



DRUGFREE**SG** ADVOCACY NEWSLETTER

NOV 2024

Dear Partners and fellow Advocates

This month, we are pleased to bring you highlights from the DrugFreeSG Appreciation Dinner hosted by Associate Professor Muhammad Faishal Ibrahim, Minister of State, Ministry of Home Affairs and Ministry of National Development for our advocates and partners of the drug-free cause.

We share snippets from the DrugFreeSG Parenting Conference organised by CNB and Berita Harian and from the Self-Help Groups' Joint Learning Fiesta, at which our National Council Against Drug Abuse (NCADA) members Dr Jimmy Lee and Mr Firdaus Daud shared tips on how to keep youths safe from drugs.

We continue to bring you winning entries from the DrugFreeSG essay competition. This month, a young man brings a personal account of how parental drug abuse has lasting impact on their children.

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.



DRUGFREESG APPRECIATION DINNER

AT A GLANCE...

The DrugFreeSG Appreciation Dinner held on 21 Nov 2024 was organised to show appreciation to CNB's partners and volunteers for their support for the drug-free cause. A/P Muhammad Faishal Ibrahim also announced the rebranding of the Anti-Drug Advocacy (A3) Network to DrugFreeSG Advocacy Network, introducing enhanced training and resources that advocates can look forward to.



Approximately 200 advocates and partners attended the appreciation dinner held at Furama City Centre on 21 Nov 2024. In his welcome remarks, MOS Faishal highlighted several contributions made by our volunteers and partners, including one by student advocate Jaylen Chua from Anglo-Chinese Junior College who roped in his tutors and friends for a school project to spread awareness on the problems that drugs cause to the self and to others. Jaylen and his fellow advocates wrote a General Paper lesson plan for class discussions and held an info-exhibition in school.

MOS Faishal also announced the rebranding of the Anti-Drug Abuse Advocacy (A3) Network to DrugFreeSG Advocacy Network and unveiled the new logo. Under this new unified scheme, training and development efforts will be enhanced to better equip advocates with the knowledge and skill sets they need to support the work in amplifying the drug-free cause.

Advocates can look forward to three key enhancements under the new network:

- Offering a revamped onboarding for new advocates to create opportunities for them to network and foster bonding
- Extending the training programme provided for the DrugFreeSG Champions to the advocates under the network
- Providing more opportunities for advocates to attend training in the form of sharing by practitioners on areas such as engaging members of the public on the topic of drug prevention and leading ground-up initiatives

We hope all who attended enjoyed themselves, and we thank you for your continued support!



MOS Faishal delivering his welcome remarks at the DrugFreeSG Appreciation Dinner 2024



The new DrugFreeSG Advocacy Network logo



MOS Faishal personally thanking our advocates and partners at every table



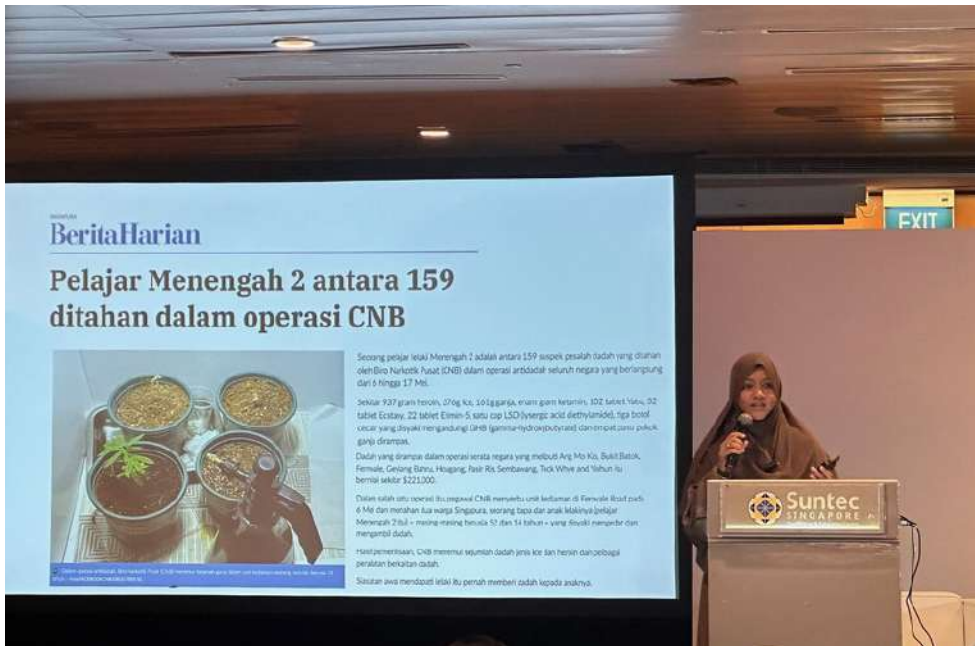
DRUGFREE SG PARENTING CONFERENCE

AT A GLANCE...

How can parents create a safe environment for discussing sensitive topics like drug abuse? Berita Harian organised a Parenting Conference on 2 Nov 2024 at Suntec City Convention Centre. Over 100 participants learned strategies for raising resilient children and discussing drug abuse with their children. A/P Muhammad Faishal Ibrahim also emphasised parents' crucial role in drug prevention via a video recording. The event concluded with a panel discussion on creating safe spaces for meaningful parent-child conversations amidst challenges.

On 2 Nov 2024, over 100 participants attended the Parenting Conference at Suntec City Convention Centre organised by Berita Harian in support of DrugFreeSG. The conference aimed to empower parents with practical tools and strategies to raise resilient children, highlighting the crucial role that parents play in shaping their children's lives.

