

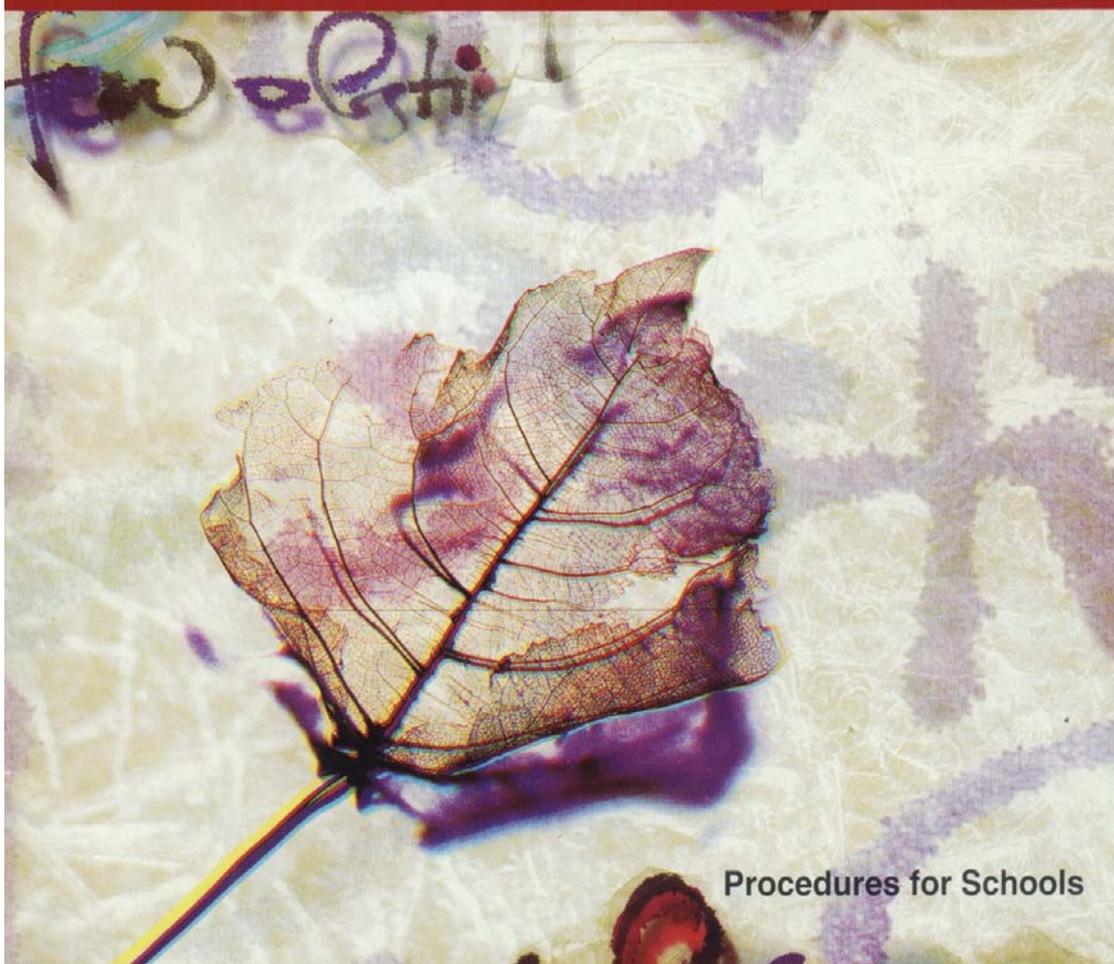
NATIONAL POLICY

SEPTEMBER 2001



Ministry of Education

TACKLING SUBSTANCE ABUSE



Procedures for Schools

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FOREWORD

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MINISTER OF EDUCATION

Society today has become very conscious of the problem of substance abuse. This increased collective awareness embraces not only illicit drugs but also legal substances such as alcohol and tobacco. The problem of substance abuse cannot be kept outside that microcosm of society that is our schools.

As schools are an integral part of society, they cannot be presumed immune to the ways of the world. Although one cannot, by any means, argue that the problem of substance abuse in our schools is widespread, nonetheless, even a single case should be treated with the utmost sensitivity and discretion.

This document concerns the abuse of illicit substances in schools. It has been formulated by the Ministry of Education in close collaboration with *sedqa*, the Education Division, and the Malta Police Force. It is meant to be a helping tool for teachers and schools administrators. Parents, students and all other stakeholders in our educational system have to be made aware of the scope and nature of such procedures.

