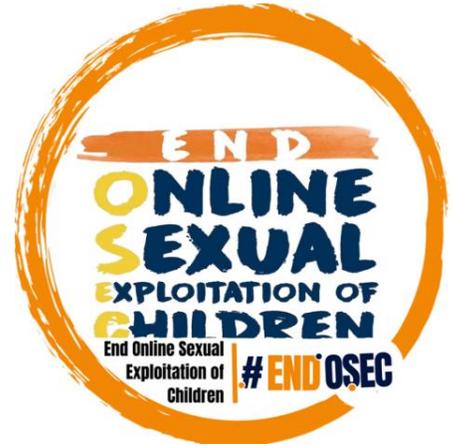


“Towards Reconciliation, Healing and Recovery in OSEC Family Reintegration”

[A Policy Brief]



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Cases of Online Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children (OSAEC) in the Philippines increased by 264.6 percent or 202,605 more reports during the imposition of the enhanced community quarantine from March to May 2020. According to a 2019 Report on Online Sexual Exploitation in Children¹, there were strong efforts to respond to the short and the long-term needs of OSEC victim-survivors, however, there remains a need for expanded protective custody options for the OSEC clients. It further highlights that safe reintegration of children back into their communities and families of origin can pose many challenges.

This policy brief will provide the key findings from the documentation of emerging practices on OSEC family reintegration that can be used as reference in the formulation of OSEC Specific Family Reintegration policies, program strategies and approaches.

INTRODUCTION

Online Sexual Exploitation in the Philippines has increased alarmingly in the past years more so during the pandemic period. While families may or may not see it as a form of child abuse, the OSEC victim-survivor suffers the most and may have serious implications in their development and well-being. OSEC is a result of widespread poverty, lack of jobs, internal and external migration, and cultural norms that uphold prioritizing family over one's own well-being, according to a study of Terre de Homes (2013).

The E-OSEC (End Online Sexual Exploitation in Children) project aims to eliminate existing barriers to delivery of effective prevention, rescue, and restoration services to children-at-risk through the conduct of capacity building and online safety awareness activities, and policy advocacies at varying levels. The End-OSEC Consortium believes that these actions would help enable the Philippine child protection system to protect children. It also aims to develop an OSEC Family Reintegration Model, through the documentation of existing approaches and interventions used to restore victims-survivors across the continuum of care paradigm or the Care Perspective for OSEC victims. There is also a need to recognize the emerging practices implemented in various set-up such as the assessment center, residential care, foster care homes and in the community.

This policy brief shall present the evidences as models that can provide useful information in the formulation of policies/ guidelines in an OSEC specific family reintegration model.

KEY FINDINGS FROM THE DOCUMENTATION PROCESS

A. Operational Definition of OSEC Specific Family Reintegration Concepts

1. Safehouse
2. OSEC Assessment Facility/ Center
3. An OSEC survivor-centered approach
4. OSEC Continuum of Care
5. OSEC Family Reintegration
6. Healing and Recovery
7. Process of Reintegration
8. Safety and Risks Issues

