GUIDELINES

SUBSTANCE ABUSE PREVENTION PROGRAMMES AND INTERVENTIONS IN STATE SCHOOLS

MINISTRY FOR EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT
GUIDELINES

SUBSTANCE ABUSE PREVENTION PROGRAMMES AND INTERVENTIONS IN STATE SCHOOLS
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The Directorate for Educational Services (DES) and the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education (DQSE) within the Ministry of Education and Employment would like to acknowledge the working committee in drafting this document:

- Ms Salvina Muscat: Ministry Advisor;
- Ms Sandra Cortis: Service Manager, Educational Psycho-Social Services within the Department of Student Services of the DES;
- Mr Stephen Camilleri: Education Officer - PSCD;
- Mr Dunstan Hamilton: Education Officer - PSCD

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TERMINOLOGY

Anti-Substance Abuse Service:
The Anti-Substance Abuse Service which forms part of the Safe Schools Programme, in the Education Psycho-Social Services within the Student Services Department, empowers students and adults (teaching staff and parents) with factual information about drugs so that they can make informed decisions and live drug-free.

BABES:
Prevention programmes for primary school children run by Sedqa

Caritas(Malta):
Is a Roman Catholic organisation which seeks to alleviate poverty and promote human development and social justice.

Drugs:
All drugs including medicines, volatile substances, alcohol, tobacco and illegal drugs (World Health Organisation WHO).

Drug use:
Drug taking through which harm may occur, whether through intoxication, breach of laws or school rules, or the possibility of future health problems, although such harm may not be immediately perceptible. Drug use will require interventions such as management, education, advice and information, and prevention work to reduce the potential for harm.

Drug misuse:
Drug taking which harms health or functioning. It may take the form of physical or psychological dependence or be part of a wider spectrum of problematic or harmful behaviour. Drug misuse will require treatment.

Harm reduction techniques:
A range of public health policies designed to reduce the harmful consequences associated with human behaviours, even if these behaviours are risky or illegal.

OASI:
Is a foundation which assists people especially those who have a drug problem through its different services.

Sedqa:
Foundation for Social Welfare Services
Choosing the best approach to drug education is a key task for all stakeholders in the field of prevention. This proposal aims to reduce repetition and minimize class disruptions whilst ensuring that effective drug prevention programmes are in place. The proposal also aims to give clear guidelines on how the different stakeholders can complement each other’s interventions within a school setting.

Prevention programmes provide practical tools to educate children and young persons about substance abuse. These programmes also address the short and long term impacts of substance abuse on students. Drugs (including medicines, volatile substances, alcohol, tobacco and illegal drugs) can undermine one’s emotional and social life, health and academic performance. Drug education programmes should therefore focus on both the informative and formative aspects so that children and young persons are given the opportunity to develop the necessary skills to deal with such issues. This can be done through area specific as well as transversal outcomes.
According to international studies such as the one conducted by PROSPER: 2013 (Promoting school-community-university partnerships to enhance resilience) prevention programmes can contribute to significant decrease of drug misuse. The study reveals that students who participated in the Prevention Programme had significantly reduced rates for use of alcohol, cigarettes, marijuana, inhalants and methamphetamine.

A multi-component drug prevention programme should aim to:

- develop intrapersonal and interpersonal skills;
- develop a sense of self respect and self discipline;
- develop coping strategies to reject peer pressure which may lead to experimentation with legal and illegal drugs;
- ensure understanding of the implications and possible consequences of use and misuse of any substance;
- delay the onset of possible drug use;
- reduce the number of young people using drugs;
- minimise the harm caused by drugs;
- enable those who have concerns about drug use to seek help;
- provide a safe environment where students acquire updated information about different drugs and the legal implications so that they can make informed decisions;
- provide opportunities for students throughout their school life to acquire knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes about drugs and to relate this to their own and other young people’s choices and behaviour.

Prevention programmes should be long-term with multiple interventions for reinforcement. Thus, the most effective way of doing drug education is through a well-planned and developmental programme within a personal and social education framework. Students, however, often find visitors from outside the school a useful and informative part of their learning, especially if there is a shared understanding about the nature and content of the session/s, the intervention/s carried out complement programmes in school and there is the opportunity for follow up sessions. (Mentor: 2012)
There is a lot of exposure to drugs on different types of media, in places of entertainment, at home and on the streets. Local and international studies report that there is an increase in exposure to different drugs by children and young persons. The findings infer that drug education is clearly essential to keep schools and communities healthier and safer.
Drug education programmes in fact provide a context for enabling students to increase their knowledge and understanding of legal and illegal drugs and help students explore attitudes and develop skills for making healthy, informed choices. These should be supported by school values and an ethos developed by all members of the school community.

If governments want prevention to influence behaviour and attitudes of teenagers, prevention programmes in schools should start from the primary years and continue through the secondary years. Students may be exposed to different drugs during their growing up stage and thus prevention programmes need to take into consideration the social and cultural influences that can affect students’ behaviour.

