

Shenzhen may clamp down on bad behavior in public places

Punishment measures may be difficult to enforce, say residents

By HUANG YULI
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Litterbugs in Shenzhen may be forced to perform community service, with the city drafting a local law in a bid to improve public behavior.

The draft regulation completed its first round of public opinion polling in early July and is now on its second poll.

A questionnaire on the website of the Shenzhen Legislative Affairs Office has 15 questions, with suggested punishments for bad public behavior including community service, restricting the roles able to be held in public office and forcing the offender to make a public apology.

The survey suggests a number of places community service could be carried out, including in hospitals, at charities and at educational institutes. Offenders could also be restricted from working as civil servants, lawyers, teachers, in high management at financial companies, and will have a mark against their names for any application for a Shenzhen permanent residential permit.

Dai Guangyu, deputy head of the committee for education, science, culture and public health of Shenzhen People's Congress Standing Committee, said on Monday the community service idea was adopted from Singapore. He said community service can educate people and have a positive influence on them. He said it is not yet decided what sort of bad behavior will be covered by the regulation because there will be three rounds of opinion polls before the draft is completed.

The first opinion poll surveyed 81,000 people and the committee released the results on July 17. The 10 most common examples of bad behavior included setting up street stalls, spitting and throwing garbage on the street and queue jumping. The 10 most controversial behaviors included raising dogs without registration,

bringing dogs into parks, gyms and other public places and smoking in public. The 10 behaviors the citizens believe most needed to be punished included throwing things from cars and buildings, damaging gully covers and traffic signs and starting fires near buildings or in forests.

Many residents applauded the legislation but have concerns about its implementation.

Wang Ming, an employee at an export and import company, said he welcomed the new measures but was concerned about how the laws will be enforced.

"I hate spitting very much, but I'm afraid if such behaviors get fined the urban management officers will have too much power, and I'm afraid the power will be misused," he said.

Zhao Yuming, an assistant lawyer in Shenzhen, shares Wang's concerns.

"I think it's a good plan, but it will be very hard to carry out in practice ... it's hard to supervise whether it's enforced by the police station or by neighborhood committees because Shenzhen is a city with so many

people from all over the country," he said.

Man Kam-chuen, a Hong Kong resident living in Shenzhen, said the city should fine people for bad public behavior.

"In Hong Kong if you throw garbage or spit on the street, and get caught by officers from the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department, you get fined HK\$1,500 (\$193). It's very strict, people do not dare to throw stuff any more. I think if Shenzhen introduces fines this city will become as clean as Hong Kong," he said.

Zhang Linchang, an IT engineer, also thinks fines will have a positive effect, but he is against implementing a fine system straight away.

"If the government decided to fine people it needs to make it public, on TV, in newspapers and in other publicity channels for a relatively long time until all the residents are informed before the fine is implemented," Zhang said.

"Don't just start fining people all of a sudden and we don't know what's going on. I think fining also needs to be on a sliding scale, a person could be fined 100 yuan when caught the first time and 300 yuan the second or third time," he said.



An Na and Wang Long, case officers with the Renzhu Social Work Office, give guidance to Zhang Yu (right), a young offender taking part in a pilot project to rehabilitate juvenile offenders through education and community service, in Beijing this month.

ZOU HONG / CHINA DAILY

Pilot program gives teenager a fresh start

By CAO YIN
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NEW LIFE FOR YOUNG OFFENDERS

Beijing's Xicheng district procuratorate is changing the way it deals with young offenders and has partnered with a private company to help those without *hukou*, or permanent residency, in the capital.

Ming Yuan Group, a private enterprise with a chain of restaurants and hotels, has been providing selected young offenders with work and accommodation since July 3.

"The suspects will be treated the same as other

employees here and sign a six-month contract with us," said Li Fei, administrative director of the company. "Then they'll get a temporary job in one of our restaurants or hotels."

"They get 1,260 yuan (\$197) a month and insurance in line with the contract. They can become formal employees if they finish their punishment and are willing to stay."

However, he said, the company just supplies a

place to work, while the legal punishment is still dealt with by the management of the Renzhu Social Work Office.

"We'll maintain the privacy of the juveniles, hoping our help can bring them bright futures," Li said. He said the program can solve the problem of prosecutors having nowhere to observe or investigate juvenile offenders who do not have Beijing *hukou*.

CAO YIN

Some schools don't understand the revised law and are unwilling to accept students with criminal backgrounds, which is not good for a youngster's development."

AN NA
A CASE OFFICER WITH THE RENZHU SOCIAL WORK OFFICE

tim, 10 years his senior, had allegedly jumped a bus line in Yanqing, leading to one of Zhang's friends being unable to board.

Zhang, who was downtown, received a call from the friend to tell him to lie in wait and teach the teacher a lesson.

"I didn't think twice and hit the teacher's head with a brick," said Zhang. "I wanted to run away, but the guy's girlfriend grabbed my belt and called the police."

Wang Yuanyuan, director of Xicheng's prosecution authority's juvenile crime division, who was also present at the interview, said that as Zhang's offense was not serious and he confessed, he was deemed suitable for the pilot program.

"I know I did something wrong," Zhang said. "I'm just glad I could serve my sentence outside prison."

According to Wang, authorities believe the work of the Renzhu Social Work Office can prevent youngsters from committing crimes in the future, unlike detention houses that can make them more likely to reoffend.

Since April, when Zhang started visiting the Xinjiekou Community Center, he has watched educational movies about crime and the legal process, watched a juvenile case being tried in court and has taken part in volunteering work, including acting as

a teaching assistant and regularly cleaning the classrooms.

