



ADVOCACY NEWSLETTER JUN 2024

Dear Partners and fellow Advocates

We would like to extend our appreciation to our partners for illuminating 48 locations across Singapore in green and white during the annual DrugFreeSG Light-Up event on 26 June. Thank you for showing your strong support for a drug-free Singapore and the global fight against drug abuse!

National Council Against Drug Abuse (NCADA) Chairman Mr Tan Chong Huat shares a message to all parents on World Drug Day, highlighting the importance of taking proactive measures to keep a drug-free society for our children.

The recent reclassification of marijuana in the United States from a Schedule I to a Schedule III drug, aligning it with substances like testosterone and certain painkillers, has raised global concerns, including in Singapore, where there are growing concerns of drug abuse among youths. NCADA Chairman Mr Tan Chong Huat and Council Member Prof Ganapathy's commentary on this development was published on Channel News Asia. You can read the full commentary in this issue of our newsletter.

Continuing our collaboration with the Singapore Prison Service, we present 'I Have A Life Too', a personal narrative that portrays the unwavering support and challenges involved while caring for a brother with a history of drug-related offences, as well as the hopes for his recovery.

We have several upcoming exhibitions where you can learn about how drug abuse affects the families of those struggling with addiction.

To round off this newsletter, we bring you bite-sized information from our Preventive Drug Education package.

Happy reading!

We value your feedback and inquiries on our programmes and activities. Please feel free to reach out to us at cnb_community_partnership@cnb.gov.sg.

Thank you for your unwavering support in our shared mission for a drug-free society.

Every year on 26 June, Singapore holds the **DrugFreeSG Light-Up** to commemorate the *International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking*, also known as the ‘World Drug Day’. This year, 48 locations islandwide illuminated their buildings and structures in green and/or white after sundown.

A big thank you to our partners who lit up our beautiful city skyline and heartlands in glorious green and white, in support of a drug-free Singapore.



Dear Parents,

You may not be aware that **drug abuse is an unrelenting problem globally**. Singapore has been actively combating the drug problem since early years of our nation building. The demand for and supply of drugs within our shores remains relatively low. But the world is not so small a place as it was when we were growing up. Singaporeans are not confined to our borders today as we become more travelled and increasingly study and work overseas. Based on projections from the United Nations, **in the next decade, our children will graduate and experience the drug issue on a far wider scale.**

Already in the 2020s, the global drug situation has reached epidemic levels in some countries. Unsure of how to manage the problem, many countries waver between relaxing and tightening drug policies. The world now operates in much more confusion than before. Obviously, Singapore is not impervious to these challenges. Beyond our borders, the situation is starkly different.

How does the drug situation affect our children? Our borders, while protected, are porous. Besides our physical world, technology has enabled an open online world, where the harms of drug abuse may no longer be as clear and apparent to those born in more recent history. Our children access volumes of conflicting narratives and content in media today. They encounter far more diverse acquaintances and people with various life experiences than we ever did growing up. Is it surprising that youths have told us they would find it difficult to reject drugs, if they are confronted with it in a permissive environment? **How do we prepare our children for such a dissimilar reality from ours?**

Every year on 26 June, the international community marks the International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking, also known as 'World Drug Day'. In the National Council Against Drug Abuse (NCADA), we stand united, resolved in a mission against drug abuse, which continues to impact millions of lives worldwide. **We hope to partner parents in Singapore to realise our vision of a Drug-Free Society for our Children.**

NCADA will be conducting a Parents Seminar on 3 August 2024 with a panel of experts to share views on what parents need to know, in dealing with the increasing permissiveness towards drug abuse today. Do look out for details of this event and we hope to see you there! As concerned parents, let us do what we can to set our children up for success.

Mr Tan Chong Huat

Chairman, National Council Against Drug Abuse

READ/COMMENTARY: BIDEN'S MARIJUANA MOVE IS A STEP BACKWARDS IN THE GLOBAL FIGHT AGAINST DRUGS

The United States has formally moved to loosen restrictions on marijuana, with plans to reclassify it as a less harmful drug.