Effective drug education programmes cannot therefore be covered in only one or two sessions. Since it has potential relevance for all areas of Personal, Social and Career Development (PSCD), particularly bullying, sexuality and relationships’ education, adopting a healthy lifestyle, and good use of leisure time, there is a strong argument for incorporating the approach into all PSCD teaching. Students would therefore have more opportunities to think and reflect about the prevalence of different kinds of behaviour in a wider range of contexts.

Students can also be provided with information and developmental exercises which encourage and help students develop responsible decision-making skills by the Anti-Substance Abuse Services. These should complement and reinforce prevention messages delivered in PSCD lessons, thus contributing to the development of the psychological well-being of students.

Other stakeholders (Sedqa, Caritas and OASI) who also give their contribution to drug prevention programmes in Maltese state schools should also seek to deliver relevant and responsive programmes which seek to develop social skills so as to strengthen protective factors in students.
**METHODOLOGY**

Effective prevention programmes targeting students use interactive methodologies to strengthen skills and attitudes that help in resisting peer pressure to drug use. The goals of a good drug education programme should therefore be that of equipping children and adolescents with the necessary skills and information to resist social influences and to be aware of the adverse health consequences of drug use and misuse. This can be better achieved if sessions of prevention are done through the use of a student centred methodology. These techniques do not only allow space for the development of communication skills, decision making skills, assertive skills and other social skills but locate the information about drugs in a realistic context. This approach fits comfortably within the key principles of the teaching of PSCD education within the Maltese context due to a number of factors: smaller classes (statutory), adoption of circle arrangement, use of experiential learning cycle and processing.
01. SPECIFIC LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- There are clear learning objectives which can be shared with and understood by the students, together with specific learning outcomes.

- Learning objectives and activities which are consistent with the syllabus and with the principles outlined in the National Curriculum Framework.

02. EFFECTIVE DELIVERY

- The development of a safe, non-judgemental environment where all students have the opportunity of participating.

- Learning opportunities enabling students to develop skills and reflect on attitudes, as well as increase understanding.

- Learning strategies that allow for insightful questioning, peer assessment and researching, as well as life skills, through the activities.

- Learning opportunities that provide information which is realistic, relevant and reinforces positive social norms.

- A teacher who has sound subject knowledge and is confident in using suitable learning methodologies.

03. SESSION CARRIED OUT BY AN OUTSIDE VISITOR

- When a visitor is invited to deliver sessions in schools, clear briefing should be undertaken. Joint planning of the lesson/session is recommended.

- The visitor should give a copy of the learning objectives and programme to be delivered to the Head of School or his/her delegate from the SMT (Senior Management Team).

- The visitor should be aware of the syllabi related to drug prevention and the principles outlined by the National Curriculum Framework.

- The visitor should avoid using shocking images and inappropriate descriptions of drug use and be sensitive to any distress or concerns raised in the session and ensure that appropriate support is given.

- The visitor should reflect on the learning from the session with the students and the teacher.

Effective drug education should include the following pedagogical practices;
- The class/PSCD teacher should be present at all times during the lesson when a visitor is in the class, and should be ready to be an active participant in these sessions. When personnel from Anti-Substance abuse services deliver sessions in schools, they may advise the class/PSCD teacher not to be present.

- The class/PSCD teacher should follow-up any unresolved issues and, whenever needed, extend the learning experience initiated by the visitor, in a subsequent lesson.

- The class/PSCD teacher should remember that students’ confidentiality should be respected except in circumstances where there is evidence or suspicion that someone is at risk. In such circumstances teachers are obliged to follow the National Policy: Tackling Substance Abuse (2001) issued by the Ministry of Education. (Currently being updated).

04. REFLECTION AND ASSESSMENT

- Undertaking summative reflection at the end, in addition to reflection throughout the lesson/session.

- Using assessment for learning principles; drawing upon routines such as What have we learned today? and/or Why did we do this exercise?.

- Involving students in assessment against learning outcomes, so they are clear about how their learning has developed and how to improve it further.

- Using a range of approaches to assessment, (for example, quizzes, “thumbs up - thumbs down”, rounds, statement continuum and others) whilst recording progress.

05. EVALUATION

- Routinely seeking feedback from students and other stakeholders about the validity and effectiveness of activities and resources being used.

- Systematically using evaluation to inform future planning, both short term (example: next lesson/session) and longer term (example: next year).
Table 1
Gives an overview of the skills, attitudes and information that need to be included in a well thought out drug prevention programme.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KNOWLEDGE</th>
<th>ATTITUDES</th>
<th>LIFE SKILLS</th>
<th>TEACHING METHODOLOGY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>types of drugs</td>
<td>assumptions about self</td>
<td>communication and self esteem</td>
<td>child centred</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qualities of drugs</td>
<td>assumptions about drug addicts</td>
<td>decision making</td>
<td>interactive and participatory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the rules and laws related to drugs</td>
<td>assumptions about people with HIV</td>
<td>values clarification</td>
<td>brainstorming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>social, emotional, physical, financial impact of drugs</td>
<td>taboos</td>
<td>assertiveness</td>
<td>role play</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STI transmission</td>
<td>stereotypes</td>
<td>coping with stress</td>
<td>discussions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>myths and false information</td>
<td>gender issues</td>
<td>analytical criticism</td>
<td>case studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>care services</td>
<td></td>
<td>finding information, help and advice</td>
<td>songs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from the ‘Drug Use Prevention Training Manual’
IMPLEMENTATION
PROCEDURE
### PRIMARY SCHOOLS PREVENTION PROGRAMMES