Identifying a substance abuse problem in its earlier stages may be the least painful and hence most profitable way to combat substance abuse. It is our mission to protect our schools from becoming a drug haven by virtue of being prepared.

While these procedures may seem prescriptive and uncompromising towards substance abuse, they are the means by which effective and timely help can be provided to abusers while at the same time ensuring a safe school environment.

I sincerely hope that this document along with the ones in the areas of Child Abuse and Anti-Bullying will serve to render our schools more conscious of their roles in society. The schools that will take these tasks to heart will not only be rendering a service to their students and staff but will also be helping our society to become a much-desired inclusive society.

PREFACE

The initiative for the formulation of the Substance Abuse Procedures (SAP) for schools, was taken, in early 1999, by the Minister of Education, the Hon. Dr Louis Galea. The Hon. Minister for Social Policy, Dr Lawrence Gonzi, supported this idea and, together, they entrusted the task to an inter-ministerial team composed of representatives of *sedqa* - agency against drug and alcohol abuse, the Ministry of Education, the Education Division and the Police.

The immediate concern of this team was to identify the possible scenarios that may be faced by schools and to formulate relevant procedures; the team's primary goal being to safeguard schools from substance abuse.

A thorough drafting process ought to ensure the production of a professional but user-friendly tool for schools.

The procedures are to be followed by schools whenever a substance is found within the school boundaries or when someone is suspected of using illegal substances. This pack includes the procedures, called Substance Abuse Procedures, or SAP for short, complete with instructions for their use. This document also comprises the Principles, the policy in the form of step-by-step procedures, a list of important definitions, and a list of contact persons their telephone numbers and addresses. Also included in the pack are copies of the SAP form to be completed when a case occurs and incorporated is a booklet with information on the most common illegal drugs, entitled *Tajjeb li tkun*

taf, and short notes on first aid techniques related to substance abuse.

Most important is the availability of the facility of a helpline and a qualified Focal Person to help schools with the administration of the procedures.

The provisions of this policy shall apply to all educational establishments in Malta and Gozo that cater for students up to the age of eighteen including those providing residential care facilities for minors.

the drafting team



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PRINCIPLES

"As key institutions within civil society, schools should foster among their students respect for others, and for the right of other people to enjoy freedom, peace, security and the benefits of a society governed by law and order."

(Creating the Future Together - National Minimum Curriculum, Ministry of Education, 1999, p.24)

1. Students have a right to a safe educational environment that is conducive to learning and promotes a healthy life-style.
2. Children have a right to protection from any forms of abuse.
3. It is therefore the obligation of all school staff to ensure a safe environment to students and to protect them from abuse.
4. Substance abuse harms students, threatens the safety of the environment, and disrupts the educational process.
5. Substance abuse is not tolerated in schools.
6. It is the duty and obligation of school staff to take all necessary measures to prevent, curb and eradicate substance abuse in schools.
7. The established disciplinary and criminal procedures are to be applied in cases of substance abuse in schools.
8. Any student or adult abusing or suspected of abusing substances is to be offered care.

AIMS OF THE PROCEDURES

The overall aim of these **procedures is to protect students from substance abuse in schools.**

In particular they aim:

- To provide educational and care personnel with a practical tool that enables them to intervene in an appropriate manner when substance is found or used in schools.
- To ensure that the environment of schools is kept safe and substance abuse free
- To prevent any risk and harm to students and other individuals that may result from substance abuse
- To inform students, their parents, and others, about the position to be taken by the school in situations of when substance is found or abused in schools.

INTRODUCTION

1. What are these Substance Abuse Procedures?

Substance Abuse procedures, SAP for short, are a set of easy-to-follow, step-by-step procedures that should be adopted by educational establishments whenever there is a problem concerning substance¹ abuse. They have been designed with the specific aim of helping educational personnel to deal with substance abuse in all educational establishments including those providing residential care facilities for minors. SAP was constructed after a series of consultations with experts in the field. These procedures should provide a positive tool for teachers, head teachers, support staff and all the persons involved in the educational system. Therefore, you are advised to read, examine and thoroughly discuss the contents of this manual. By doing this, you will be fully prepared for such situations and be able to deal efficiently, effectively, and with the utmost speed and discretion that this delicate issue demands. Should you, during the process of reading, familiarising yourself with or using SAP, encounter problems, or feel the need for clarifications regarding any part of this manual, do not hesitate to contact the Focal Person².