Under the move, marijuana – which has been classified since 1970 as a Schedule I drug alongside heroin, LSD and ecstasy – will be downgraded to a Schedule III drug, putting it in the same category as drugs like testosterone or painkillers containing codeine. Schedule III drugs are deemed to have a “moderate to low potential” of dependence.

“No one should be in jail merely for using or possessing marijuana,” US President Joe Biden said in a video on May 17. “Far too many lives have been upended because of failed approach to marijuana and I’m committed to righting those wrongs.”

Earlier this week, Maryland pardoned more than 175,000 marijuana convictions, becoming the latest state to do so after similar mass pardons by Massachusetts and Oregon, among others.

The intent could be politically motivated, or even empathic. Regardless, it is a regressive step in the global fight against drugs, and undermines decades of progress in drug control efforts and contradicts extensive scientific evidence on the adverse effects of cannabis.

Research reported in The American Journal of Drug and Alcohol Abuse highlights that prolonged cannabis abuse can disrupt brain function, particularly during critical developmental stages.

Similarly, the Singapore Medical Journal featured local research that attests to these findings, showing that early initiation of cannabis use leads to greater long-term negative impacts.

The reclassification of marijuana at the federal level could legitimise the cannabis industry and accelerate the normalisation of recreational cannabis use at the state level, despite concerns about the risks.

RISING CONCERNS ABOUT DRUG USE AMONG SINGAPOREAN YOUTH

In Singapore, recent data highlights growing concerns about drug use among youth.

The 2022 Health and Lifestyle survey by the Institute of Mental Health (IMH) revealed that the mean age of drug initiation in Singapore is 15.9 years.

Drug-related arrests are also on the rise, increasing by 10 per cent to 3,122 cases last year. Notably, there was a 17 per cent increase in cannabis abusers arrested. Amongst new cannabis abusers arrested, close to two in three were below the age of 30.

These statistics reflect a troubling trend that underscore the need for more robust and concerted drug prevention measures. Despite Singapore’s comprehensive demand and supply reduction efforts, endorsed by strong public opinion, misconceptions about cannabis are prevalent among youths.

In the 2023 National Drug Perception Survey by the National Council Against Drug Abuse (NCADA), 90.4 per cent of youths agreed that “drug-taking should remain illegal in Singapore”, but only 79.3 per cent supported the continued criminalisation of cannabis.

Qualitative interviews revealed that some youths believe cannabis use can be personally regulated, while young adults in their early 30s often view cannabis as a “soft” drug suitable for recreational use without addiction risks.

But research invalidates the perception that cannabis is less harmful than other drugs. In a study published in the Singapore Medical Journal last year, researchers found that almost half of the 450 participants surveyed progressed to using other illicit drugs after trying cannabis, with 42 per cent progressing to heroin.

The distorted knowledge among youths is unfortunately compounded by social media and pop culture. The task of combating misinformation about drugs is made more difficult by the vast digital landscape, where young people encounter a wide array of information, some of which can potentially fuel drug-abusing behaviours.

THE INTERGENERATIONAL IMPACT OF DRUG ABUSE

The repercussions of drug abuse extend far beyond individual abusers, deeply affecting their families and the community.

A 2020 study by Singapore's Ministry of Social and Family Development stated that children of parents who committed drug offenses are 5.18 times more likely than other children to have contact with the criminal justice system in the future.

Additionally, youth offenders from households with a history of substance abuse are 2.2 times more likely to join gangs.

Research shows that children of drug-abusing parents experience a range of social-psychological deficits including weakened social bonds to conventional institutions and role models.

The Biden administration's decision to relax its stance towards marijuana has been lauded by advocates for addressing what they say is an uneven drug enforcement policy that has fuelled mass incarceration and disproportionately affected certain communities. However, this commendation appears contradictory, as it fails to recognise the potential adverse effects such a move could have on socio-economically deprived and disadvantaged communities already afflicted by the drug scourge.

Empirical evidence from countries that have adopted harm reduction approaches, such as Portugal, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Canada, and Australia, reveals mixed outcomes.