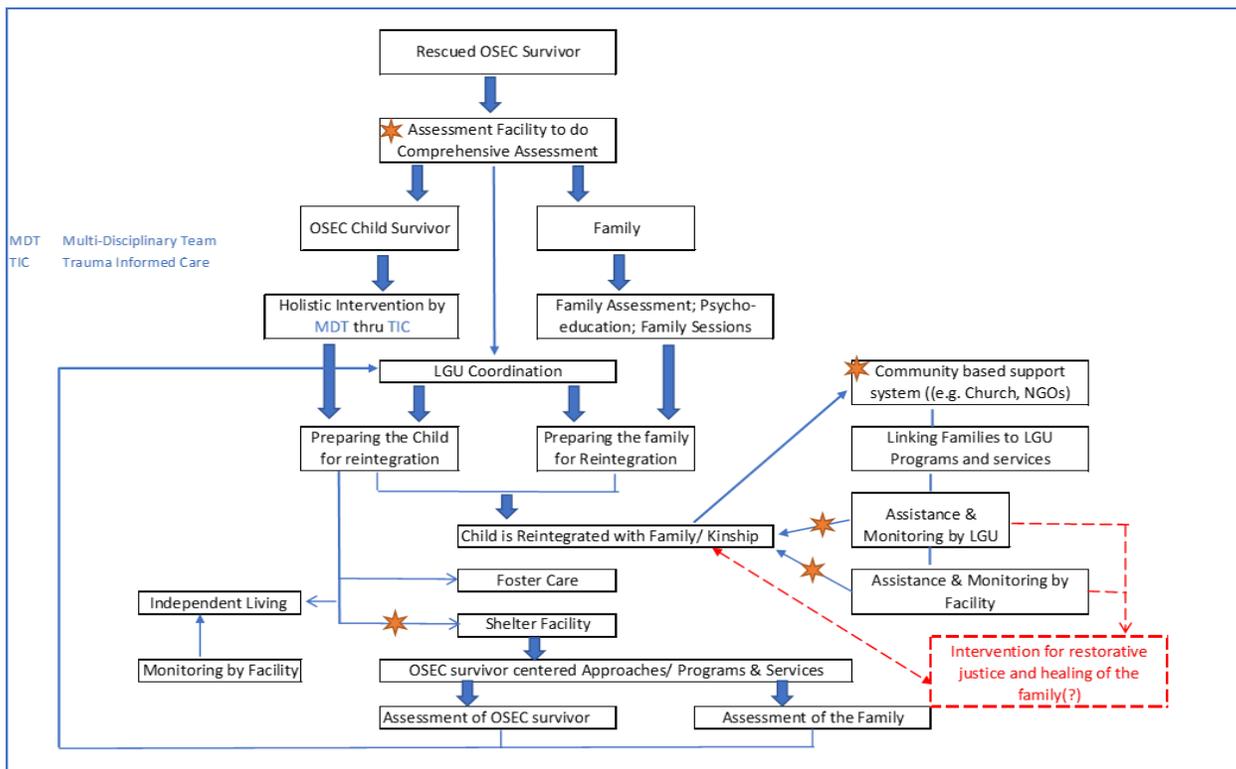
[Please see Annex for complete definition and description of these concepts]

¹ Online Sexual Exploitation in Children in the Philippines, 2019. International Justice Mission; Philippine Inter-Agency Council Against Trafficking (IACAT), U.S. Department of State Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons (TIP Office)

B. Key Elements of OSEC Family Reintegration Model

Elements	Key areas
<i>Child Protection Policies and Standards</i>	UNCRC Child Protection Policies (i.e. Child Protective Custody, etc) Guidelines on Children's Reintegration. Report, 2016. Inter-agency Group on Children Reintegration DSWD Memo 2015-020 (as reference) but need to develop an OSEC Specific Guideline/ IRR
Structures	Assessment Facility "Safe houses" Temporary Residential Care Facilities Licensed Foster Care
<i>Comprehensive Assessment/ Holistic gender and culture responsive programs & services</i>	Comprehensive assessment (e.g. 14 day induction sessions) Multi-disciplinary Team Approach Trauma informed care Approach Gender-culture sensitive/ age-appropriate interventions Holistic programs and services (physical, psychological, emotional, spiritual) including educational assistance; life-skills, livelihood trainings and sessions; psycho-therapy sessions Orientation on Child's Rights and Protection (safety nets on use of social media); Family reintegration sessions for both the OSEC victim-survivor and the parents Psycho-education sessions Healing, recovery, transformative, empowering
<i>Family Reintegration Processes/ Phases</i>	Highlighted on the continuum of care as follows: Rescue Admission Assessment of OSEC victim-survivor and family Case management Referral and Coordination with key stakeholders (i.e. LGU partners) Preparing the OSEC victim-survivor (using available assessment tools) Preparing the family for reunification (using available assessment tools) Coordination with community- based support mechanisms; partnership with other NGOs and CSOs (e.g. Faith- based groups) in the community Choosing which Model is most appropriate to the child (with child participation in decision making process) Final processing of the child towards actual reintegration process including close coordination with the LGU Transfer of the OSEC victim survivor to the family and post-reintegration monitoring
<i>Family Reintegration Models</i>	Non-offending family/ Kinship Foster placement Shelter Facilities Independent Living
<i>LGU Partnership & linkages for economic recovery</i>	Connect with existing LGU/ DSWD economic livelihood opportunities (i.e. 4Ps, livelihood skills training, other support programs) Partnership building to strengthen community support system
<i>Monitoring of OSEC survivor and family</i>	Monitoring by LGUs Monitoring by Facility/ Agencies Community based mechanisms to support monitoring by LGUs (e.g. Barangay, Youth organizations, schools, 4P's parent leaders, women groups/ organization)
<i>Community-based support mechanism</i>	Explore and build partnerships with local churches for continuing spiritual support during the healing and recovery stage → strengthening the support group & fellowship Connect with barangay structures for sustained child protection thru BCPC (Barangay Council for the Protection of Children) Partnership with youth programs to advocate and implement child protection policies in the barangay Establish partnerships with community-based NGOs for continuing support system and child protection awareness and activities Strengthen community education thru partnership with schools and other support groups on child protection and OSEC awareness and advocacy