The recommended procedure for Primary State Schools Prevention Programmes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>MODE OF DELIVERY</th>
<th>PERSONNEL DELIVERING CONTENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten to Year 2</td>
<td>Intrapersonal/interpersonal skills and emotional literacy</td>
<td>Class Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 3</td>
<td>BABES Programme</td>
<td>Sedqa Facilitators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 4</td>
<td>Integrated prevention programmes in the PSCD syllabus</td>
<td>Peripatetic PSCD teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 5</td>
<td>Integrated prevention programmes in the PSCD syllabus</td>
<td>Peripatetic PSCD teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 6</td>
<td>Integrated prevention programmes in the PSCD syllabus</td>
<td>Peripatetic PSCD teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All years to reflect</td>
<td>On request</td>
<td>Anti-Substance Abuse Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>contingency needs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 3 to Year 6</td>
<td>Seminars in collaboration with PSCD and/or guidance teachers on request*</td>
<td>OASI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 3 to Year 6</td>
<td>Seminars in collaboration with and/or guidance teachers on request**</td>
<td>Sedqa/Caritas</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Gozo only
** Malta only
## 4.2 SECONDARY SCHOOLS PREVENTION PROGRAMMES

The recommended procedure for Secondary State Schools Prevention Programmes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>MODE OF DELIVERY</th>
<th>PERSONNEL DELIVERING CONTENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year 7</td>
<td>Integrated prevention programmes in the PSCD syllabus</td>
<td>PSCD teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 8</td>
<td>Integrated prevention programmes in the PSCD syllabus</td>
<td>PSCD teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 9</td>
<td>Integrated prevention programmes in the PSCD syllabus</td>
<td>PSCD teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Drug prevention workshop in collaboration with Drama Unit within the community and facilitated by Anti Substance Abuse Service**</td>
<td>Anti-Substance Abuse Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 10</td>
<td>Integrated prevention programmes included in the PSCD syllabus</td>
<td>PSCD teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 11</td>
<td>Integrated prevention programmes included in the PSCD syllabus</td>
<td>PSCD teachers</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Day seminar in collaboration with Police Department on request</td>
<td>Anti-Substance Abuse Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gozo Seminar in collaboration with PSCD teachers***</td>
<td>OASI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Zones and Centres</td>
<td>Secondary prevention programme</td>
<td>Sedqa/OASI/Caritas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Servizz Ghozza</td>
<td>Prevention programme</td>
<td>Anti-Substance Abuse Service/Sedqa/Caritas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekend seminars</td>
<td>Youth leadership prevention programmes</td>
<td>Sedqa/Caritas/Agenzija żgħażagħ</td>
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** Year 9 students in schools that are not catered for will have the opportunity to attend as Year 10 students during the following year

*** Gozo only
Prevention programmes should however not be the sole responsibility of PSCD and Guidance practitioners but can also be cross curricular and can be tackled by other subject teachers such as: in Physical and Health Education, Religion, Social Studies, Biology and/or General Science. Talks should therefore be held with Education Officers of the respective subjects to see how they can include prevention lessons within their syllabi and curricula and develop a training programme for these teachers.

4.3 TALKS FOR PARENTS/CAREGIVERS

Parents or caregivers have an enormous influence on a child’s healthy development and well-being, particularly during the early stages of a child’s life. This makes them important sources of positive health education and the persons primarily responsible for educating their children about different issues.

The schools can make use of the different agencies and services to organize talks for parents as necessary.

4.4 CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Continuous professional development of school staff and school support staff is necessary to improve their skills and provide a more specialized area of knowledge and service to students. This training is important if class teachers are to do follow-up sessions after programmes are delivered. (Example BABES Programme).

The training to school support staff will help teachers to identify early signs of drug abuse or misuse and refer as necessary.

The schools can make use of the different agencies and services to organize training for school staff and school support staff as necessary.
REFERENCES

Drug Education - An entitlement for all; DCSF Publications: Nottingham 2008

European Drug Report - Trends and Developments: Lisbon 2014

Reviewing your drug and alcohol policy - A toolkit for schools; Mentor: UK 2012

Tackling Substance Abuse: National Policy September 2001; Ministry of Education

The principles of good drug education; Drug Education Forum: UK 2012

Unplugged- a handbook for teachers; EU-Dap, European drug abuse prevention: Turin 2007

PROSPER (Promoting school-community-university partnerships to enhance resilience): American Journal of Public Health: USA April 2013
The Guidelines will be revised and updated if necessary once the Substance Abuse Policy will be published.

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