¹ A definition of "substance" can be found in the section *Definition of Terms*.

² A definition of "Focal Person" can be found to the section *Definition of Terms*.

2. Who should use SAP?

All those concerned with the well-being of students should familiarise themselves with these procedures. This process should be spearheaded by the Head of School³ who is ultimately responsible for their effective implementation and supported by the teachers and all the other staff working in the school. It is the responsibility of the Head of school to see to it that these procedures are put into practice. However, any member of staff who feels that the Head of school is not administering the procedures as they should be has the moral and executive duty to take the necessary steps himself/herself. Furthermore, parents should also be aware of SAP so that, if needs be, they can use the information contained here to deal with the issue themselves. These Procedures are binding and should not leave scope for inaction that could seriously damage the children's well being and endanger the school's ethos and reputation. Moreover, neglecting serious cases of abuse means neglecting one's professional duties. Thus, it is imperative that educators take the appropriate action. Disciplinary action by the Education Division may be taken against a member of staff who fails to follow these procedures. When in doubt contact the Focal Person for advice and guidance.

³ A definition of "Head of school" can be found in the section *Definition of Terms*.

3. *When does one use SAP?*

SAP should be followed when:

- ❖ a substance is found on the school premises; or,
- ❖ there is a disclosure or strong suspicion that someone may be abusing drugs.

These are very serious cases and it is essential to follow the procedures carefully and calmly. Such problems should be given priority above all else and be dealt with on the same day.

4. *How does one use SAP?*

SAP have been devised in very clear and simple terms to facilitate their use by all staff. In using these procedures, one must first of all distinguish between two types of situations:

Situation A: When an illegal substance or substance-related paraphernalia is indeed found on the school premises. In such situations one should always follow **Procedure A** and then, depending on who the person using the substance

is, choose between either Procedure A1 or A2 or else A3.

Situation B: When there is a disclosure, or a strong suspicion that someone has used an illegal substance, **Procedure B** should be followed.

Following the procedures, you will find the SAP Form that should be filled-in when the procedure asks for together with an envelope marked SAP Envelope that is to be used to seal the substance found. The SAP Form is to be used also when following procedure B even if no substance is found. A SAP receipt is also provided and this should be filled in and filed for further reference.

There is also a guide to basic techniques that may be used in cases where first aid is required. Please follow these carefully since properly- and timely- administered First Aid techniques may save a life.

Should you have any queries on how to use these Procedures or on what to do next, be calm, think clearly, and to consult the Focal Person.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

There are some very important terms that need defining to avoid misconceptions and misinterpretations. It is advisable that this section be consulted during the administration of the procedures so that no mistakes are made that may be regretted later.

i. SUBSTANCE

This may be any material suspected to have a mind-altering effect on the user, such as drugs that may be administered orally, inhaled, sniffed, taken intravenously or smoked. Substance abuse may also be indicated by the presence of drug-abuse related paraphernalia such as: syringes, tweezers, burnt spoons, pieces of lemon, citric acid, plastic bottles, small paper sachets, small pieces of aluminium foil, cigarette paper, blades and any other item that may be suspected to have been used for the abuse of drugs. Further description of the most important illegal substances may be found in the publication *Tajjeb li tkun taf* enclosed with this document.

ii. FOCAL PERSON

This is the officer at the central level, or if absent his/her

substitute, responsible for the co-ordination and organisation of the SAP and based within the Education Division, Department for Student Services, with whom all cases are logged and ongoing collaboration maintained. This Focal Person will provide help and consultation for those who may have difficulties and doubts about administering SAP. The telephone number of the Focal Person [i.e. 21 231567] should only be used in connection with SAP and not for any other matter.

iii. HEAD OF SCHOOL

This is the person who is responsible for the daily administration of the school and includes any other person who has the responsibility of the school in the absence of the incumbent. However, any member of staff who feels that the Head of school is not administering these procedures has the moral and executive duty to inform the Focal person. For the purpose of this policy document, 'Head' refers as well to persons responsible for managing educational establishments providing residential care facilities and also to those persons in charge of post-secondary educational institutions.

iv. PARENTS

This document considers parents to be the legal guardians of the child in question, whether they are the biological, adoptive, or foster parents or legal guardians. Single parents who have full custody of the children will be held fully responsible for the purposes of these procedures while those holding joint custody will be held jointly responsible.

v. STUDENTS

Students, and/or pupils, are those persons registered as students with any educational establishments including those providing residential care facilities for minors that also provide education.

vi. SCHOOL STAFF

The school staff includes all the persons who are listed on the attendance sheets of schools and other educational establishments including those providing residential care facilities. It comprises all teachers, including subject teachers, peripatetic teachers, class teachers, as well as those performing special duties in the school, such as complementary education teachers, guidance teachers and school counsellors, librarians and administrative staff.