The graphical illustration below reflects the **OSEC specific Family Reintegration Model in the Care Continuum Perspectives**. This model consolidates and presents the overall process flow in ensuring that the continuum of care for the OSEC victim survivor is being maintained and supported all throughout the reintegration phases.



POLICY GAPS/ IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Legal Mandates

Legal mandates with emphasis on OSEC specific family reintegration interventions, programs and services are not yet available.

Explanatory note: While there are several laws that are being used as reference in the implementation of OSEC related interventions for children (i.e. laws on anti-trafficking, child protection policies, anti-sexual abuse and exploitation in children) among others, the complexity of family reintegration among OSEC victim-survivor warrants a specific law and IRR to further guide its implementation.

B. OSEC Guidelines

Current guidelines and protocols are not OSEC-specific

Review existing policies related to child protection and other related policies

Push/ advocate the passing of the law and crafting of the IRR defining OSEC specific guidelines and protocols to include well defined OSEC family reintegration interventions;

Budget appropriations should be stipulated in the IRR of the laws that provides assistance to the family after reunification/ reintegration to improve economic recovery and prevent re-victimization

Support the conduct of participatory action research to evaluate and establish evidences of promising practices on OSEC interventions, programs, services among GAs/ NGOs (Agencies)/ FBOs providing OSEC services. An evaluative research to provide the evidences to support key elements of the OSEC-specific standard protocols and practice guidelines to help implementing Agencies.

Note: The Documentation of OSEC Family Reintegration Models can serve as reference points in defining these standards of practice and guidelines.

The current protocols and standards being implemented by the Agencies can serve as inputs to the IRRs or guidelines to be developed in an OSEC specific program and services

Standards Manual and Guideline can be formulated based on the promising evidences from the OSEC implementing agencies

Guideline defining an alternative interim structure (e.g. shelter, foster care, independent living) before the actual reintegration process based on child's expressed choices and status of the family can be formulated

C. Funding

Funding support to assist the families even after the actual reintegration are insufficient to address the needs of the reintegrated OSEC victim survivor and her family.

D. Supporting Policy Structures

Need to ensure that OSEC related issues and concerns are taken up and discussed in specific inter-agency committees (at the various levels of public welfare system) to address and resolve policy and operational issues in OSEC implementation

Discussions on OSEC related issues and concerns at the LGU level (more specifically in "hot spot" areas) need to be reinforced and sustained

E. Guideline to support restorative justice among offending family members

There is an observed gap in terms of interventions to address offending family members since they still are part of the reintegration process. It was being noted that OSEC victim-survivors still yearn to see and talk to their offending parent/s despite the wrongdoing.

F. Community based Protocols on Non-discrimination and protection for the OSEC victim survivor and the family

Post-reintegration safety, security, stigmatization and discrimination poses a big risk to the OSEC victim survivor during the healing process.

OSEC family reintegration should always prioritize the reintegration of the child with the family. If not possible, the other models should be explored as an option

G. Guideline on Human Resource Augmentation at the LGU level

Lack of human resource to provide support to the OSEC victim survivor and the family in the reintegration process.

Explanatory note: It was being noted that the reintegration process entails close monitoring and provision of assistance to the OSEC victim-survivors and their families to prevent re-victimization. LGU social workers need the extra hand and support to perform expected tasks with the follow up of OSEC cases.

