



DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

MEDIA STATEMENT

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INTERNATIONAL DAY AGAINST DRUG ABUSE AND ILLICIT TRAFFICKING

Today, 26th June 2014, the world will observe International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking. Nations use this day to raise awareness of the problem drugs present to society; to highlight their destructive effects as well as to inspire communities to fight the scourge posed by drug abuse. This year's theme is: **"A message of hope: Drug use disorders are preventable and treatable"**.

Drug abuse is an inter-sectoral problem that affects all facets of society. It calls for a coordinated and integrated approach. It destroys lives and communities, undermines sustainable developments and leads to crime. It mostly affects young people, but drug addicts come in all ages. The Department of Social Development has, in line with the Prevention and Treatment of Drug Dependency Act (Act 20 of 1992) drafted the National Drug Master plan, which is a national strategy reflecting the country's response to the substance abuse problem. It also clarifies roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders in the field.

Currently, there is no accurate and reliable data on the nature and extent of drug abuse in the country but dagga and alcohol remains the drugs of choice for the majority of South Africans. There are currently very few community based organisations delivering services in the field of substance abuse in Limpopo. Communities are mobilized at local level to form community based organizations to tackle substance abuse issues at local level, to support and complement government efforts. The Department's programmes include:

- Education and information campaigns;
- Counseling and life skills programmes;
- Referral to outside treatment centres for those needing treatment;
- Implementation of prevention programmes to in and out of school young people;
- Recruitment and training of volunteers to support prevention and treatment programmes in different communities;
- Capacity building of these volunteers;
- Funding for community based organisations delivering services in the field;
- Construction of a public treatment centre, which is nearing completion.

However, the most important message is for communities to take charge and report drug abuse and illicit drug trafficking. Parents are advised to take active interest in their children's activities and whereabouts. Know the early signs and symptoms of substance abuse such as performance changes in school work and behavioural changes and take appropriate action. Give children factual information of the negative effects of drugs. Peer pressure, lack of positive role models, poor coping skills, poor home and community environment and societal moral decay can all lead to children abusing substances.

Community members must be vigilant and raise objections when applications are made for liquor trading places next to schools and churches. Alert law enforcement officers when alcohol is sold to underage children or when liquor trading places operate outside legally permitted hours of trading. As adults, we should not expose our children to alcohol by using it in front of them or worse – sending them to fetch or buy liquor for adults! Positive role models are needed to volunteer their time to address the youth, so that they know what their alternatives are.

People who have succumbed to addiction should know that substance abuse is not the end of the road and treatment is available at private and public treatment centres. If you or anyone close to you is abusing substances, consult your nearest social worker for assistance.

End.

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