The support staff cannot be considered to be exempt from the obligations of this Policy. Support staff includes clerks, watchperson, cleaners, messengers and any other category. Educational social workers, school psychologists, therapists and other staff from the Student Services Department, as well as the Education Officers and staff in similar positions are considered as being school staff for the purposes of this policy.

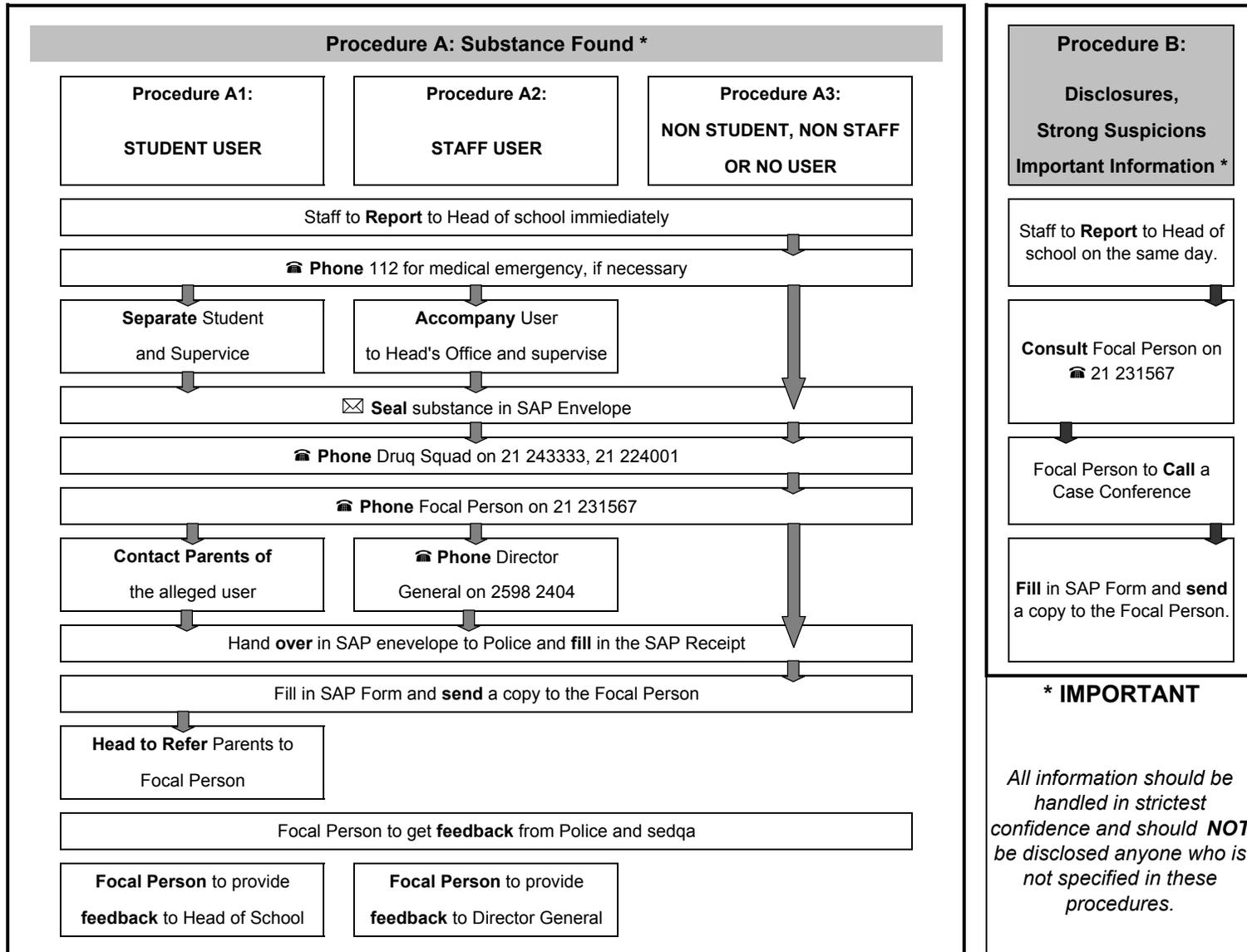
vii. sedqa

sedqa agency against drug and alcohol abuse is the government agency that has the responsibility of providing preventive, treatment and care services in the field of substance abuse. The procedures specifically require that this agency be informed about cases that are present in every school so that preventive and/or care interventive actions take place.

viii. MALTA POLICE FORCE

The Drugs Squad of the Malta Police Force shall be the only Police entity to be involved in school substance abuse cases. Therefore, when reporting a case to the Police you are asked to contact the Drugs Squad only and no other police unit.

