

CHINA

Surge in sick kids sparks call for resources

Health authority forbids grassroots clinics from turning away patients

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China's top health authority on Monday required localities to "exhaust all means" to increase pediatric service capacity and stock up on pediatric medications and relevant medical materials to cope with a spike in respiratory illnesses among children.

All grassroots medical institutions should be open to child patients and are forbidden from turning them away, the general office of the National Health Commission said in a circular released on its website.

"Community healthcare centers in cities seeing surging demand should also extend hours on weekdays by one to three hours or set up additional service periods on weekends based on their capability," said the commission.

Rural and community health centers should be guided to set up separate sections for pediatric services, and they should organize general physicians who have received training on pediatric diseases to see child patients.

Each community or village healthcare center should be paired with a pediatric department at a higher-level hospital. Experienced medical professionals will be allocated to grassroots facilities to provide pediatric services and train staff on key skills, including emergency care, prompt identification of severe symptoms and venipuncture — the process of inserting a needle into a child's vein.

Localities are also required to equip grassroots facilities with thermometers, nebulizers, antibiotics, antivirals, as well as pediatric medicines for easing cough and phlegm.

These requirements have been raised as China is battling a surge in respiratory illness fueled by the circulation of different pathogens including influenza, the COVID-19 disease and mycoplasma pneumoniae.

Children have appeared to be affected particularly hard this winter as parents have found difficulties obtaining hospital appointments or have to endure long waiting periods at major pediatric hospitals. Despite

authorities' appeal to the public to visit primary health institutions first rather than going straight to large hospitals, concerns have emerged over the community clinics' capability and capacity in handling pediatric patients.

Wang Huaqing, chief immunization planning expert at the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention, said late last month that influenza and rhinovirus are the most prevalent among toddlers aged 1 to 4, and for children aged 5 to 14, influenza, mycoplasma pneumonia and adenovirus are the most common.

Tong Zhaohui, vice-president of the Beijing Chaoyang Hospital affiliated to Capital Medical University, suggested a child who begins developing a fever to visit a community hospital to first take a rapid antigen test, which can identify whether they contracted a respiratory virus or a bacterial infection like mycoplasma pneumonia. They can also get regular antivirals and drugs there.

"However, for kids who have had a fever for more than three days or have shortness of breath, they should visit pediatric hospitals," he said during an interview with China Central Television on Sunday evening.

Tong added that most doctors at primary health institutions are trained in general medicine and are capable of dealing with common respiratory illnesses in children.

"It is important for them to access prompt treatment at medical facilities nearby, and in this way, parents and kids can save the trouble of lining up at large hospitals, where the risk of cross-infections is higher," he said.

The commission also said in the newly released notice that grassroots medical facilities should play a role in meeting demands for pediatric services, easing pressure on major hospitals seeing large volume of visitors, as well as monitoring health conditions of and expanding vaccination among key populations.

According to the document, fever clinics at grassroots clinics should also keep surveillance of the situation of respiratory disease and report data to higher authorities swiftly.

Mayday denies allegations of lip-syncing in concert

By ZHOU WENTING in Shanghai
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The record company of pop group Mayday has denied allegations that the band lip-synced during its November concerts in Shanghai earlier this year.

"There were no lip-syncing behaviors during the tour of Mayday. The allegations maliciously attack the artists and injure their reputations," read the statement released by B'in Music, Mayday's record company.

Video and audio clips of their concert performances in Shanghai have been submitted to the city's cultural market inspection department for evaluation and analysis, with the investigation results to be published later, China Central Television reported.

The investigation follows a blogger's viral video at the weekend that made the allegations that the band lip-synced during several songs at a recent Shanghai concert.

The blogger said that he collected video clips of the band singing 12 songs at the concert in Shang-

hai on Nov 16, filmed by audience members, and found lip-syncing in five of the songs by comparing the sound with the original recorded songs with the help of professional technical software.

According to the country's Regulations on the Administration of For-profit Performances, performers must not deceive the audience by lip-syncing, and performance organizers must not organize performers involved in lip-syncing. A fine of 50,000 yuan (\$7,000) to 100,000 yuan could be imposed if they are found guilty.

