

## **Chapter V**

### **THE SCHOOL SECTOR**

#### **(A) Importance of the School Sector**

5.1 The Task Force attaches great importance to the school sector in tackling the problem of youth drug abuse. About 900,000 primary and secondary students attend school every day. According to CRDA, some 50% of young drug abusers first use illicit drugs below the age of 15, generally during their nine-year compulsory education. Apart from the family, the school plays a large part in the life of adolescents and can be critical in shaping their behaviour in the formative years. School is a key institution on the path to adulthood.

5.2 The pivotal role the school sector plays in our battle against youth drug abuse has long been recognised. Over the years, progressive efforts have been made to enhance drug education in schools by incorporating anti-drug elements in both the school curriculum and other learning activities, with varied emphases and coverage at different levels or in different subjects. Specific drug education talks and programmes are delivered to individual schools by NGOs, not the least through funding support by ND and SWD, or sponsorship of BDF on a project basis.

5.3 The escalating youth drug abuse problem in recent years again highlights the importance of the school sector in the battle. The unhealthy youth sub-culture legitimising drug abuse, the falling age of first-time drug abusers, and the lack of motivation for abusers to seek help all call for appropriate responses. It is imperative to enhance preventive efforts in schools and to start early, and to make good use of the school platform to help identify and engage abusers in their initial drug experimentation stage.

## **(B) Issues and Strategy**

5.4 In considering reinvigorating anti-drug efforts in the school sector, one pertinent issue identified by the Task Force is a common concern about possible stigmatisation due to anything related to drugs and the misconception in some quarters that combating youth drug abuse is of little relevance to them.

5.5 Youth drug abuse is not necessarily a problem confined to certain groups of young people with some particular attributes, as many other less obvious factors can be in operation at the same time. Adolescence is a period of experimentation and search for identity, and young people are more likely than adults to experiment with various things, including drugs. Young people are particularly vulnerable to peer influence as well as other risk factors such as the urge to prove oneself and to rebel against rules.

5.6 It would thus not be prudent to dismiss anti-drug efforts as irrelevant in any particular section of the community. In the school sector, preventive education is important for all. Every school should be well prepared to deal with any unfortunate case of drug abuse among students. With enhanced anti-drug efforts across the board, we should be able to engender a change to the mindset and minimise concern about possible stigmatisation, in the best interest of students.

5.7 Another issue identified by the Task Force is that many teachers are not that well-equipped with knowledge and skills in delivering drug education to students and handling drug cases effectively. The school management may also be in need of expertise, resources and support from the outside to put in place the right approach and protocol of dealing with anti-drug matters on campus.

5.8 To address the issues identified, the Task Force would propose a strategy along the following directions –

- (a) institutionalising a healthy school policy with an anti-drug element;

- (b) strengthening drug education;
- (c) identifying at-risk students who may need help; and
- (d) enhancing support for schools.

5.9 It is assessed that the critical success factors of implementing the strategy are a high degree of awareness of the drug issues among schools; the readiness and confidence of the school sector in tackling the youth drug abuse problem; and no stigmatisation of those schools which proactively devise and implement anti-drug measures.

### **(C) Healthy School Policy with an Anti-drug Element**

5.10 The Task Force sees the need to foster a culture of embracing drug education in the school sector. This should start at the policy level in each school in accordance with school-based management.

#### **Recommendation 5.1**

The Task Force recommends that all schools should devise a healthy school policy to build up positive values and attitudes among students from an early stage, thereby enhancing their ability to resist taking drugs. A school may, having regard to its own circumstances, devise a school-based policy to address its students' specific needs.

#### **Measures taken thus far**

EDB is taking the lead to promote institutionalisation of a healthy school policy in all schools. It has set up a time-limited dedicated anti-drug education team to spearhead and coordinate such efforts during the initial three years and an advisory committee to benefit from the counsel of representatives from the school sector and departments concerned.

5.11 Each school should appoint an experienced teacher to coordinate all matters relating to the healthy school policy. The teacher will be responsible for fostering a caring environment and a positive and amicable atmosphere to encourage students to lead a healthy way of life. The school management will need to ensure that all staff understand and support the healthy school policy.

5.12 The healthy school policy should be an integral part of the school's Three Year Development Plan and Annual Plan and Report. It should be subject to regular review for adjustment and improvement.

5.13 The school management can make use of the healthy school platform to step up preventive education, beginning with curriculum planning and teaching strategy to equip students with drug knowledge, and correct their misconceptions about psychotropic substance abuse.

5.14 For schools in need, a targeted approach should be adopted under which they have to step up their efforts by formulating comprehensive anti-drug programmes pertaining to the students' needs, which should be discussed and endorsed by the School Management Committee or Incorporated Management Committee. Relevant Government bureaux and departments would also strengthen their support to these schools.