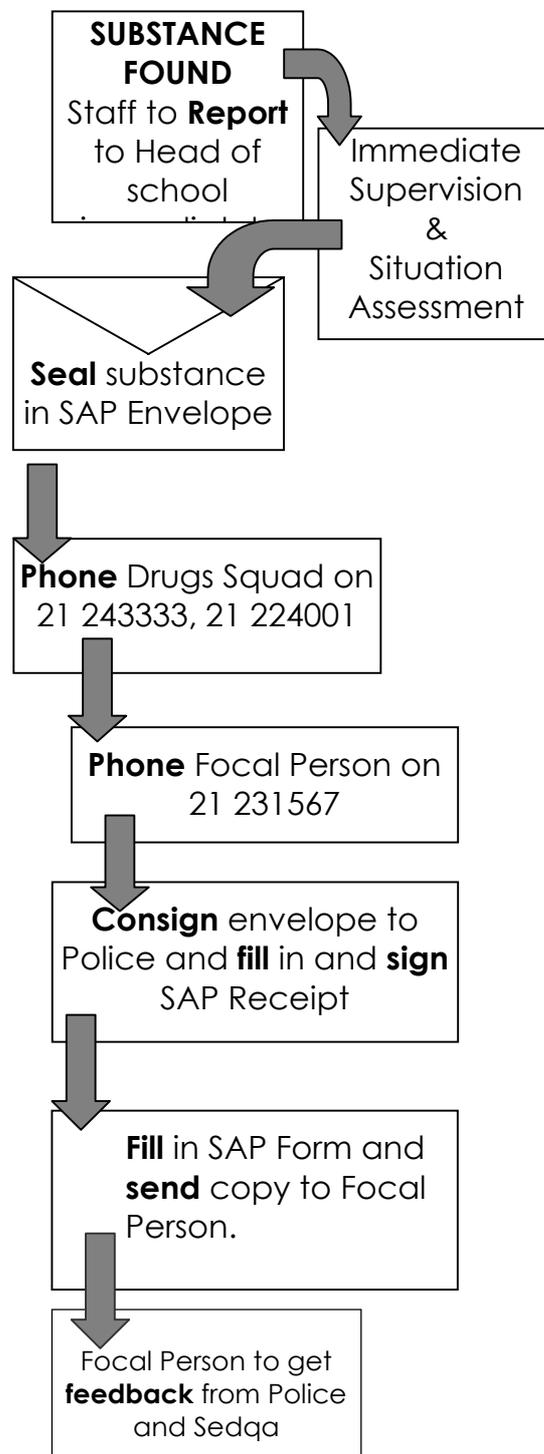
Overview of Procedures



PROCEDURES

Procedure A: Substance Found

1. When any suspicious substance is found, the person who finds the substance has to inform the Head of school within the hour.
2. After a quick reconnaissance of the situation by the Head of school personally, the substance is to be removed, sealed in a special envelope¹, and placed in a safe place under lock and key. The key should be accessible only to the Head of school. All the keys to the safe place should be collected and kept by the Head of school.
3. The substance should not be smelled, tasted or in any other way dabbled with by any member of the school. It is important for the chain of evidence to be left undisturbed until the Police arrive.
4. The Head of school should immediately phone the Police Inspector acting as schools contact person at the Drugs Squad [21 243333, 21 224001]. It is important that the Head of school makes contact only with the Drugs Squad and no other police entity.²
5. The Head of school should then contact the Focal Person by phone [21 231567] for consultation and report the information as soon as possible.
6. The Police will collect the substance directly from the Head of school in a sealed SAP envelope that is signed by the Head and countersigned by the Police. The Head and the Police will also jointly sign a copy of the SAP Receipt³.
7. The Head should fill in the SAP FORM⁴ and send a copy to the Focal Person within 3 working days.
8. If it is confirmed that the substance is in fact an illegal one, the Police and *sedqa* will follow up the case and keep the Focal Person informed of all developments.
9. The Focal Person should also provide a quantum of information by way of feedback to the Head of School.



