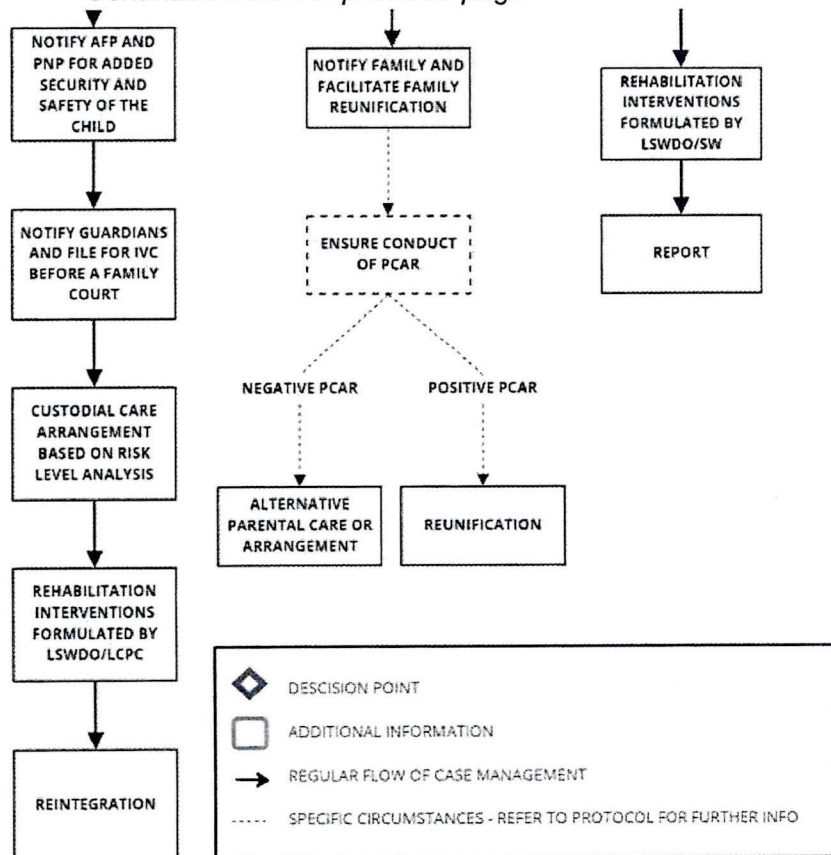
Annex A: CSAC Flowchart

*All handovers to be carried out within the timeframe of 24 to 72 hours
*Age verification must follow the assumption of minority principle



Continued on the next page

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Annex B: Turnover Report

(to be filled by the person/agency surrendering the child to the LSWDO or DSWD)

Fill-out the form to the best of your knowledge. Write N/A if the information cannot be obtained at the time of reporting.

Date [mm/dd/yyyy]: _____

Name of Child: _____

Last

First

Middle

Date of Birth [mm/dd/yyyy]: _____ Age: _____

A. Initial Report:

1. Address/Place of origin: _____

2. Tribal/Ethnolinguistic Affiliation: _____
3. Name of Parents/Guardians/Nearest Relatives:

Name: _____

Age and Relationship: _____

Present Address and Contact Information (telephone/cellphone/email):

B. Physical/Psychological Condition: (Please Check)

1. Physical

- Wounds
- Fractures
- Others (Specify)

2. Medical

- Nutrition
- Illnesses
- Others (Specify)

3. Psychological

- Eating Disturbance (Specify) _____
- Sleeping Difficulty (Specify) _____

- Others (Specify) _____

C. Brief Circumstances of the Rescue of the Child: (Where, When, How)

D. Measures Taken While in Custody: (Please check and specify)

- Physical/Medical Examination: _____
- Mental/Psychological Examination: _____
- Medications Provided: _____
- Assistance/Services Provided: _____
- Visitors: _____
- Others: _____

Transferred by:

Received by:

Signature: _____

Signature: _____

Name: _____

Name: _____

Designation: _____

Designation: _____

Agency: _____

Agency: _____

Annex C: Acknowledgement

Date [mm/dd/yyyy]: _____

This is to acknowledge the receipt of:

Name of Child: _____

Last

First

Middle

Date of Birth [mm/dd/yyyy]: _____ Age: _____

From:

(Name and Address of the agency/organization which turned over the child)

In:

(Status of physical/psychological condition of the child)

Upon receipt, the subject child shall be provided with humane treatment and their rights protected at all times, as provided for in Section 7 of RA 11188 "Special Protection of Children in Situations of Armed Conflict Act."