## **(D) Strengthening Drug Education**

### **(a) School curriculum and beyond**

5.15 Drug education has been integrated into the school curriculum for various Key Stages of Learning and related topics have been incorporated in relevant subjects at primary and secondary levels. Great efforts have been made through the school curriculum and learning experiences to cultivate positive values and attitudes among students for whole-person development.

## **Recommendation 5.2**

The Task Force recommends that EDB should –

- (a) review and strengthen the anti-drug elements in various Key Learning Areas and subjects, notably in the new senior secondary curriculum to be implemented in 2009-10; and
- (b) encourage and provide more opportunities for students to engage meaningfully in Other Learning Experiences (OLE) for positive peer influence and life values cultivation.

5.16 EDB will continue to offer diversified learning opportunities to cultivate positive values among students. It will continue to provide educational programmes whereby students may acquire life skills and refusal skills to keep themselves away from drugs, to enhance their capability to resist temptation, and to handle adversities with proper attitudes and skills.

5.17 EDB will enhance its efforts to promote students' participation in uniformed group activities, Smart Teen Camps, visits to DIC and other youth development programmes such as the Understanding Adolescent Project<sup>1</sup>, and P.A.T.H.S.<sup>2</sup>, and by exploring further collaboration with other parties for offering OLE opportunities to students.

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<sup>1</sup> EDB has organised the Understanding Adolescent Project (UAP) for primary schools since the 2004-05 school year. The UAP is a comprehensive support programme for personal growth. It aims at enhancing students' resilience in coping with the challenges they have to face as they grow up. Findings from students' evaluation questionnaires indicated that students who have participated in the UAP generally made progress in anger management, conflict resolution, goal setting and interpersonal relationship.

<sup>2</sup> To promote the holistic development of adolescents in Hong Kong, the Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust donated HK\$400 million to implement a four-year project known as 'P.A.T.H.S. to Adulthood: A Jockey Club Youth Enhancement Scheme', in collaboration with EDB and SWD. The term 'P.A.T.H.S.' denotes Positive Adolescent Training through Holistic Social programmes.

## **(b) Drug education programmes for students**

5.18 ND, SWD, the Police and DH have all along organised or sponsored talks and other activities for students to enhance their knowledge on drugs. Specific anti-drug talks have been provided to students at Primary Four and above through NGOs sponsored or subvented by ND and SWD. Preventing drug abuse is an integral part of the Student Health Service of DH, and the Police School Liaison Programme. The Task Force appeals to all schools to embrace such programmes in planning their school calendars.

### **Recommendation 5.3**

The Task Force recommends that drug education programmes for students should be strengthened by all departments and NGOs concerned. The format and content of such programmes should be improved to make them both informative and relevant to schools and students. Where appropriate, different speakers such as doctors, Police officers, lawyers, and ex-drug abusers may be invited to create a strong impact on students. Appropriate measures should be taken to ensure the quality of programmes organised by NGOs and departments.

Subject to arrangements with schools, the Administration should further enhance and coordinate the various programmes, to extend the coverage to all primary (upper primary students) and secondary schools as far as possible in three years' time.

### **Measures taken thus far**

In the 2008-09 school year, the ND-sponsored and SWD-subvented programmes would reach half of the primary school students of Primary Four and above and 75% of secondary schools.

## **(E) Identification of At-risk Students who may Need Help**

5.19 Identification of early drug abusers for intervention is an important part in the anti-drug efforts in the school sector, not only to help the abusers themselves, but also to nip a possible campus problem in the bud.

5.20 The handling of drug abuse cases demands cross-discipline team work involving teachers, school social workers, police school liaison officers, etc. The Task Force understands that schools may possibly encounter difficulties in facilitating collaboration among different parties in helping out, in view of professional ethics, personal data privacy and other legal considerations.

5.21 The Task Force appreciates that the provision of drug testing may help identify drug abusers early, especially in the school sector context. There are, however, many sensitive issues that need to be addressed. Chapter VII will discuss the idea in detail.

### **Recommendation 5.4**

The Task Force recommends that schools should play a proactive role in identifying and assisting at-risk students early and handle suspected drug abuse cases jointly with professionals from relevant sectors. Clear guidelines and protocols should be drawn up for all personnel in the school setting to handle cases involving at-risk students and those with drug abuse problems in a collaborative manner, to ensure appropriate assistance and timely referral and follow-up.

### **Measures taken thus far**

EDB is encouraging schools to organise the active participation of all teachers and staff in the measures addressing the healthy growth of students and in identifying at-risk students early for intervention.

EDB, ND, SWD and the Police are, in consultation with the school and social work sectors, jointly working in enhancing school and social work guidelines with drug-related elements to handle cases involving at-risk students and those with drug abuse problems.