¹ Special envelopes and pairs of gloves for handling substances are found in this pack.

² It may be advisable, if the suspect is a student, for the Head not to phone the Police in the student's presence but to do this from a separate place.

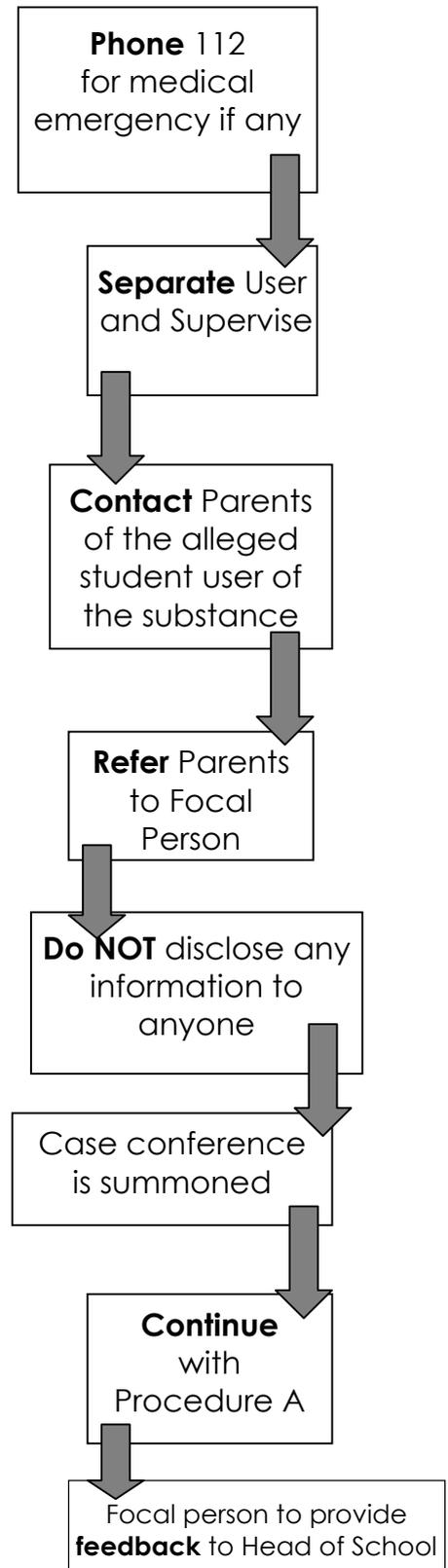
³ Sample of SAP Receipt on page 17 of this pack.

⁴ Sample SAP Form on page 18 of this pack.

Procedure A1: Substance Found - User is a Student

This procedure should not be adopted on its own but has to be used only in conjunction with Procedure A on page 12.

1. If emergency medical attention is warranted, it should be attended to as the first priority¹. In this case phone Emergency 112.
2. If the alleged user is a student, he or she should be placed under strict supervision immediately.
3. If no medical intervention is required, the alleged user (the student) should be separated from the rest of his/her schoolmates. Under no circumstances should the alleged user (the student) be left alone.
4. Parents should be informed, by the Head of school personally, while further action is taken. When speaking to parents keep these three points in mind:
 - a. Whilst conceding the parents' right for information this should NOT stop you from taking all the action prescribed by these procedures.
 - b. If the parents cannot be contacted then one should proceed.
 - c. The least said the better. No details should be given over the phone.
5. Parents are to be referred to the Focal Person for further information and support.
6. The name of the alleged user should not be disclosed to staff members unless strictly necessary. This is done to safeguard the student's best interests.
7. The Focal Person is to summon immediately a case conference with the Head of school, parents, care service providers and others involved for a decision on whether the student should continue or otherwise to attend school. This decision will be taken according to the specific case, situation and the established Education Division policies, keeping the school students' interest uppermost.

