



THE INFORMATIVE IDADAIT NEWSLETTER OF THE SUBSTANCE ABUSE ADVISORY COUNCIL

ISSUE 1, 2020

VISION

A DRUG FREE FIJI

MISSION

TO PROMOTE A DRUG FREE ENVIRONMENT IN OUR SCHOOLS AND OTHER SETTINGS BY ESTABLISHING POSITIVE EDUCATION APPROACHES EFFECTIVE SUBSTANCE CONTROL PROGRAMMES AND APPROPRIATE INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORKS.

AIM

What is IDADAIT & why is it commemorated annually on June the 26th?

IDADAIT stands for International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking. The aim is to reduce the incidents and minimize the impact of drugs and substances abuse in our schools by promoting healthy lifestyles through awareness and education. It also provides interventions such as counselling for young people affected by substance and drug abuse in schools.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime launched campaigns to raise awareness of drugs and crime problems. The celebration of the International Day against Drug Abuse and illicit Trafficking was established by the UN in 1987, to emphasize the need for strengthening actions in support to an international community free of drugs, in all countries. On 26 June every year, UNODC marks the International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking.

The Substance Abuse Advisory Council was established on 1 March, 1999 after the passing of the Substance Abuse Advisory Council Act of 1998. This statutory body was established under the Ministry of Education to collaborate with government ministries and NGO's to address problems arising out of drugs and substance abuse.

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What is drugs and types of Drugs

Drugs is something when taken into the body, changes the way you see, hear or behave. They are essentially poison and the amount taken in determines the effects.



Types of Drugs

(i) Legal Drugs

Legal drugs are those that are allowed under the law to be consumed. Alcohol, tobacco and kava are allowed under the law. Apart from these, medications prescribed by the doctor are also legal drugs.

(ii) Illegal Drugs

Illegal drugs are drugs that are not allowed to use, cultivate, transport, sell or produce under the law. The maximum penalties can be life imprisonment. Whenever we think or hear of the phrase illegal drugs, images of marijuana and other psychotic and hallucinogenic come across our minds. Methamphetamine, Cocaine, heroin, Cannabis, etc. are some of the popularly known illegal drugs.



Categories of drugs

(i) Stimulants

Stimulants are drugs speed up the central nervous system and brain and produce bursts of energy. As many people deal with issues that result in fatigue, stress, and sluggishness in their day-to-day routine, stimulants often seem like a viable solution to living an energetic and accomplished life. Stimulants are both prescription and illegal, yet all are addictive.

(ii) Depressants

Depressants are drugs that help slow the central nervous system and brain. Their desired effects include a sense of relaxation and calming the body and mind. Some drugs are both depressants and narcotics, such as the opiate heroin. While opiates are pain relievers or analgesics, they also have depressant factors. One depressant frequently sold and used worldwide is alcohol.

(iii) Hallucinogen

Hallucinogens are known for altering mood, sensory awareness, and perception. As hallucinogenic drugs enter the bloodstream and brain, a variety of effects are experienced. Most notable are sensations of being out of the body, having an altered sense of perception, and deeper awareness of surroundings. Hallucinogens provide a sense of perception not based on reality produced through the normal five senses: sight, hearing, taste, touch, and smell.



Who are at risks at abusing drugs and substance?

(i) Children of drug-abusing parents

Children of drug abusing parents are at high risk of developing physical and emotional issues, as well as suffering from addiction later in life. If left untreated, substance abuse has the potential to destroy a family, disrupt communication, create financial problems, fuel physical altercations, and disturb healthy family roles.

(ii) A person with family history in drug abuse

Researchers believe that there may be a genetic predisposition to drug addiction, meaning if someone in your family has dealt with drug addiction, you have a higher risk of dealing with it yourself. This is only true among blood relatives, such as a parent, grandparent or sibling.

(iii) People living with a mental disorder

Having other mental health problems such as anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) can make you more susceptible to drug addiction. This is because these disorders may sometimes lead to coping through drugs, alcohol or other substances.

(iv) Children who lack family involvement

When parents aren't involved in their children's lives, or their children simply lack supervision, risk of drug addiction goes up. This is because, not only is it easier for the child to acquire and abuse drugs, but it also promotes difficult family situations and a lack of a bond, which may force drug use.

(v) Those who take a highly addictive drug

Some drugs are more addictive than others. For instance, cocaine is known as a highly addictive drug. Painkillers may also create a faster tolerance and dependency. Even so, taking drugs that are thought to be "less addictive" can still put you on a path to drug addiction.

