



Republic of the Philippines
House of Representatives
Quezon City, Metro Manila

Twentieth Congress
Second Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 11080



Introduced by Representatives Ferdinand Martin G. Romualdez, Yedda Marie K. Romualdez, Andrew Julian K. Romualdez and Jude A. Acidre

AN ACT
STRENGTHENING CHILD-CENTERED, FAMILY-BASED, AND
REINTEGRATIVE VISITATION AND CARE STANDARDS IN ALL
BAHAY PAG-ASA FACILITIES, ESTABLISHING A HOLISTIC SUPPORT
SYSTEM, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The State affirms its constitutional duty to uphold the best interests of the child, particularly for children in conflict with the law (CICL), who require protection, rehabilitation, and meaningful reintegration into society. Under Republic Act No. 9344, Bahay Pag-asa facilities were established as child-caring institutions that provide temporary residential care and intervention services. These facilities are central to the country's juvenile justice and welfare system and are intended to operationalize a child-centered and restorative approach to justice.

Over the years, the Philippines has seen significant progress in reducing juvenile delinquency. Data from the Juvenile Justice and Welfare Council indicate that cases involving CICL declined from 26,850 in 2017 to 4,383 in 2024, reflecting the effectiveness of diversion and rehabilitation programs. However, recent trends suggest potential increases in cases, highlighting the need to strengthen existing mechanisms and prevent regression. Despite these gains, persistent gaps in Bahay

Pag-asa operations continue to undermine the delivery of holistic and rights-based care.

Among the most critical gaps is the absence of a standardized, enforceable framework on child-sensitive visitation and reintegration practices. While family contact is widely recognized as essential to a child's emotional well-being and successful reintegration, current practices across facilities remain inconsistent and, in some cases, unregulated. Visitation is often conducted without proper risk assessment, structured supervision, or meaningful child participation. Inadequate documentation and lack of post-visit psychosocial support further weaken the system. These deficiencies expose children to risks of retraumatization, coercion, manipulation, and continued exposure to harmful environments—factors that may ultimately undermine rehabilitation and increase the likelihood of recidivism.

Compounding these issues are infrastructure and service delivery challenges faced by Bahay Pag-asa facilities nationwide. With approximately 118 operational centers, many experience overcrowding, limited resources, and insufficient facilities for safe and child-friendly visitation. Moreover, the shortage of trained personnel to manage visitation and reintegration processes constrains the ability of institutions to implement child-sensitive interventions effectively.

International standards, including the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, emphasize that children deprived of liberty have the right to maintain contact with their families in a manner consistent with their well-being and best interests. Such contact must be facilitated within a safe, structured, and child-sensitive environment, with appropriate safeguards and professional oversight. The absence of a national framework places the implementation of these standards at risk of inconsistency across local government units.

This proposed measure seeks to address these gaps by institutionalizing a Child-Centered Reintegration and Visitation Standards Framework in all Bahay Pag-asa facilities. It mandates the development of individualized visitation and reintegration plans, grounded in social case studies and psychological assessments, and subject to regular review. It establishes risk-based visitor screening and accreditation, ensuring that only individuals who do not pose harm to the child are granted access. The measure also defines levels of visitation—including supervised, therapeutic, and virtual modalities—tailored to the needs and circumstances of each child.

Crucially, the bill ensures that children are recognized as active rights-holders by requiring their participation and assent in visitation decisions, while safeguarding them from forced or distressing interactions. It mandates the provision of safe, child-friendly visitation spaces, as well as strict prohibitions against abuse, coercion, and other harmful conduct during visits. To strengthen accountability, the measure requires comprehensive documentation, monitoring, and post-visitation assessment, enabling timely intervention and continuous improvement of care.

Furthermore, the bill integrates visitation within a broader child-centered reintegration strategy, recognizing that meaningful family engagement, when properly managed, can significantly improve emotional recovery, strengthen support systems, and reduce reoffending. By embedding visitation within a structured and trauma-informed framework, the State ensures that family contact becomes a tool for healing rather than a source of harm.

Ultimately, this measure reinforces the principle that children in conflict with the law are not merely subjects of legal processes but individuals in need of care, guidance, and opportunity. By establishing clear, enforceable standards for visitation and reintegration, the State strengthens its commitment to restorative justice and the long-term well-being of every child.

In view of the foregoing, the immediate passage of this measure is earnestly sought.