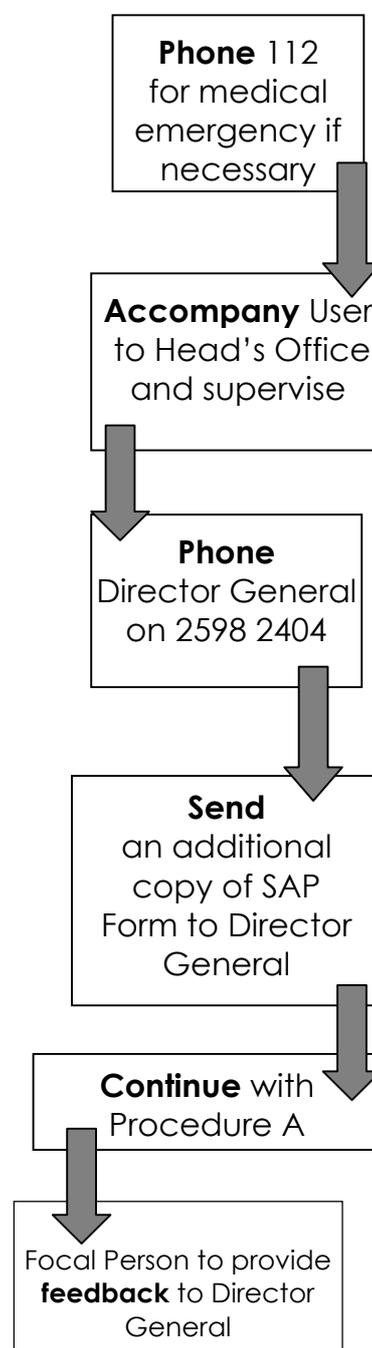


¹ Please find a brief description of First Aid techniques that may be used in these cases on page 19 of this pack.

Procedure A2: Substance Found - User is a Member of Staff

This procedure should not be adopted on its own but has to be used only in conjunction with Procedure A on page 12.

1. If the alleged user is a staff member, the matter has to be handled with the utmost discretion as this person is perceived as a role model.
2. If emergency medical attention is warranted, it should be attended to as the first priority¹ by phoning Emergency 112.
3. The alleged user should be directed to the Head of school's office. Under no circumstances should the alleged user be left alone.
4. The name of the alleged user (staff member) should not be disclosed. No staff member or other person should be informed unless strictly necessary. This measure safeguards the alleged user (staff) and the school's best interests.
5. The Head of school should refer the case to the Director General of Education, or, in his/her absence, the Acting Director General, who will from that point onwards be responsible for the management of the case. The Focal Person shall also provide further information required by the Director General.
6. Another copy of the SAP Form should be sent to the Director General under confidential cover.



¹ Please find a brief description of First Aid techniques on page 19.

Procedure A3: Substance Found - User is neither a student, nor a member of staff

This procedure should not be adopted on its own but has to be used only in conjunction with Procedure A on page 12.

1. If the alleged user is neither a student nor a staff member but only an occasional or habitual visitor to the school, the Head of school is still responsible for referring the case.
2. If emergency medical attention is warranted, it should be attended to as the first priority¹ by phoning Emergency 112.
3. The Police Inspector acting as school contact person within the Drugs Squad should be contacted immediately, within the hour on phone number 21 243333 or 21 224001.

Phone 112
for medical
emergency if
necessary

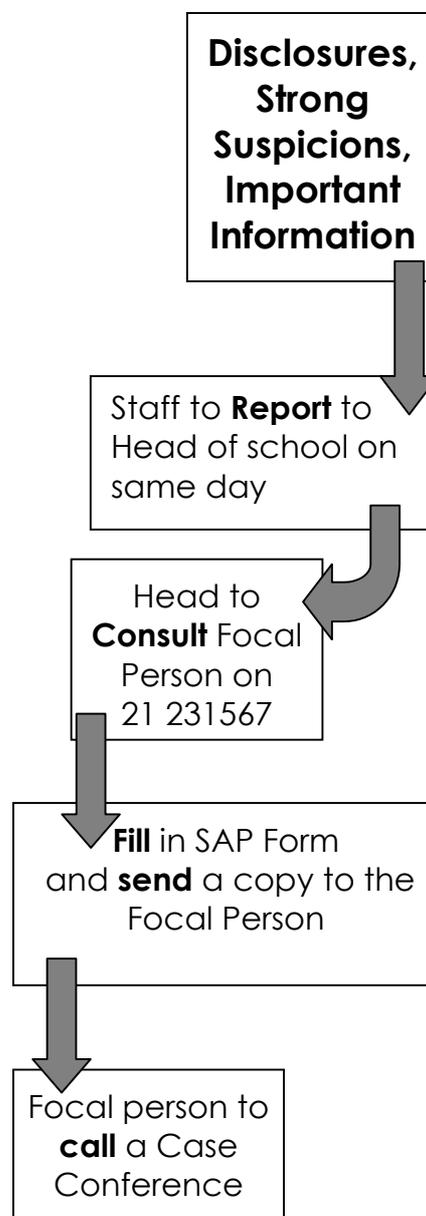
**Phone Drugs
Squad on**
21 243333 or
21 224001

**Follow
Procedure A**

¹ Please find a brief description of First Aid techniques on page 19.