For instance, the Netherlands, known for its regulated sale of cannabis through so-called "coffeeshops", continues to face issues of drug tourism and associated social ills where children as young as 14 years old are recruited as "cocaine collectors". In January 2024, the Mayor of Amsterdam warned in an opinion piece published in the Guardian that the Netherlands risks becoming a "narco-state".

In Sweden, the number of fatal shootings has more than doubled since 2013, reaching 391 in 2022, primarily due to gang-related drug and arms conflicts. A lawyer representing teenage shooting victims told the BBC that 'children in Sweden are using their own bags not to carry books, but to carry the drug markets of Sweden on their shoulders.

Similarly, Canada and Australia, despite their comprehensive harm reduction strategies, persistently encounter drug-related crime and health issues. In 2023, British Columbia decriminalised drugs to reduce overdose rates, but only to see it surge by 5 per cent, the BBC reported. BC authorities are now considering re-criminalising the use of hard drugs in public places.

Closer to home, Thailand is planning to relist cannabis as a narcotic, just two years after it became the first in Southeast Asia to decriminalise its recreational use.

These cases illustrate the complexities and potential negative consequences of relaxed drug policies, particularly for vulnerable populations.

It is precisely for this reason that Singapore maintains its unwavering commitment to shield vulnerable communities from the devastating effects of drug abuse and prevent the intergenerational cycle of crime, arrest, incarceration, and re-incarceration.

Singapore's approach, guided by science and sensible considerations, prioritises harm prevention over harm reduction and serves as a robust framework for tackling this pervasive issue.

Mr Tan Chong Huat

Chairman, National Council Against Drug Abuse (NCADA)

Associate Professor Narayanan Ganapathy

Member, National Council Against Drug Abuse (NCADA)

Scan the QR code for
the full article:



<https://go.gov.sg/bidensmarisnamov-eisastepbackwardsintheglobalfightagainstdrugs>

ADVOCACY/DRUG VICTIMS REMEMBRANCE DAY

The Drug Victims Remembrance Day roving exhibition continues its journey across Singapore! Through interactive and immersive installations, members of public learnt about the physical and societal impact that drugs have on the loved ones of drug abusers. Join us at JEM this week!



Upcoming:

JEM (B1 Jem Market, 50 Jurong Gateway Rd, Singapore 608549)	28 Jun – 30 Jun
Northpoint City (L1 South Atrium B & C (Near Uniqlo), 930 Yishun Ave 2, Singapore 769098)	5 Jul – 7 Jul
Jurong Point (L1 Central Stage 2 & 3 (Near McDonald's), 1 Jurong West Central 2, Singapore 648886)	12 Jul – 14 Jul
Heartbeat @ Bedok (Atrium 3, 11 Bedok North Street 1, Singapore 469662)	19 Jul – 21 Jul

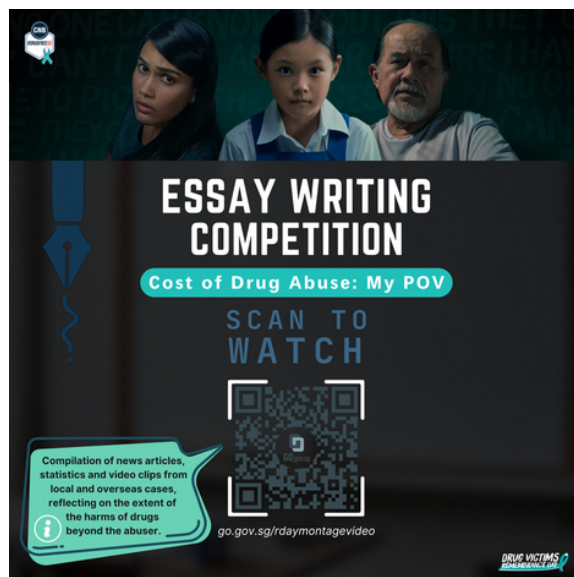
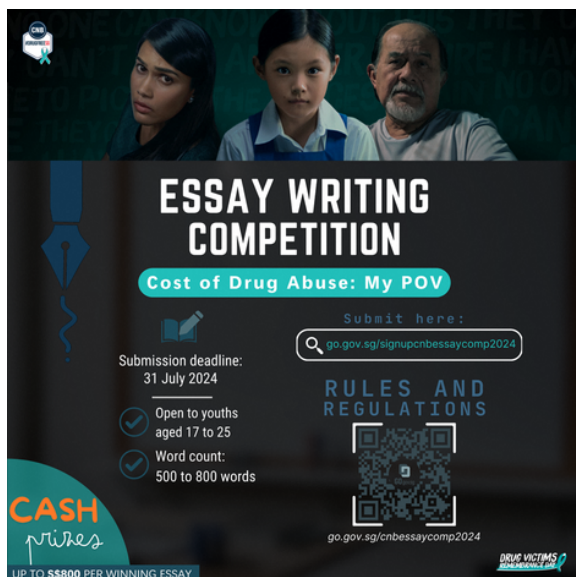
Stay tuned to CNB’s social media pages (@CNB.DrugFreeSG) for more information and updates about Drug Victims Remembrance Day!