Mayday is a well-known Chinese rock band from Taiwan, with a huge fan base on the Chinese mainland. This year, the band held concerts in Beijing, Shanghai, Shenzhen, Guangzhou, Wuhan, Shenyang, Hong Kong and other Chinese cities. The band has held around 60 concerts in cities around the world in 2023.

Tickets for the band's Shanghai concerts were priced from 355 yuan to 1,855 yuan. The eight concerts held in Shanghai in November attracted audiences totaling 360,000.

Ready to guide



People who are visually impaired receive newly "graduated" guide dogs at Beijing's first center for guide dog training at Beijing University of Agriculture on Sunday. The center is equipped with facilities catering to a dog's whole training process, as well as veterinarian services. YUAN YI / FOR CHINA DAILY

Cities loosening hukou policy to make it easier for people to move for work

By ZHAO RUINAN
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Some provincial capitals and large cities in China have begun to relax their *hukou* policies, a move that experts said was to encourage a more flexible movement of people, particularly those seeking employment.

The *hukou* is the system of household registration on the Chinese mainland, identifying an individual as a permanent resident of a particular area and granting that individual social benefits such as access to education, healthcare and the purchase of property.

A recent trending topic on microblogging platform Sina Weibo revolved around the possibility of switching a household registration from a place outside of cities such as Nanchang, Haikou and Hangzhou, to one of those cities provided you had a friend living in that city and if other conditions are met.

The trend of loosening *hukou* policy is widely seen as an approach to bolster labor mobility while stimulating urbanization efforts.

The requirements vary in different cities and regions. In some cities such as Nanchang, if a friend owns a local residence and agrees to sponsor a registration, that individual can settle in Nanchang.

But in larger cities like Hangzhou, it's more difficult to transfer *hukou*. An individual must be unmarried

and have no property in Hangzhou, as well as meet specific criteria set by the city to be eligible for household registration.

In cities like Haikou and Hefei, friends can buy a property together and have their household registrations in the same booklet. However, only one of them can be registered as the head of the household.

Wen Jun, a professor of social sciences at East China Normal University in Shanghai, said that the move could help young people better integrate into urban life where they choose to move to.

"For young job seekers, this is good news," Wen said, adding that the relaxation of household registration policies in cities provides them with more employment opportunities and room for development.

From a broader view, Wen saw the relaxation as the latest manifestation of China's ongoing household registration reform.

"It's a continuous trend that urban household registration restrictions have been gradually loosening. And it is no doubt a positive sign and an essential way to enhance China's urban management capacity," he said.

The Chinese government has been gradually bridging the gap between agricultural and urban *hukou* over the past decade.

Hukou reforms such as these ultimately aim to reduce the inequities between different types of *hukou*

holders and improve labor mobility in the economy, Wen said.

In August, the Ministry of Public Security piloted the implementation of more flexible *hukou* policies to boost urbanization. First- and second-tier cities such as Shenzhen in Guangdong province and Nanjing in Jiangsu province have also loosened household registration policies this year.

However, there is a significant difference in household registration conditions among cities, with megacities such as Beijing and Guangzhou continuing to have more restrictive policies.

Hukou is closely linked to access to many social welfare benefits in a specific city, including education, healthcare and retirement pensions, Wen explained.

"So the relaxation of household registration policies needs to consider the corresponding management capabilities and social security systems."

He cautioned that the easing of household registration policies should follow a step-by-step approach and each city or region should open under certain conditions based on its own situation.

"If the management capacity and the social security and welfare system cannot keep up after the relaxation, it is easy to create inequalities within a city, which will complicate the original guarantee system and social public services. And that would be troublesome."

Teacher executed for raping students

By ZOU SHUO in Changsha
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A middle school teacher in Longhui county, Hunan province, has been executed for raping and molesting multiple students, according to a local court.

After being approved by the Supreme People's Court, the Shaoyang Intermediate People's Court executed Long Peizhu, 60, on Friday.

The court said Long had raped five female students, aged between 12 and 14, repeatedly from April 2016 to October 2020 while serving as the head teacher of the students. Three of them were under the age of 14.