"Zhang can decide when he wants to take part in activities," An said. "We'll make an appointment with him first so he can keep his privacy."

At this point in the interview, Wang Long, 23, the other case worker at Renzhu, picked up a Rubik's Cube and handed it to Zhang to play with, explaining that brain-training puzzles can be used to help correct a juvenile's behavior.

"I play badminton (with Zhang), and we often chat, so I know what he's thinking about," Wang said. "I also prepare a psychological test once a month for him, which reflects his mental state."

As the two case officers talked, Zhang went to the washroom. "He's not good at expressing his feelings and lives alone with his father, so we have to work really hard to get through to him," An said.

The young offender heard the comment as he re-entered the room and added that he was just unwilling to talk with strangers.

"I see Wang and An as my older brother and sister. After all, they give me a lot of care," Zhang said.

Although everyone seemed to think Zhang has shown progress over the last few months, the teenager admitted that he did not really understand what he was agreeing to

when prosecutors suggested he take part in the pilot program.

"Most of what they said was just legal language," he said. "I just thought it could be good for me, as they said the crime could be wiped from my record and that I wouldn't have to go to prison."

An said his office is not involved in the process of selecting candidates, but added that he feels it is common for young offenders not to understand what the program entails, or have any knowledge of the revised law, as prosecutors use legal jargon.

"However, there have also been youngsters who preferred to go into detention rather than receive community correction," An said. "Those who accepted the correction have to confess their crime, but some want the chance to prove their innocence in court."

A bright future

In addition, the program can affect an offender's education, she said, explaining that teachers at Zhang's vocational school persuaded him to quit his course in car mechanics after he was absent for 15 days.

"Some schools don't understand the revised law and are unwilling to accept students with criminal backgrounds, which is not good for a youngster's development," An said.

Zhang, who lives at home and works part time at a karaoke bar in Yanqing, said he has decided to continue his studies after the program and also wanted to join the social work team in the future.

"I'm interested in engine repair. I'll first get a driver's license and learn something about that," he added.

School closures causing villagers to leave

By CHENG YINGQI
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Langdonggou is typical of rural villages in Yanchi, the Ningxia Hui autonomous region — the residents are either older than 60 or younger than 6.

Villager Zhu Yaoshan said the young people leave the arid land to make a living in cities.

But now people are also leaving for another reason. Ever since the only primary school in the village was merged with a school in a town 10 kilometers away, children have had to board at school.

The parents of the students, worried about the young children alone in the town, are leaving the village to be closer to them.

"Before the village school closed, some young people used to stay. Now they have all moved out for the children's schooling," Zhu said.

Between 2002 and 2010, the number of primary schools in China shrank 44 percent from 456,900 to 257,400, while the number of new enrolments only decreased 13.37 percent, according to statistics from the Ministry of Education.

The shrinking number of schools is a result of a policy to close rural schools and centralize students in county schools. However, this policy may be revised.

On Sunday, the Ministry of Education published an adjustment proposal on its website to solicit public opinion.

The proposal said the centralizing of the school network had resulted in long commutes for many children, led to an increase in traffic safety hazards and put a financial burden on parents. It also suggested local authorities reopen some remote schools that had been shut down.

From July 22 to Aug 6, comments and advice will be received at the ministry's e-mail address at gaogx@moe.edu.cn.

"The central government abolished agricultural tax, so government bodies below county level do not have the income resources to support public schools," said Yuan Guilin, an expert on rural education at Beijing Normal University.

"As a result, county governments took over the management of public schools. Since the county governments have rather limited manpower, they had to centralize the schools for the convenience of management."

"The changing management system of public schools is the primary reason China has closed rural schools."

But the policy was challenged when a string of road accidents involving rural students and preschoolers in late 2011, raised questions about children being forced to take long commutes to get to school.

"It is good for the ministry to recognize the wrong policy and try to reopen some schools, but I do not think it is necessary to build new schools because the number of school-aged children is decreasing," Yuan said.

The government could use existing activity centers in rural villages as schools, Yuan said.

Zhang Yutang, 63, a retired professor of education from Sichuan Normal University, said even if local authorities can find a proper place to reopen schools, they are not likely to find teachers.

"Take the city of Chengdu for example. A teacher earns nearly 4,000 yuan (\$626.27) a month working in downtown schools, while in the outer areas only one hour drive away, the salary is barely 2,000 yuan," Zhang said.

"What the government should do is not building modern school buildings in rural villages, but increasing rural teachers' pay."

Beijing Huiyuan Media Village Apartment



Beijing Huiyuan Media Village (Huiyuan Service Apartment) is located in the central area of the business district of the Olympic and Asian Games villages, about 500 meters away from the National Stadium (the Bird's Nest). As the media village of the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games, it was home to more than 1,000 Chinese and foreign journalists. It offers a number of different varieties of apartments. Spacious and well-lit, they have ample facilities and furnishings and are suitable for residential or business use. Businesses may be registered here and it is ideal for individual business or tourist customers.

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A better place

When I first saw Zhang, he was taking a class on volunteering work with 20 high school students at Xinjiekou Community Center in Xicheng.

Afterward, An Na, one of two case officers with the Renzhu Social Work Office and in charge of day-to-day operations, brought the teenager to a room on the second floor for an interview.

Zhang, who hails from rural Yanqing county in the western suburbs of Beijing, sat down stiffly on a black sofa, staying largely silent with his head lowered. "He's a shy boy," An said, attempting to break the ice.

She explained that the youngster had attacked a teacher at a bus stop in Deshengmen in the winter in 2010, when he was only 17. The vic-