Guidelines should include the provision of necessary and much needed budgetary appropriation/ allocation to support economic recovery of the family and to prevent revictimization of the OSEC victim-survivor.

Advocacy to LGUs should be sustained to ensure that OSEC programs and services will be given priorities more so under the Mandanas-Garcia ruling of the Supreme Court (2019) which transfers bigger share/ large chunk of the internal revenue allocation to local government units

Explore the possibility of establishing public-private partnership in providing assistance to NGOs/FBOs supported facilities catering to OSEC cases

Review and amend current/ existing national and local government committees and inter-agency councils that can already include OSEC specific issues

Policy on the creation of inter-agency committees on OSEC at the local levels to monitor OSEC related issues and concerns

Forged partnerships with different sectors (GOs, NGOs, FBOs, Private sector) at all levels to create an inter-agency committee on OSEC concerns

Establishing the feedback mechanisms from community back to the referring agency/ institution.

A policy intervention may need to be carefully studied on restorative justice and healing for the OSEC victim and the offending family member. It was noted in the documentation process that family reconciliation is key towards healing and recovery of the OSEC victim-survivor

The law should mandate the set standard for community protocols that provides safeguards to the OSEC victim-survivor and family to prevent stigma and discrimination; while this may be under the jurisdiction of the BCPC, clarity in terms of how to respond to the needs of the OSEC victim survivor and the family should be well defined.

OSEC mandates, implementing rules and regulations and other guidelines should be in alignment with international standards in terms of child rights and protection, OSEC principles, concepts, and practices with full consideration of the Filipino context, values, and acceptable norms.

Policy should consider that LGUs shall have additional human resource to have dedicated people on OSEC related issues and concern for the child and the family.

Partnership agreements should be established between the NGOs and LGUs to define specific roles and responsibilities to support the OSEC victim survivor and the family after reintegration.

H. Guideline on Community-based monitoring of OSEC victim survivor and the family

Develop the monitoring framework/ design and tools to include OSEC indicators and parameters to track the OSEC victim survivor and their families during reintegration (for LGUs, NGOs, and community- based mechanisms)

Monitoring of OSEC victim survivor at the community level is wanting

Development of an OSEC database (at the LGU level) to support tracking and monitoring of OSEC victim-survivor and their families

Difficulty in tracking OSEC victim survivor and their family after reintegration in some areas

Conclusion:

The key findings and result of the documentation study raises the concern in the formulation of a law that specifically defines the key elements, processes, and strategies in the implementation of an OSEC Specific Family Reintegration Model. While the country awaits the final passing of the OSEC Bill, the accompanying Implementation Rules and Regulation should stipulate provisions along these areas. The study had provided an opportunity to define and describe the unique features of the OSEC family reintegration model that can be used as reference in the formulation of the OSEC specific policies and guidelines.

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APPENDIX

Operational Definition of OSEC Family Reintegration Concepts

Safehouse: A safe house is being described as a temporary house where rescued OSEC victims are brought and provided with their immediate needs, services and other programs on OSEC being offered. It is a place where the children feels safe physically and emotionally as they are able to share their feelings and begins to build their relationships and trust.

OSEC Assessment Facility: In this study an OSEC Assessment Facility is described as a temporary shelter and safehouse where rescued OSEC victims are being referred for a comprehensive assessment and holistic approach in the provision of appropriate interventions by a Multi-disciplinary Team. The comprehensive assessment covers a 14 days induction period where certain tasks needs to be performed (i.e. psycho-evaluation, medical/dental, homelife. Love and care [to establish trust and building relationships], etc.). The critical needs of the rescued OSEC survivor must be addressed: 1. Survival/ critical assessment (including the stabilization of emotion, children feel that they are in a safe house); 2. Healing and recovery which is a process that begins with the results/ findings of the assessment done by MDT, including therapy session, and identification of capacities); and 3. capacity building. Interventions in the assessment facility covers the bio-psycho-social, and spiritual needs of the OSEC survivor including formal and non-formal education. It also includes the simultaneous assessment of the child’s family in preparation for reintegration. The end goal of an assessment facility is to be able to reintegrate the OSEC children to the non-offending families/ kinship; or referral to foster care facilities, or to shelter facilities if the two options are not possible. Children usually stay from 3-6 months in an assessment facility (but extensions were observed during the pandemic period). Family connection/ linking and family interaction are important in the process but it usually takes a month before the child can connect with the family.