(vi) Students - exposed to negative peer pressure

Many teenagers follow their peers. They get high from abusing substances which range from legal drugs inhalants and alcohol to illegal street drugs crystal meth, marijuana and cocaine. Some of these teens will go on to a life of addiction, abusing increasingly dangerous substances. Some teens will have more short-lived experience, as abusing a drug or other substance even one time can be fatal.

The Effects of drugs and substances

(i) Health

People with addiction often have one or more associated health issues, which could include lung or heart disease, stroke, cancer, or mental health conditions. In addition, some drugs, such as inhalants, may damage or destroy nerve cells, either in the brain or the peripheral nervous system (the nervous system outside the brain and spinal cord). Drug use can also increase the risk of contracting infections. Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and hepatitis C (a serious liver disease) infection can occur from sharing injection equipment and from impaired judgment leading to unsafe sexual activity. Infection of the heart and its valves and skin infection can occur after exposure to bacteria by injection drug use.



(ii) Family

Children growing up seeing a parent addicted to drugs or alcohol are more likely to develop substance use disorders in their adulthood. They are also more likely being neglected, physically, and sexually abused.



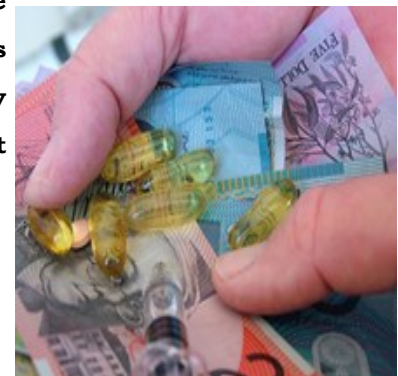
Seeing a parent on drugs often creates distressing emotions which not only create delays in learning and development, but prolonged mental and emotional disorders.

Since children are still developing their personalities and are vulnerable to external influences, they run the risk of repeating such behaviors. Children may be exposed to aggression or violent behavior due to a parent or both parent's drug use. Arguments between parents may be normal, causing the child emotional distress as they witness family members fighting.

(iii) Finance

Addiction can even create poverty in future generations. Due to drug habits, children may receive inadequate education and struggle with budgeting and time management. They may even mimic habits and develop addictions themselves; something no one wants for their children.

Addiction is heavily associated with poverty, not just because substance abuse itself is expensive, but because addiction is often a means of escape from reality. Many people living in poverty, abuse substances in order to avoid the serious problems they may be facing in their lives. When one is living payday to payday and struggling to make ends meet, drugs can provide an instant gratification that is virtually absent in all other areas of their life.





(iv) Education

Drug abuse has multiple negative effects on a student's academics. From continual absences to poor grades, abusing drugs and alcohol can cause damaging academic problems that are difficult to recover from. Drug use can also cause mental and cognitive impairments that make it difficult for students to succeed in school.

(v) Work

The work performance of an employee with a drinking or drugs problem can be affected as a result of poor decision-making and impaired reaction times. Their behaviour may also detrimentally affect relationships with colleagues, damaging team spirit and morale. Productivity often suffers resulting in inferior services or goods, while errors can lead to injuries and accidents. This in turn can affect consumer confidence, and potentially damage a company's image and customer relations.

Other effects include:

Absenteeism and sickness

Persistently working longer hours than demanded out of fear of losing one's job.

Reduced productivity

Inappropriate behaviour affecting employee morale

Injuries and accidents, including fatal accidents.



(vi) Economy

Drug abuse has many effects on the economy. Drug users buy illegal substances that are not regulated, keeping illegal drug dealers in business. These drug users also contribute to the rising costs of healthcare.

Actions to address drug and substance abuse problems:

(i) Government

(a) Target Group

The first thing is to identify populations to be target for drug prevention and treatment.

(b) Monitoring Plans

Monitoring plans such as prescription drug databases offer ways to catch those abusing drugs. Additionally, strict policing of drug trafficking over our borders will be effective.

(c) Better treatment and Awareness programmes

Better treatment programs will help with the recovery process, but they also require funding and staffing. It will be important for the government to work with treatment providers, parents, and law enforcement to make an impact on the drug problem. By pooling resources and being willing to fund programs that really work, we can improve and save lives.

(ii) Community

(a) Community Coalitions

Communities can respond to the challenge of preventing substance abuse among adolescents with broad-based groups involving many different sectors of the community. These groups which can include Faith based groups, Advisory councils, Village council could involve key community leaders and representatives of grass-roots organizations. They can bring together representatives from schools, law enforcement agencies, religious organizations, businesses, and other sectors of the community that share a concern on drug and substance abuse or have a stake in its solution.