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SYSTEM, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Philippines in Congress assembled:

SECTION 1. *Short Title.* – This Act shall be known as the “*Bahay Pag-asa Child-Centered Reintegration and Visitation Standards Act.*”

SECTION 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – It is hereby declared the policy of the State to:

- (a) Ensure that Bahay Pag-asa prioritizes care, restoration, and reintegration over punishment;
- (b) Uphold the best interests, dignity, and developmental needs of the child at all times;
- (c) Ensure that all interventions are child-centered, trauma-informed, culturally sensitive, and rights-based;
- (d) Promote safe, regular, and meaningful family engagement as essential to rehabilitation;
- (e) Guarantee privacy, respect, and emotional safety in all forms of visitation and communication;
- (f) Provide holistic and integrated services, including education, health care, psychosocial support, and legal assistance;
- (g) Enforce a zero-tolerance policy against all forms of violence, abuse, exploitation, and neglect; and
- (h) Facilitate the timely reintegration of children into their families and communities.

SECTION 3. *Coverage.* – This Act shall apply to all Bahay Pag-asa facilities established pursuant to Republic Act No. 9344, as amended, including those operated by local government units (LGUs) and accredited private entities.

SECTION 4. *Establishment of a National Child-Centered Reintegration Framework.* — There is hereby established a National Child-Centered Reintegration Framework (NCCRF) to govern visitation, care standards, and reintegration processes in all Bahay Pag-asa facilities.

The Juvenile Justice and Welfare Council (JJWC), in coordination with the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and Commission on Human Rights (CHR), shall develop, implement, and monitor the NCCRF.

SECTION 5. *Minimum Standards for Child-Centered Care and Reintegration* – All Bahay Pag-asa facilities shall adopt and implement a unified system of minimum standards to ensure that care, visitation, and reintegration services are delivered in an integrated, child-centered, and rehabilitative manner. Such standards shall be anchored on the best interests of the child, restorative justice, and trauma-informed approaches, and shall take into consideration the child’s age, developmental stage, and individual circumstances.

Care provided under this Act shall not be limited to custodial supervision but shall encompass holistic interventions that promote the child’s physical, emotional, psychological, social, and educational well-being, including the preparation for successful reintegration into the family and community, with mechanisms to ensure continuity of support.

SECTION 6. *Visitation Rights and Standards.* – Every child under the care of a Bahay Pag-asa facility shall have the right to maintain regular, meaningful, and humane contact with his or her family, guardian, and legal counsel, as part of the child’s rehabilitation and reintegration.

Visitation shall be allowed at least once a month, and, whenever feasible and consistent with the best interests of the child, on a more frequent basis, including

weekly visits. All visitation shall be conducted in private, safe, and child-friendly spaces that uphold the dignity and confidentiality of the child.

Facilities shall provide for alternative modes of communication, including virtual or remote visitation, when in-person contact is not practicable. Visitation schedules shall be reasonably flexible and responsive to the needs and circumstances of the child, subject to the recommendations of the Multi-Disciplinary Team.

SECTION 7. *Child Participation and Autonomy* – In all matters affecting the child, due regard shall be given to the child’s right to participation, consistent with the child’s evolving capacities. The informed consent or assent of the child shall be obtained, as appropriate, in relation to visitation and reintegration processes. The child shall have the right to express his or her views freely and to refuse, defer, or request reasonable modifications to visitation arrangements.

No visitation shall be imposed against the will of the child, except when recommended by qualified professionals and determined to be clinically necessary and in the best interests of the child, with adequate safeguards to ensure the child’s protection and well-being.

SECTION 8. *Facility Environment and Conditions*. — All Bahay Pag-asa facilities shall maintain a home-like, nurturing, and non-punitive environment conducive to the child’s rehabilitation and development. The use of detention-like conditions, structures, or practices is hereby prohibited. Facilities shall be designed and maintained to promote safety, dignity, and a sense of normalcy, and shall provide adequate and appropriate spaces for education, recreation, play, counseling,

and family interaction. The overall environment shall reflect a rights-based and rehabilitative approach to child care.

SECTION 9. *Multi-Disciplinary Care and Case Management.* – Each Bahay Pag-asa facility shall establish a Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) composed of qualified professionals, including, but not limited to, social workers, psychologists, educators, health personnel, and legal practitioners, who shall be responsible for the assessment, planning, implementation, and monitoring of each child’s case.

An individualized care and reintegration plan shall be prepared within seven (7) days from the child’s admission, setting forth appropriate interventions, objectives, and timelines. Such a plan shall be reviewed and updated at least once every month through case conferences, or as may be necessary, to ensure responsiveness to the child’s progress and emerging needs.