The rapes occurred in his office, the school dormitory and at Long's home.

All of the students who were raped by Long have experienced mental health issues as a result. One even took her own life.

Long had also molested three students aged between 12 and 14.

According to China's Criminal Law, people convicted of rape can be sentenced to more than 10 years in prison, life in prison or even death. Those who rape girls under the age of 14 receive harsher sentences.

The court said Long's case was extremely severe, violating the bottom line of the law and morality, and causing serious negative social impact.

The Shaoyang court sentenced him to death, which was then upheld by the Hunan Provincial High People's Court and approved by the Supreme People's Court.

The court said that protecting the rights of children has been its long-held principle and it will continue to take swift action.

According to the country's top court, three courts in Hubei, Shandong and Henan provinces executed three men for raping children in May.

Zhou Guangquan, dean of the School of Law at Tsinghua University, said what Long did was so outrageous that the punishment fitted the crime.

The Criminal Law stipulates that people who commit extremely serious crimes can be sentenced to death, and carrying out the death sentence has shown the Party and country's resolution in punishing people who have seriously harmed the rights and interests of children and women, he told China Women's News.

Olympics brings wave of winter sports popularity

By ZHAO RUIXUE in Jinan
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Riding on a wave of popularity created by the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics, winter sports in China are attracting millions of people to dip their toes into icy waters and have a go.

More than 30 primary school students in Fushan district of Yantai, Shandong province, gathered at an ice sports center for training on Monday. Equipped with ice skates and protective gear, the students followed the guidance of their coach as they glided on the ice with the help of small chairs.

"I feel great on the ice, like a little penguin," said Zhang Yutong, a grade one student from Fuhai Road Primary School.

The education and sports bureau of Fushan district has this winter organized free ice sports experiences for students from primary and junior middle schools in the district.

"Students have the opportunity to learn from professional coaches who teach them the proper way to wear protective gear and maneuver on the ice. They can also learn skills related to hockey and short-track speed skating," said Lin Wentao, deputy director of the equipment center of the bureau.

This initiative to popularize winter sports in schools was launched in the district in 2019 in response to the government's call to involve 300



Grade one students from a primary school in Fushan district of Yantai, Shandong province, experience ice sports at an ice center on Monday. HU BIN / FOR CHINA DAILY

million people in winter sports.

The aim is to introduce ice sports to kindergartners, provide basic courses for primary school students in grades one and two, and offer more advanced courses in hockey and short-track speed skating to students in grades three and above.

Over the past three years, primary school students have participated in winter sports activities, including short-track speed skating, ice hockey, figure skating and curling, a total of 30,000 times, the bureau said.

Seven primary and junior middle

schools in the district are rated as national-level schools characterized by ice and snow sports.

"Children have a natural affinity and love for ice and snow," said Zhang Tingting, a mother of a grade four student from the district's Donghua Primary School.

"Just like children enjoy snowball fights, children are excited to put on ice skates and hit the ice rink, even if they fall down frequently," said Zhang, adding that ice sports have not only improved physical fitness but also strength-

ened the willpower of her child.

Chongli district in Zhangjiakou, Hebei province, where most of the snow events of the 2022 Winter Olympics were held, has witnessed a surging number of enthusiasts stepping on their snowboards.

The district had received a total of 511,400 visits and earned tourism revenue of 449 million yuan (\$63 million) as of Saturday this snow season, according to the district's culture and tourism bureau.

Since the opening of Forlong Ski Resort at Forlong Four Seasons Town this year, it has received more than 60,000 skier visits, nearly doubling the number of 2019, Zou Zhongqiao, deputy manager of the resort's culture and tourism department, was quoted as saying by Beijing Business Today on Wednesday.

The rise in demand for hotels and guesthouses has reflected a significant increase in skiing demand.

To meet the surging demand, Zhangjiakou has taken multiple measures while making full use of its post-Olympics legacy, such as holding competition events at Olympic venues and putting on entertainment.

The city published a system last month standardizing its snow resorts' services covering catering, accommodation, transportation, sightseeing, shopping and entertainment.

Zhang Yu contributed to this story.