## **(F) Enhancing Support for Schools**

5.22 The implementation of the above recommendations in schools is not possible without enhancing support for them in various ways.

### **(a) Resource kits for schools**

5.23 In the first place, there should be a clear, convenient documentation and repository of relevant information in the form of resource kits for reference and training purposes. The resource kits should form part of the training and professional development materials to be used by NGOs for organising training or sharing for school heads, teachers, school social workers, and student guidance officers/teachers to enhance their knowledge, expertise and confidence in teaching and handling drug-related issues.

### **Recommendation 5.5**

The Task Force recommends that a set of resource kits should be developed for -

- (a) the school management to help them formulate a school-based healthy school policy with an anti-drug element;

- (b) guidance and discipline teachers and school social workers to help them handle cases involving at-risk and drug-abusing students, providing useful guidelines and checklists as well as case studies and pointers; and
- (c) class and subject teachers to help them deliver drug education and identify at-risk students.

**Measures taken thus far**

ND and EDB are working together to commission an NGO to develop the resource kits in modular form, which are targeted for completion in phases in 2009.

**(b) Professional development for teachers and school heads**

5.24 Aside from the resource kits, the Task Force has not lost sight of the need to enhance continuous professional development of teachers for them to deliver the new tasks. The Task Force also appreciates the pivotal role of school heads in shaping and guiding the development of the recommended healthy school policy, given competing priorities and demands from various stakeholders.

5.25 The Task Force considers that structured training should be provided to include –

- (a) a half-day, on-site school-based training programme for class and subject teachers of local primary and secondary schools to enhance their knowledge on drugs and drug prevention as well as to develop their skills in early identification of at-risk students; and
- (b) two-day intensive training for key school personnel, such as guidance and discipline teachers, to equip them with

knowledge and practical skills in planning and implementing a healthy school policy with an anti-drug element, and to collaborate with various quarters of the community and the Government to prevent drug abuse, identify at-risk students and handle drug cases involving students.

#### **Recommendation 5.6**

The Task Force recommends that, starting from the 2008-09 school year, structured professional training for teachers should be enhanced to reinforce their competence and knowledge in delivering drug education and handling at-risk students who may have drug abuse problems. The training programme aims to cover all local schools in five years time. Teaching relief grant should be provided to enable teachers to take part in the training.

#### **Measures taken thus far**

ND and EDB are working together to commission NGOs to run the teacher training programmes in 2008-09 school year. Resources have been obtained to provide teaching relief grant for teachers to attend two-day training.

#### **Recommendation 5.7**

The Task Force recommends that a seminar by senior officials, medical experts and prominent figures from the anti-drug field should be organised for school heads to appeal for their support and to facilitate exchange of practical experiences in implementing anti-drug initiatives in schools. Subject to progress of the enhanced anti-drug efforts in the school sector in future, further programmes may be organised to reinvigorate support of school heads and to update them on the latest drug trends.

### **Measures taken thus far**

An anti-drug seminar for school heads was jointly organised by ND and EDB on 4 July 2008. More than 500 school principals and educators from primary and secondary schools took part.

### **(c) School social work service**

5.26 As detailed in Chapter VI, the Task Force sees merits in seeking an enhancement to the provision of the school social work service to augment the efforts in the secondary school platform in implementing the healthy school policy. As set out in Recommendation 6.1, subject to availability of resources, the school social work service should be strengthened to complement the overall enhancement of anti-drug efforts in the school sector following progressive implementation of the healthy school policy.

### **(d) Police School Liaison Programme**

5.27 As detailed in Chapter IX, the Police School Liaison Programme (PSLP) can play a key part in supporting schools in combating the youth drug abuse problem on campus. As set out in Recommendation 9.3, PSLP should be strengthened and the communication on drug matters among schools, EDB and the Police should be enhanced.

### **(e) Reaching out to parents for mutual support**

5.28 Home-school cooperation can play a significant part in educating youngsters, especially so in preventing youth drug abuse. Parent-teacher associations and their federations are important vehicles to engage and mobilise parents to join the ranks in the anti-drug cause. As discussed in Chapter IV, an anti-drug resource kit is being developed to equip parents with knowledge and skills in preventing youth drug abuse and to identify potential problems among their children early.

**Recommendation 5.8**

The Task Force recommends that more anti-drug talks and programmes should be co-organised with parent-teacher associations and their federations so as to outreach to more parents for enhanced home-school cooperation in the anti-drug cause.

**Measures taken thus far**

EDB and ND are working hand in hand with the Committee on Home-School Co-operation (CHSC) to promote this cause. The theme of the CHSC Annual Symposium held in October 2008 was dedicated to healthy family with prevention of drug abuse as an integral element. Hundreds of parents, teachers and school personnel attended the event.