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This presentation looks at the Norwegian view of childhood and parenting and the law on the protection of the rights of children. The focus will be on the rights of children at various ages, irrespective of gender.
The Act concerning Children and Parents (The Children Act)

- A law was enacted in 1981 to safeguard inter alia the rights of children: The Children Act.
- Amongst other issues, the Children Act regulates the duties and responsibilities of parents towards children and the rights of children in relation to their parents.
- The Children Act protects children and young people against all forms of physical and mental abuse, mistreatment and failures in care.
The child's right of co-determination

- The child’s right of co-determination and self-determination are key principles of the Children Act.

Examples of the right of co-determination:

Age 7: The child has the right to give his/her opinion before the parents make decisions.

Age 12: Considerable weight must be attached to the opinions of the child.

Age 15: Children have the right to make decisions about their choice of education.

Children have the right to decide whether to join or leave organisations and faith communities.
The duties and responsibilities of parents

• The parents’ duties include:
  – the duty to provide for their children
  – The right and duty to make decisions on behalf of the child if the child is unable to make decisions him/herself.

• Many of the provisions of the Children Act regulate rights and duties relating to care, visitation and provision for the child in the event of divorce/separation.
Joint parental responsibility

• Parents who are living together have joint parental responsibility for the children of their relationship.
  - Both parents must agree on important decisions concerning the child.
  - Both parents have financial obligations towards the child and the duty to provide for him/her.

• If the parents divorce/move apart their joint parental responsibility will continue, unless they agree otherwise. Both parents have a duty to ensure that the child is able to spend time with each parent.
Raising children in a new country

Case:
Omar and Zainab have a nine-year-old son called Niwar. Niwar protests against everything his parents say and does not listen to them. They just don’t know what to do.
One thing Omar is sure of is that if he had behaved like Niwar when he was a child he would have been beaten. But Omar and Zainab also know that in Norway hitting a child is against the law. They feel helpless.

Discussion:
- What can the parents do to get Niwar to listen to them?
Raising children in a new country, contd.

Case:
Omar and Zainab attended a parental counselling course at the local health centre. Here are some of the advises they got:

- Give clear instructions.
- Maintain eye contact with the child when you are giving him/her instructions.
- Repeat the instruction several times.
- Speak calmly, but firmly.
- Be consistent. If you have said no to something, for example sweets, you should not change your mind and say yes later.
- Listen to your child.
- Praise him/her frequently.
Raising children in a new country, contd.

Discussion:

- Can this advice help Niwar’s parents?
- What advice would you give when it comes to setting limits for children?
When parents need help

- Providing for and raising children is the responsibility of the parents.
- Sometimes parents are not able to give the child the care and security he/she needs. When this happens, it is the responsibility of the Child Welfare Services to help and support the family.
- The purpose of the Act is to help ensure that children and young people grow up in safe and secure formative conditions.
Filing a report with the Child Welfare Services

- Parents can contact the Child Welfare Services themselves if they need help in a difficult situation.
- Public sector employees have a duty to file a report with the Child Welfare Services if they suspect that a failure in care or domestic violence is occurring.
- Private citizens may also contact the Child Welfare Services if they are concerned about a child.
- The Child Welfare Services will follow up on all reports.
What do the Child Welfare Services do?

- All measures implemented by the Child Welfare Services must be in the best interests of the child.
- The most common assistive measures are counselling, financial support for leisure activities, a place in a kindergarten/before and after-school activities, support/outreach contact and respite care.
- In very serious cases, for example in the case of violence and abuse, the child may be taken into care for a shorter or longer period of time.
Kindergarten

- All children have a right to a place in kindergarten starting in the year in which they reach the age of one (the Kindergarten Act).
- The kindergarten is required to provide children with a level of care and a learning environment that are in the best interests of the individual child.
Kindergarten is an educational programme

- Kindergarten is an educational programme in which play occupies a central role.
- Play provides the foundations for learning and development.
- Kindergarten plays an important part in the development of a child’s language skills and socialisation.
Schooling for children and young people

- Primary, lower secondary and upper secondary education are regulated in the Education Act.
- All children have the right to receive and the duty to attend 10 years of primary and lower secondary education.
- Young people have the right to upper secondary education.
- Primary, lower secondary and upper secondary education in publicly-owned schools is provided free of charge.
- Young children in grades 1 through 4 can attend before and after-school activities outside school hours.
Some key features of the Norwegian education system

- All children in Norway are entitled to equal educational opportunities, irrespective of where they live and the income of their parents.
- Girls and boys study together at all levels of the education system.
- Physical education and swimming are also co-educational.
- At primary school level pupils do not receive grades for their schoolwork.
The collaboration between the school and the home

- The school expects the parents to follow up on their child’s schooling.
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- Parents can support and motivate their children by, for example
  - showing an interest in their schoolwork
  - ensuring that the children do their homework
  - talking about the school and the teachers in positive terms
Parent teacher meetings and development reviews

- Parent teacher meetings and development reviews are important channels of communication between the school and the home.
- Both the school and the kindergarten expect parents to attend these meetings.
A good learning environment

- The goal of the school is to educate individuals who think independently and have well-developed social and academic skills.

- A good learning environment is contingent upon the pupils feeling secure and on a good relationship between teacher and pupil and between fellow pupils.

- All schools have rules of conduct.
Taking part in leisure activities

- Many children and young people take part in organised activities in their spare time, through both before and after-school programmes as well as privately-organised activities.
  - Examples of organised activities:
    - Sports, e.g. football, handball, skiing and gymnastics
    - Dancing
    - Chess
    - Marching bands
    - Scouting
- Girls take part along with the boys.
Children’s birthdays

Discussion:
• In Norway, children celebrate their birthdays together with children from their school and kindergarten. What do you think of this tradition?

Dear Anders

I will be five and am having a birthday party on Saturday 11 March between 13.00 and 15.00.

The address is Blåfjellstien 3.

I hope you can come.

Regards from Kim

Let me know on mobile no. 123 45 678, or e-mail: name@post.no
If you can’t come.
Traffic rules

- Parents must teach children how to walk safely in traffic.
- Examples of traffic rules:
  - Use the pavement, don’t walk on the road.
  - If there is no pavement, walk on the left-hand side of the road.
  - Use the pedestrian crossing when you cross the road.
  - Look to both the right and left before crossing the road.
  - Use reflectors after dark.

Discussion:
- Which traffic rules are important for your children to learn where you are living now?
Cycling to and from school

- It is up to the parents to decide when their children are mature enough to cycle to school on their own.

Advice on what children need to know before they are allowed to cycle to school on their own.

**Children must:**

- be able to control their bicycles properly, have good balance, be able to give signals, look backwards and stop.
- know the basic traffic rules.
- practice cycling in traffic with an adult before they cycle to school on their own.
- wear cycle helmets.