We seek your support to spread awareness and rally support to protect our community from the harms of drugs that extend beyond the abuser.

As of June 2024, over 90,000 Singaporeans have made a promise to stay drug-free, to protect their loved ones from the physical and psychological harms that come with drug abuse. If you haven’t made your promise yet, scan here to do so!



<https://go.drugsg.org/day2024/mc/resite>



Theme: Cost of Drug Abuse: My POV

It is still not too late to share what you think about the multifaceted impact of drug abuse, and stand a chance to win attractive cash prizes!

Why participate?

- Raise Awareness – share your thoughts and educate others about the broader impacts of drug abuse
- Remember the Victims – pay tribute to those affected by drug abuse
- Win Prizes – top essays will be rewarded and featured on CNB social platforms!

Who can participate?

- Open to all youths aged between 17 and 25
- Singapore Citizens, Permanent Residents or foreigners residing in Singapore on a valid Singapore Immigration Pass (e.g. student pass, dependent pass) during the period of competition

How to participate?

- Write an essay (between 500 to 800 words) exploring various dimensions of how drug abuse affects individuals, families, communities, and the society
- Submit your essay by 31 July 2024, 23:59 hours
- For more information, visit www.go.gov.sg/cnbessaycomp2024.

For enquiries, please contact:

- Hazel at hazel_chua@cnb.gov.sg
- Jue Hui at goh_jue_hui@cnb.gov.sg
- WhatsApp: <https://wa.link/ghrfmu>



Only two months left to submit your video entries! Show your support for a drug-free Singapore by participating in the DrugFreeSG Video Competition 2024 and stand a chance to win attractive cash prizes.

Need help crafting your video submission? Check out our latest reel featuring the important elements of a great short film!

Scan the QR code
to access the
reel:



The competition closes on **30 August 2024**. Find out more at **drugfree.sg** or email **contact@drugfree.sg** for enquiries.

Scan the QR code
to access the
microsite:



We seek schools' and organisations' support to promote this competition and encourage youths who are interested in video production to submit their entries.

Learn more about the harms of drugs and drug prevention at the upcoming community roadshows.

Event Name	Date/Time	Venue
Paya Lebar Community Resilience (CR) Day	13 July 2024 8.30am – 12pm	206 Hougang Street 21, Singapore 530206
Narpani Community Carnival (21st Edition)	14 July 2024 8am – 4pm	Sentosa Palawan Green, Singapore 098233 (located next to Sentosa Island's Beach station)
Jurong Central Eco-Youth Fest	14 July 2024 11am – 3pm	Jurong Green Community Club (6 Jurong West Ave 1, Singapore 649520)
Rhythm of Hope	27 July 2024 2.30 – 4.30pm	Nee Soon Central Community Club Level 2 – Function Room 2

CALL for VOLUNTEERS

Interested in sharing the drug prevention message? Email us at **CNB_Community_Partnership@cnb.gov.sg** if you are keen to help out at any of our roadshows and events!