Procedure B - Strong Suspicions that a student or staff is abusing substances

1. If any member of the school staff should come to know, suspect, or disclosures are made to him/her that a student or a member of staff is dabbling in or using illegal substances inside or outside school, then that member of staff is duty bound to report this to the Head of School immediately on the same day. This should occur even though the member of staff has no hard evidence in hand to back the information at hand.
2. The Head of School should immediately contact the Focal Person on phone 21 231567 for consultation and to pass on the necessary information within the same day.
3. The case should be recorded on SAP Form and filed for further reference. A copy of this Form should be sent to the Focal Person.
4. After consultations, the Focal Person should call a case conference as early as possible. A decision must then be taken on how to pursue the matter is to be pursued further.



SAP Receipt

This is to certify that I have received from Mr/Ms _____,
Head of School / acting in lieu of Head of School, a sealed envelope
whose contents have been found in _____ school
and which are to be analysed in connection with possible substance
abuse.

Name of Police Officer: _____

Rank/Number: _____

Signature: _____

Date and Time: _____

This is to certify that I have deposited with Insp. _____ of
the Drugs Squad a sealed envelope whose contents have been found in
_____ school and which are to be
analysed in conjunction with possible substance abuse.

Name of Head of School: _____

Grade: _____

Signature: _____

Date and Time: _____

S.A.P. Form

For use by focal person only

Name of School

Date and Time of Incident

School Address

School Telephone No.
Fax No.
E-Mail Address:

Head of School

Person responsible in Head's absence

Alleged user's name

DOB

ID No:

Address

Tel No:

Father's/Mother's names

Brief Description of Incident

Action Taken (including dates)

Additional Remarks, if any:

Signature of Head, date and time:

School Rubber Stamp

First Aid Techniques

THE RECOVERY POSITION

Any unconscious casualty should be placed in the recovery position. This is especially the case for suspected casualties of substance abuse. This position prevents the tongue from blocking the throat, and because the head is slightly lower than the body

must leave an unconscious casualty unattended, he or she can safely be left in

1. Open airway by tilting head back and lifting chin. Straighten legs and bend one arm at the elbow with the palm upwards.



allows liquids to drain from the mouth, reducing the risk of casualty inhaling stomach contents. The head neck and back are kept in a straight line, while the bent limbs keep the body propped in a secure and comfortable position. If you

3. Grasp the thigh furthest from you and pull the knee up, keeping foot flat.



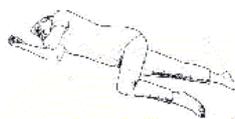
the recovery position while you get help.

The technique for turning assumes that the casualty is lying on his or her back from the start. Naturally not all the steps will be necessary if the casualty is lying on his or her front or side.

Before turning a casualty make sure to remove all bulky objects from the pockets, spectacles and any tight belts or neckties.



2. Bring the other arm across the chest and hold the hand palm outwards against the casualty's cheek



4. Keeping the hand pressed against the cheek, pull at the thigh and roll towards you. Make sure the airway remains open and adjust upper leg if necessary

IMPORTANT

Should there be a suspect spinal injury, such as after a large fall, special attention and support should be given to the neck area when handling the casualty. If limbs are injured and cannot be bent, the body should be propped up to prevent it from toppling forward.

LIST OF CONTACT PERSONS

<i>Organisation/ Service</i>	<i>Name of Contact Persons</i>	<i>Tel No</i>	<i>Fax No</i>	<i>Address</i>
Medical Emergency	Medical Officer on Duty	112	21 240176	Emergency and Admitting Department, St Luke's Hospital Gwardamangia
Focal Person Education Division	Mr Edmond Pace	21 231567	21 252866	Student Services Centre Sarria Street Floriana VLT 16
Police Drugs Squad	Insp. Josric Mifsud	21 243333 21 224001	21 235476	Drugs Squad Police General Headquarters Floriana CMR 02
<i>sedqa</i>	Ms Josianne Camilleri	21 441014 21 441015	21 441029	<i>sedqa</i> Drugs Community Team Braille Street Sta Venera HMR11
Director General Education	Mr Charles Mizzi	21 221401 25982404	21 246782	Education Division Floriana CMR 02