

## What role can parents and/or guardians play?

Alcohol and drug use is a societal issue that impacts on teaching and learning. As such, parents and/or guardians must play an active role in supporting the school in creating a safe environment for teaching and learning. Parents and/or guardians must:

- Establish rules at home on alcohol and drug use and enforce such rules.
- Promote and role model healthy lifestyles with respect to alcohol and drug use, as children mimic the behaviour of family and friends.
- Know the signs and symptoms of alcohol and drug use.
- Talk openly with their children about the consequences of alcohol and drug use on schooling outcomes, and health and wellbeing in general.
- Support schools in remaining alcohol and drug use free zones by ensuring that:
  - Learners do not attend school under the influence or in possession of alcohol or drugs.
  - All events held at the school, including School Governing Body (SGB) fundraising activities, are alcohol and drug free.
  - All sporting events are alcohol and drug free and that doping in sport is prohibited.
  - You are aware of your child's **rights and responsibilities** with respect to drug testing at school.
  - You participate in local drug action committees to prevent easy access to alcohol and drugs on the way to and from school.
  - Your child is supervised after school, when experimentation with alcohol and drugs is more likely to take place.
- Inform the school if your child has an alcohol or drug abuse problem.

## Tips to help learners resist peer pressure

Peer pressure is one of the major reasons learners are tempted to use alcohol and drugs. Assist your children to practise the following responses:

- "No, I really don't want to."
- "I know the harmful effects of alcohol and drugs and I don't take chances with my body."
- "No thanks, it's against the law."
- "I don't believe in using that stuff."
- "I'm on the team, and we don't use drugs."
- "No thanks, I am high on life and don't need alcohol/drugs to have fun."
- "I respect myself; I don't want to let my parents down."
- "No thanks, I'm not into chemicals."
- "No, I need all the brains I've got."
- "Ke Moja, I'm fine without drugs."

- Enrol children in treatment programmes when they are found to be abusing alcohol and drugs.
- Ensure that their children continue with schooling whilst undergoing long-term treatment and that they are fully re-integrated into the schooling system on completion of treatment.
- Avoid stigmatising children abusing alcohol and drugs, but offer support to overcome the addiction.

For more information contact the Substance Abuse Helpline  
Toll free number: 0800 12 13 14 or SMS: 32312



## A message to parents on alcohol and drug use

## Integrated School Health Programme





# Taking responsibility for our children's health and wellbeing

## Why is health education important for learners?

The Department of Basic Education is committed to realising the education rights of all children, including the most vulnerable, through schools becoming inclusive centres of learning, care and support.

The Department of Basic Education, in partnership with the Department of Health, is delivering health services for learners in schools. The health services' package includes health education on important health barriers to learning. Identifying health barriers early will improve learners' overall development and assist with their ability to learn.

## Why is it important to identify learners with alcohol and drug use problems?

Alcohol and drug use have many negative effects on the health and wellbeing of learners. It is linked to academic difficulties, absenteeism and school drop-out. It also leads to other problems such as crime and violence, mental and physical health problems, traffic accidents and unprotected sex.

## What are the various categories of drugs?

Drugs are chemicals that change the way our bodies work. In this document, drugs refer to substances that are **legal** (e.g. alcohol, tobacco, over-the-counter medications and household goods such as glue) and **illegal** (e.g. cannabis, methamphetamine, heroin and cocaine).

Drugs affect the central nervous system and can alter mood, thinking and behaviour. Drugs may be divided into four categories:

- **Depressants:** drugs that decrease alertness by slowing down the activity of the central nervous system (e.g. alcohol, analgesics and heroin).
- **Stimulants:** drugs that increase the body's state of arousal by increasing the activity of the brain (e.g. caffeine, nicotine, amphetamines, ecstasy and cocaine).
- **Hallucinogens:** drugs that alter perception and can cause hallucinations, such as seeing or hearing something that is not there (e.g. Lysergic Acid Diethylamide - LSD, 'magic mushrooms').
- **Other:** some drugs fall into the 'other' category, as they may have properties of more than one of the above categories (e.g. cannabis or dagga, which has depressive, hallucinogenic and some stimulant properties).

**Note: Polysubstance use** (using more than one drug at a time), is very common in South Africa and leads to addiction. In addition, heavy use of tobacco and alcohol, known as 'gateway drugs', often lead to use of harder drugs such as cannabis, cocaine and heroin.

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## What are the signs of alcohol and drug use?

- **Changes in level of activity:** periods of tiredness or periods of hyperactivity, lack of coordination, staggering or slow movements, clumsiness and falling.
- **Inaudible or confused speech:** forgetting thoughts or ideas, and illogical conversations.
- **Changes in physical appearance:** drastic changes in style of clothing, less concerned about appearance, which may become careless and untidy.
- **Sudden aggressive and violent behaviour:** unexplained outbursts of anger, restlessness, irritability and destructive behaviour, e.g. punching walls, swearing and fighting.
- **Lack of motivation:** sudden loss of interest in hobbies or sports previously enjoyed and lack of concern about life in general.
- **Severe mood alterations or mood swings:** sudden excitement to sudden feelings of depression, despondency and hopelessness.
- **Alteration in thought patterns:** strange and weird thinking, fearful, abnormal suspiciousness, hallucinations, depressed thoughts and suicidal thoughts.

## Why do learners use drugs and alcohol?

Learners use alcohol and drugs for various reasons that include amongst others:

- To have fun
- To relax and forget problems
- To gain confidence
- To socialise
- To experiment
- As a form of escapism
- To lessen inhibitions
- To remove personal responsibility for decisions
- To celebrate
- To relieve boredom and stress
- To cope with problems
- Peer pressure

Friends, parents, other family members, neighbours and the media can also have an influence over a young person's decision to use alcohol and drugs.