(b) Have an Action Plan

Taken together, the proposed changes in all relevant sectors of the community provide a blueprint for action. The purpose of this Action Planning Guide is to enhance the community's efforts to plan for the prevention of substance abuse among adolescents.



**PREVENTION
WORKS!**

(iii) Faith-based leaders

(a) Creation of Public Awareness

Public awareness campaigns play a significant role towards substance use prevention. Some faith-based leaders use social awareness campaigns as popular interventions in reducing drug and substance abuse among the youth in the community and learning institutions across the world. This program has been proved to be an influence learners' beliefs and behavior towards drug abuse. Therefore, religious groups have a critical role to play in the society in creating awareness on the negative impacts of drug and substance abuse.

(b) Community Mobilization

Faith based organizations can employ community mobilization as one the key programs in substance use prevention. This strategy may intend to increase community willingness and engage communities in prevention activities and actions to moderate use of harmful legal products among youth. Faith based organizations demonstrate that effective community mobilization can support prevention actions and engage more community members. Hence, an effective community mobilization is essential to implementing a mutually supportive mix of prevention approaches such as health strategies and a school-based substance use prevention curriculum.

(b) Advocacy

Faith-based organizations with a foundation in community welfare and social service delivery are particularly prominent development agents in the society. Promoting behaviour change often begins by identifying religious leaders who have the capacity and legitimacy to motivate and mobilize communities. Moreover, partnering with local religious leaders or agents of change has repeatedly become an invaluable strategy in gaining wider acceptance and ownership of programmes. Carefully developed advocacy campaigns, closely tailored to the religious and cultural contexts in which they are launched, make it easier to deal with sensitive subjects in the society like substance use prevention.

It teaches adolescents ways to recognize situations where they are likely to experience peer pressure to use drugs. The youth are taught ways to avoid or otherwise effectively deal with these high-risk situations in their lives. Participants are taught that they can effectively respond to direct pressure to engage in substance use by knowing what to say and how to deliver what they say in the most effective way possible.

(c) Promoting Crisis Counseling and Rehabilitation Services

Faith based organizations play a key role in reducing the burden of drug abuse across the world through counseling and rehabilitation programmes. They take a lead role of counseling in the society that is key in substance use prevention, treatment and in providing a safe place for drug and substance users to talk. In collaborations with community leaders, faith based organizations can ensure that substance users are receiving the education and assistance that they need to lead and maintain healthy lives.

The teachings offered in the religious based rehabilitation centres play a fundamental role in persuading and motivating patients based on the biblical teachings in order to help them stabilize the acute symptoms of the psychiatric illness and/or the drug use disorder. The faith based organizations also motivates patients to continue in treatment once the acute crisis is stabilized or the involuntary commitment expires by offering religious and required social support.

(iv) Parents / Guardians

(a) Prevention Starts With Parents

As a parent, you have a major impact on your child's decision not to use tobacco, alcohol, and drugs.

- Prevention starts when you start talking with, and listening to, your child.
- Help your child make good choices and good friends.

Teach your child different ways to say "No!"

(b) Parents/ Guardians Are Powerful

Parents are the strongest influence that children have. There is no guarantee that your child won't use drugs, but drug use is much less likely to happen if you:

- Provide guidance and clear rules about not using drugs.
- Spend time with your child.

Do not use tobacco or other drugs yourself.

Children notice how parents use alcohol, tobacco, and drugs at home, in their social life, and in other relationships. This includes how parents deal with strong feelings, emotions, stress, and even minor aches and pains. Actions speak louder than words. Children really do notice what their parents say and do.

(c) Prevention Starts When You Start Talking—and Listening

Talk honestly with your child about healthy choices and risky behaviors. Listen to what your child has to say. Make talking and listening a habit, the earlier the better! Learn the facts about the harmful effects of drugs. Talk with your child about the negative effects alcohol and drugs would have on their brains and bodies and their ability to learn or play sports.

(d) Be clear and consistent about family rules.

It does not matter what other families decide; your family rules show your family values.

Correct any wrong beliefs your child may have.

- "Everybody drinks."
- "Marijuana won't hurt you."

Avoid TV programs, movies, and video games that glamorize tobacco, alcohol, and drugs. Since it's hard to escape the messages found in music and advertising, discuss with your child the influence these messages have on us.

(e) Find time to do things together.

Eating together as a family is a good time to talk and learn about what's going on.