Transferred by:

Received by:

Signature: _____

Signature: _____

Name: _____

Name: _____

Designation: _____

Designation: _____

Agency: _____

Agency: _____

Annex D: Report on Grave Child Rights Violations (GCRVs) under RA 11188

Source of Data

Name of the reporting party: _____

Agency/Organization: _____

Contact details: _____

Event Information

Source of information: _____

Date and time of the incident: _____

Location: _____

Number of children affected: <i>*indicate the number of boys and girls*</i>		
Boys	Girls	TOTAL
Number of Children with Special Needs:		
Boys	Girls	TOTAL

Names and age/s of affected children:

[Name]/[Age]/[Gender]/[With/without special needs]

Name of armed group or forces involved: _____

Signature of reporting party:

Signature: _____

Name: _____

Designation: _____

Agency: _____

Annex E: Social Case Study Report Template

SOCIAL CASE STUDY REPORT

Date:

I. IDENTIFYING INFORMATION:

Name :
Sex :
Age :
Date of Birth :
Nationality :
Place Of Birth :
Civil Status :
Religion :
Occupation :
Address :
Educational Attainment :
Contact No. :

II. FAMILY COMPOSITION:

Name	Relationship	Age	Birthdate	Civil Status	Educational Attainment	Occupation	Estimated Monthly Income	Remarks

III. PRESENTING PROBLEM

IV. BACKGROUND OF THE CASE

V. ASSESSMENT

VI. RECOMMENDATION

Prepared by:

Reviewed by:

Approved By:

Intervention Plan

NEEDS/ ISSUES/ CONCERNS	RESULT STATEMENT/ OBJECTIVES	SUGGESTED INTERVENTION/ ACTIVITIES	RESPONSIBLE PERSON/ AGENCY	TIMELINE

Annex F: Consent Form

Revise according to the preferred language of the signatory (CSAC, their parents or guardian)

Sa kinauukulan:

Ako si _____, nasa wastong gulang at nakatira sa _____,

Ako ay kusang loob na nagbibigay ng pahintulot sa Pangalan ng ahensya (DSWD/LSWDO/etc.) na:

- Kolektahin at gamitin ang aking personal na impormasyon;
- Upang mapailalim sa pangangalagang pag-iingat; at/o
- Tumanggap ng interbensyon at tulong para sa layunin ng Batas Republika 11188 o ang "Special Protection of Children in Situations of Armed Conflict Act".

Naiintindihan ko na ang aking impormasyon ay aalagaan sa pangangalaga ng mga batas ukol sa proteksyon ng datos, kasama ang Batas Republika 10173 o ang "Data Privacy Act of 2012."

Maaring ibahagi ang aking personal na impormasyon sa mga awtorisadong indibidwal at mga kaugnay na ahensya para sa mga nabanggit na layunin. Naiintindihan ko rin na may karapatan akong humiling ng access, koreksyon, at pagtanggap ng aking personal na impormasyon, ayon sa batas. Sa pamamagitan ng pagpirma sa ibaba, ako ay nagpapatunay na naiintindihan at sumasang-ayon sa mga termino ng pahintulot na ito at nagbibigay ng aking pahintulot sa Pangalan ng ahensya (DSWD/LSWDO/etc.) na kolektahin, gamitin, at iproseso ang aking personal na impormasyon ayon sa nabanggit na layunin.

Pangalan ng Kliyente o ang kanyang magulang/tagapag-alaga: _____

Lagda: _____

Petsa: _____