"Waiting For You", an initiative by the Singapore Prison Service features a compilation of stories written from the perspectives of the drug abusers' family members and loved ones. In this edition, we share with you "I Have A Life Too" – a heartfelt account of unwavering support and struggles in caring for a brother with a history of drug-related offences, and hopes for his recovery.

I Have A Life Too

Alias is my brother and I love him with all my heart. I will always be here to support and cheer him on. At times, I think he forgets that I have a life too. And frankly, I am quite afraid to say it to him as I do not want him to think that he is imposing on me whenever he wants to approach me for help.

Alias has been in and out of prisons since he was a teenager. He was incarcerated for a myriad of offences ranging from drug consumption to trafficking and a whole lot more. Our family only found out about his drug use when he was arrested. We were shocked at that time as Alias appeared to be fine. He had a stable job and seemed normal when he was at home. Alias told us he tried using drugs for fun because he was curious. Ironically, he has had to pay a high price for his curiosity and fun and till this day, he continues to pay. Our family did not blame his friends as we believed that Alias was old enough to discern between right and wrong. Looking back, I feel that Alias was a good person who was incapable of making good decisions. As a family, we have scolded and advised him to quit his bad habits but we could not supervise him around the clock as we have our own lives to lead too.

I often asked Alias why our family had to do all the work of advising and visiting him whenever he was incarcerated. I wanted to know why his friends were his first priority instead of his family when he was released. It felt unfair. Alias would only respond with "Yes, okay okay, I will change." but it has never happened. I have been playing the role of a broken recorder. It has become my job to talk to him, see to his needs and remind him of the things he needed to do. For example, I had to be mindful of what day it was so that I could remind Alias to attend his urine tests. Whenever I talked to him, I had to measure my words carefully so that I do not hurt his feelings. I had to sound encouraging, understanding and empathetic so as to not trigger any ill feelings or misunderstandings. On top of this, I am the main caregiver to our elderly parents. I have a lot to juggle and I have to admit that I feel so tired, but I know this is my responsibility to shoulder despite my struggles.

Alias knows that I care about him even though I used to demand answers from him. Mostly, I told him to reflect on his behaviours. I would have come across as harsh and there were times I scolded him in the presence of prison officers during those visits. What troubled me most was seeing my mother's emotional pain and distress when we visited Alias. Her sobs evoked my fury, so much so that I would raise my voice in the fervent hope that Alias would understand our pain, and consequently consider change more seriously. In my moments of anger, I may have uttered unpleasant words that I did not mean and I know they came from a place of hurt, frustration and helplessness. I have been taking care of everyone's feelings without realising that I feel equally broken. Once, I told Alias that I wanted to get incarcerated just to understand why he kept going back in. He might have understood my fatigue at that point because his facial expression suggested that he knew I had my own life to live.

Before I focus on myself, I want to ensure that Alias's life improves first. My dream is to see him find work that he enjoys and become independent enough to take care of himself before he progresses to start his own family. Above all, I wish that he would forever stay drug and crime free. I know how powerful a family's support can be to inmates. I have called the families of Alias' prison mates to request that they pay their respective inmates a visit. Sadly, most have refused with reasons such as "busy, no time, don't want." Oftentimes, they decline because they are struggling with their own lives. Some have lost hope, while others no longer have the energy to keep up. At the same time, if families do not support them, then who will? For me, I will always be here for my brother because of my love for him. I am fine placing his welfare above mine but I long for the day he would get his act together so that I can start living my life.

#DIDYOUKNOW/PREVENTIVE DRUG EDUCATION (PDE) INFORMATION PACKAGE

Among the many resources that you can find on CNB's website is a handy Preventive Drug Education Information Package. Comprising a handbook, a deck of powerpoint slides and a list of commonly asked questions and answers, the package is to help members of the public understand the global and local drug situation and Singapore's approach to tackle the drug problem. Check out this month's content that you can share with your family, friends, colleagues and others, when speaking on the anti-drug cause.