(f) Making Smart Choices

It's a parent's job to use love and experience to correct mistakes and poor choices. By using a mix of praise and criticism, you can correct your child's behavior without saying your child is bad. This helps children build self-confidence and learn how to make healthy and safe choices. In time, making smart choices on their own will become easier. Let children know you care about them. Talk with them about being safe.

Help Your Child Make Good Choices and Friendships A good sense of self-worth and knowing what is right and wrong will help your child say "No!" to drugs and other risky behaviors. Help your child by

- Noticing efforts as well as successes.
- Praising for things done well and for making good choices.
Encourage positive friendships and interests.

- Check to see that the friends and neighbors your child spends time with are safe and have values similar to yours.
- Find ways to get your child involved in sports, hobbies, school clubs, and other activities. These usually are positive interactions that help develop character and lead to good peer relationships. Look for activities that you and your child or the entire family can do together.

Help your child learn the importance of being a responsible individual and what it means to be a real friend. Children need to learn that doing something they know is wrong is not a good way to "fit in" or feel accepted by others.

(v) Teachers

(a) Remember it's a medical — not a moral — issue

Those affected by behavior of the addict instinctively blame the situation on the addict. Addiction is tricky because it's a medical condition masquerading as personal choice, and while it appears that the addict is making poor decisions, in reality, they are victims to the whims and wants of their drug of choice.

There is no way a rational person, especially one surrounded by a caring and loving family, would willingly trade all that away because they wanted to. They're in the clutches of a disease that's calling the shots. As they say in recovery programs, "Hate the disease. Love the person."

(b) Look at the big picture

Student-addicts often need to attend outside counseling sessions. Obviously this will interrupt their education, so you have to be reasonable and look at the big picture on classwork, tests and homework.

Addiction treatment — and this is not an overstatement — is a life-and-death issue. Having the child get the necessary help outweighs all school-related matters. Extend deadlines, offer extra help and be giving of your time and patience.

(c) Empathize, don't sympathize

Nobody has an easy time addressing their addiction, and especially a child who is managing all the other adolescent emotions. Rather than tell them you feel sorry for them, a better tact is to let your student know that you're happy that they're OK and getting the help they need, and that you're there for them as necessary.

Offering a "safe harbor" for the child, even if they never come to see you for help, sends a strong message about the caring nature of the school staff.

(d) Talk to your supervisor

As with any student medical issue, be sure to speak with your immediate supervisor and your school's substance abuse counselor. They will give you specific advice and direction as you help the child re-enter the classroom.

Working off of their advice and guidance is the best way to proceed so you can be certain that you're not overstepping boundaries and that you're doing the best possible job on behalf of the child. This situation is where experience colleagues can be strong sources of guidance and sage advice.

(e) Keep confidentiality above all

As the child manages all the emotions of addiction — anger, shame, worry and fear among others — it is essential that the student's private life remains exactly that. From time to time, we all work with colleagues who are gossips and seem to reveal in the poor choices and difficult situations of our students.

Do not engage in this behavior and avoid those who do, or agree not to discuss a child's challenges with them. The student has too much at stake to get caught up in the petty pursuits of unkind people.

(f) What of relapses?

Not all addicts stay clean and sober — some students do slip back into the throes of addiction. All schools have strict policies regarding student drug and alcohol use and you must communicate your concerns to your school's administration.

Working with students attempting to recover from their disease is often difficult and frustrating work. Never forget to be kind, patient and loving regardless of their addiction and their accompanying choices.



(vi) Youths

(a) Draw the Line and Empower Other Youths

Bearing in mind, some of the issues facing today's youth - help empowering them to "Draw the Line" against poor choices and destructive habits that can impact the rest of their lives.

(b) Join Youth Coalition - Help Students Make Healthy Life Choices

A Youth Coalition can be formed - dedicated to helping their peers pave the way to a brighter future—one healthy choice at a time.

(vii) Students

(a) Avoid bad company

Students should look for friends who influence them positively. Good friendship fosters positive thinking and a healthy environment.

(b) Utilize boredom

Students should utilize boredom to good use. For example; by reading, doing household chores, socializing with family and so forth can divert them from engaging in in-appropriate behavior.

(c) Communicate Early

Students should be confident to talk about their issues with parents, teachers or counsellors. They should always know that help is out there and that they are not alone or have to become victims of this drug-war.

(d) Self-education

With so much advocacy and learning platforms available in this era, students must educate themselves on the negative consequences of substance abuse. This will refrain them from getting lured by drugs.



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