SECTION 10. *Safety and Protection Standards.* — Bahay Pag-asa facilities shall uphold the highest standards of child protection and shall adopt a policy of zero tolerance against all forms of abuse, violence, exploitation, discrimination, and neglect. Appropriate mechanisms for the prompt reporting, documentation, and response to any incident shall be established and strictly enforced. All personnel shall be required to undergo training on child safeguarding and shall comply with established protocols, including mandatory reporting obligations. Preventive and responsive measures shall be instituted to ensure that all children are protected from harm at all times.

SECTION 11. *Integrated Services, Diversion Support and Reintegration Programs.* – Bahay Pag-asa facilities shall ensure that CICL are provided with access to integrated and coordinated services, including education, health care, mental health and psychosocial support, life skills training, and legal assistance, consistent with diversion and intervention programs under Republic Act No. 9344. Case management shall be conducted without undue delay, in coordination with the courts, local government units, and other stakeholders. Reintegration programs shall include family-based interventions, restorative justice processes, community involvement, and aftercare services to support the child’s transition back into society and to prevent recidivism.

SECTION 12. *Documentation, Monitoring and Aftercare Support.* – All interventions, including visitation, case management, and rehabilitation activities, shall be properly documented in accordance with applicable laws on confidentiality and data privacy. Bahay Pag-asa facilities shall establish monitoring and evaluation systems to ensure compliance with standards and to assess the effectiveness of programs.

Post-visitation debriefing and psychosocial support shall be provided, when necessary, to assist the child in processing experiences and emotions. Information derived from documentation and monitoring shall be used to inform policy, improve practice, and update individualized intervention plans, ensuring that all measures remain aligned with the best interests of the child and the objectives of restorative justice.

SECTION 13. *Grievance, Complaints and Reporting Mechanism.* – All Bahay Pag-asa facilities shall establish a confidential, accessible, and child-friendly grievance and reporting mechanism that allows children in conflict with the law (CICL), their families, guardians, and facility personnel to report complaints, concerns, or incidents of abuse, neglect, or misconduct without fear or intimidation. The system shall be designed to be age-appropriate, understandable to children, and capable of receiving complaints through multiple channels, including verbal, written, and electronic means, with assistance provided to CICLs when necessary.

All complaints shall be acted upon promptly, fairly, and in accordance with due process, with strict observance of confidentiality and data privacy laws. The mechanism shall ensure full protection against retaliation or reprisal, whether direct or indirect, against complainants or witnesses, and shall be supported by designated child protection focal persons responsible for assisting in the reporting and resolution process.

SECTION 14. *Oversight and Compliance* – The Juvenile Justice and Welfare Council (JJWC), pursuant to Republic Act No. 9344, shall conduct regular inspections, audits, and compliance monitoring of all Bahay Pag-asa facilities, including unannounced visits to ensure full compliance with child protection and rehabilitation standards.

SECTION 15. *Appropriations* – The amount necessary for the initial implementation of this Act shall be charged against the current appropriations of concerned agencies. Thereafter, funding shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

SECTION 16. *Prohibited Acts.* – The following acts shall constitute violations of this Act:

- (a). Denial, unjustified restriction, or arbitrary limitation of a child’s right to regular and meaningful visitation;
- (b). Failure to provide safe, private, and child-friendly visitation environments;
- (c). Imposition of punitive, detention-like, or non-child-sensitive conditions within the facility;
- (d). Failure to establish or maintain a Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) and individualized care plans;
- (e). Neglect in providing access to education, health care, psychosocial support, or legal assistance;
- (f). Failure to implement safeguarding measures or respond to incidents of abuse, violence, or neglect;
- (g). Obstruction of monitoring, inspection, or audit functions of oversight agencies; and
- (h). Falsification or non-maintenance of required records and documentation.

SECTION 17. *Administrative Sanctions.* – Any official, employee, or personnel of a Bahay Pag-asa facility, whether under a local government unit (LGU) or accredited private entity, who violates any provision of this Act or its Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) shall, after due notice and hearing, be subject to appropriate administrative sanctions, including but not limited to

reprimand, suspension, or dismissal from service, without prejudice to the filing of civil or criminal actions under existing laws.

SECTION 18. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* - Within ninety (90) days from the effectivity of this Act, the JJWC, in coordination with the DSWD, shall promulgate the necessary rules and regulations for its effective implementation.

SECTION 19. *Separability Clause.* - If any provision, or part hereof, is held invalid or unconstitutional, the remainder of the law or the provision not otherwise affected shall remain valid and subsisting.

SECTION 20. *Repealing Clause.* - Any law, presidential decree or issuance, executive order, letter of instruction, administrative order, rule or regulation contrary to, or inconsistent with the provisions of this Act is hereby repealed, modified, or amended accordingly.

SECTION 21. *Effectivity.* - This Act shall take effect after fifteen (15) days following its complete publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,