Commonly Abused Drugs and Their Effects

Discover in-depth information about frequently abused drugs, including their effects on the body and mind, to gain a comprehensive understanding of the impact of substance abuse.



- Methamphetamine** (a.k.a 'Ice', Glass, Crystal, Speed, 'Ya Ba', 'Quartz', 'Hiropon', Shabu and Syabu)
- Usually a colourless and odourless crystal that resembles glass fragments or shiny white "rocks".
 - Also comes in tablet form.
- Harmful Effects**
- Increased heart rate and body temperature.
 - Fits, stroke and death.
 - Damage to heart and nerves.
 - Liver and kidney diseases.
 - Abnormal behaviour with mood swings, confusion, delusion and hallucination.
 - Anxiety and irritability.



- New Psychoactive Substances (NPS)** (a.k.a Spice, K2, Bath Salts, Kronic, and Bromo-Dragonfly)
- Substances that mimic the effects of controlled drugs.
 - Have unknown, dangerous toxicology effects and are as addictive and harmful as controlled drugs.



Severe intoxication



Severe toxic reaction leading to death



Paranoia



Hallucinations



Adverse cardiovascular problems



Renal failure



- Cannabis** (a.k.a Marijuana, Pok, Grass, Joints, Ganja, Hashish and Weed)
- Resembles dried herbs or tea leaves. Can also be hidden in food products, like brownies or candies.
 - Contains a chemical, tetrahydrocannabinol, that affects one's mood and the way one sees and hears things.

#DIDYOUKNOW/PREVENTIVE DRUG EDUCATION (PDE) INFORMATION PACKAGE



Heroin (a.k.a White, Smack, Junk, Powder, Putih, Medicine, Ubat)

- Comes in granular, powder or solution form.
- Whitish or brownish in colour.

Harmful Effects

- Lowered heart rate and respiration.
- Damage to lungs, kidneys and liver.
- Dull feeling and tiredness.
- Difficulty in concentrating.
- Constipation.



'Ecstasy' (a.k.a XTC)

Harmful Effects

- Increased heart rate and blood pressure.
- Jaw clenching, teeth grinding and uncontrollable shaking.
- Kidney, liver and brain damage.
- Long term memory loss.
- Chills, sweating and vomiting.
- Inability to think, see and co-ordinate properly.
- Hallucination.



Lysergide (LSD) (a.k.a Acid, Trips, Blotters, Tabs, Stamp, Black Sesame, Seed, Micro, Micro Dot)

- A hallucinogen, often sold on blotting paper with a colourful design.

Harmful Effects

- Increased heart rate, breathing and body temperature.
- Numbness.
- Distorted sight, hearing, smell, touch and taste.
- Loss of control of thoughts.
- Severe panic, confusion, hallucination and paranoia (irrational fear or suspicion).

Scan the QR code
for the full
content:



<https://pdr.gov.sg/pde-website>

HELP US SPREAD THE ANTI-DRUG MESSAGE



The **Anti-Drug Abuse Advocacy Network (A3 Network)** is a volunteer scheme jointly administered by the NCADA and CNB. The A3 Network, which is under the umbrella of the Home Team Volunteer Network comprises various groups of people who identify with, support and promote the anti-drug cause*.

**Volunteers under the Network do not represent CNB and NCADA, nor are they spokespersons of CNB and NCADA during or outside the term of deployment.*

Help us grow the A3 Network by telling your friends about us and the volunteering opportunities with CNB. Scan the QR codes for more information about the two different schemes (Adult Advocates and Youth Anti-Drug Advocates), or drop us an email at cnb_community_partnership@cnb.gov.sg.



Drop us an email at CNB_Community_Partnership@cnb.gov.sg if you would like to add your colleagues and friends into our mailing list or if you wish to unsubscribe.

If you come across drugs, or what you suspect to be drugs, you should call CNB hotline at **1800-325-6666**. Kindly note that airtime charges apply for mobile calls to 1800 service lines and calls are free of charge only if made from regular land lines.

For more information, please visit the CNB website at www.cnb.gov.sg

Connect with us:



@cnb.drugfreesg

JUN 2024