An OSEC survivor centered approach. In this study it considers child awareness on OSEC issues in relation to values (i.e. material things, money, family needs). Since OSEC victims are in denial of a “wrong doing” since they feel they are able to help the family. The approach should consider to re-evaluate the process on how to raise the awareness to the OSEC victim given the family context. It also considers awareness raising for both the child and the family thru psycho-

therapy/ psycho-education. Acceptance of siblings in the facilities are given consideration as part of the trauma informed approach to cope with the trauma during the rescue process.

OSEC Continuum of Care- In this study it starts during admission and continuous with the 14 days induction where basic needs and emotional support are being provided to OSEC survivor. It continues with the family reintegration phase (using a family-based approach) that entails monitoring the child and the family in coordination with the LGU. During reintegration, jurisdiction in terms of child care goes back to LGU social worker so they are critical partners in the monitoring phase although the Agency still does a separate monitoring of the child and the family to provide assistance. The monitoring covers how they are doing in the family, the community i.e. continuing with education; check on potential re-victimization; ensuring that family residence is not in a hot spot; acquiring sponsorship and tapping of other organization for educational assistance helps in the cooperation of parents during the monitoring activities. The LGUs are crucial in the continuum of care as they are able to link families with available programs and services to OSEC survivors and their families (e.g. 4Ps, livelihood projects). To ensure the continuum of care, it entails the continues monitoring of the OSEC survivors and their families and to provide assistance if they still need (e.g. quarterly visit with food assistance) needs to be sustained. Building community-based support mechanisms and establishing coordination with community structures for support and networking needs to be explored. The continuum of care covers the monitoring (of the child and family) should continue for 6 months after reintegration or up to the 2 years and depends on the assessment of the child.

OSEC Family Reintegration - In this study, it is used to describe the movement or transfer of the OSEC victim- survivor from the assessment facility to their family, kin or to another shelter. The transfer involves physical, emotional, psychological and economic preparations for both the OSEC victims-survivors and the family, kin or to another shelter. There are 2 stages involved in the preparation which is the period from intake to the formal turn-over. The first stage is called the “family reunification stage, and the second stage is called the “” family reintegration phase” which involves the actual turn-over of the OSEC victim -survivor to the family or kin, or to another shelter. The OSEC family Reintegration also is keen on restoring or healing family relationships and building new ones. Different tools are used in assessing the preparedness of both the OSEC victim-survivor and the family in the family reintegration.

Healing and recovery - In this study, healing and recovery is used to describe a process (not a state) of an OSEC victim-survivor in the Family Reintegration Program across the care continuum perspective. Other organizations used the term “Transforming and Reforming” which focuses on children’s resiliency and prepares children to become advocates. Other agencies use the term “healing towards recovery” subscribing to the belief that unless a child is healed, it would be difficult for the child to move towards recovery. Agencies used different tools in assessing if the child is healed or has recovered from her/his experience.

Process of Reintegration – In this study refers to the different phases and stages in the Family Reintegration Program. OSEC assessment facility and temporary shelters for OSEC victims-survivors have specific guidelines, protocols and requirements in the process of reintegration. Some organization starts with (1)assessment, (2)family tracing and assessment, (3) reintegration and support, (4) follow-up and support, (5). termination. Others start with (1) child assessment, (2) Family Assessment; (3) Psycho-education; (4) Family Case Conference; (5) Reintegration, and (6) Monitoring.

Safety or risks issues - These are issues surrounding survivors that may do harm to the child (e.g. harm inside the facility, harm in the family). These may include the following: 1. Economic risks (may lead to re-victimization (when there is no work--- no income--- revictimization) Note: ASO tools also indicates when family is able to finance and sustain the family; 2. Physical safety ; 3. Environment; 4. Peers; 5. relationship of child with relatives (as they may influence certain decisions on legal matter); 6. Community risks: place where they came from (the environment also is a risks); 6. family support to the child; 7. medical history. Note: Domains on Family Risk Assessment Tool which also includes qualitative descriptions on the 8. progress of legal cases (while still in the center) → the child’s being influenced by family members also poses as a risk.