Speakers for the conference included Ustazah Shameem Sultanah, an Islamic motivational speaker and Ms Hilyah Saparin, a social worker who shared with participants helpful tips on fostering open communication with their children about difficult topics such as drug abuse. Associate Professor Muhammad Faishal Ibrahim, Minister of State, Ministry of Home Affairs and Ministry of National Development, highlighted the permissive attitude of youths towards drug abuse and the importance of the role of parents in drug prevention via a video recording. The conference concluded with a panel discussion on how parents can provide a safe space for their children amidst all the challenges. This was moderated by Berita Harian Podcast Producer and Presenter, Ms Natasha Mustafa, and included panellists Ustazah Liyana Musfirah, motivational speaker, Ms Shafiqah Ashur, a Senior Case Officer at AMP's Aftercare (Reintegration) unit, Mr Mohamed Khair, Executive Chairman and Principal Consultant of SuChi Success Initiatives Pte Ltd and Head for Exemplary Fathers sub-committee in Nakhoda and Mr Danial Iskandar, a volunteer with IM Volunteers Network.



Ustazah Shameem sharing with the attendees on Positive Islamic Parenting Principles



MOS Faishal highlighted youth's permissive attitudes towards drugs and parents' crucial role in drug prevention via a video recording



Panel Discussion – (from left to right) Ms Natasha Mustafa, Ms Shafiqah Ashur, Ustazah Liyana Musfirah, Mr Mohamed Khair and Mr Danial Iskandar



SELF-HELP GROUP JOINT LEARNING FIESTA

AT A GLANCE...

How can we keep our youths safe from drugs? NCADA Council Members Dr Jimmy Lee and Mr Firdaus Daud addressed this crucial question at the Self-Help Groups' Joint Learning Fiesta on 9 Nov 2024.

On 9 Nov 2024, Council Members from the National Council Against Drug Abuse (NCADA) Dr Jimmy Lee and Mr Firdaus Daud shared information about keeping youths safe from drugs at the Self-Help Groups' Joint Learning Fiesta. The event, held at the Singapore Institute of Management and jointly organised by the Chinese Development Assistance Council, Eurasian Association, SINDA and Yayasan MENDAKI, was attended by educators, mentors and teachers from various agencies. Mr Firdaus and Dr Jimmy discussed the 3Cs explaining why youth take drugs and strategies for engaging in conversations with youths about drug abuse.



Why do youths take drugs?

- Curiosity
- Culture – Peer or Family Influence
- Coping Mechanism



How to initiate conversations with youths?

- Use teachable moments to highlight the harms of drugs
- Use well-known celebrities/news cases – e.g. *“Some celebrities have talked about their struggles with drug abuse. Why do you think they were addicted to taking drugs?”*
- Share personal encounters – e.g. *“Do you have any friends who think lightly of drugs? If so, how do they show it?”*
- Ask about healthy coping styles – e.g. *“What do you do when you feel stressed?”*



WINNING ENTRY FROM THE DRUGFREESG ESSAY WRITING COMPETITION 2024

AT A GLANCE...

In May this year, CNB organised the DrugFreeSG Essay Competition, which concluded in Aug, to encourage conversations and reflections on the multifaceted impact of drug abuse. There were a total of 283 entries from various schools.

This month's winning essay shares insights on how parental drug abuse affects children. Through a mix of personal story and research, the essay discusses the long-term consequences on emotional well-being, health, and academic achievement, emphasising the impact across generations.

ESSAY BY IRFAN (CURRENTLY SERVING NATIONAL SERVICE)

I remember fleeting memories of following you to visit Tok Mid at the halfway house. I was confused about what even was a "halfway house". All I knew was that my grandfather needed to live there before returning to us. It was only much later when I listened to your stories that I began to piece your experiences together. You were only 10 when the weight of the world was too much for your tiny, little innocent feet. At 10 when children ran and played the playgrounds, running with bubbling laughter under the bright sun, you were confined indoors. Not because you wanted to but your dad could not keep his mind and body steady enough for you to look up to him as a father. At 10, you wanted to play with the other kids but saw your dad playing with white snow that you believed was candy.

Mummy, you were only a child, this was the only life you knew and played in except Tok Mid was rolling life's dice with drugs.

While my mother's story is personal, it reflects a broader issue affecting many children. In the US, more than 8 million children live with parents who regularly abuse drugs (Lander et al., 2019). Although Singapore does not provide statistics like the above, we cannot discount the many children who live such experiences. The impact of parental drug abuse on family dynamics is profound, leading to a higher likelihood of emotional and behavioural problems among children (Finan et al., 2015; Hussong et al., 2010, as cited in Lowthian, 2022). Unfortunately, they may not break the cycle and end up following their parents into a life of degeneration with drugs (Ministry of Home Affairs, 2021). This disruption often leaves a constant void of a healthy attachment with their parents. The lack of parental love that they receive reinforces their beliefs that they are not worthy of such love and may exhibit behaviours that we would think are delinquency or callousness but in reality, a parent's love can tame the tempest within a child. These children are not just mere statistics in the fight against drugs, they are children with a whole life waiting for them. They deserve to be lifted up and not be broken down due to circumstances beyond their control.

To fully grasp the impact of parental drug abuse on children, Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are traumatic events in childhood that include abuse and household dysfunction (Richardson, n.d.). For instance, having a parent who abuses drugs adds a point to a child's ACE score. Given the dysfunctional reality of these children, their ACE scores would increase significantly as drug abuse is often linked to neglect and other household dysfunction (Kuppen et al., 2020). Over time this prolonged trauma can lead to a cascade of issues from health to education, and socioeconomic prospects.

As a result of this constant stress and trauma, these children are likely to grow up with a lifetime of depressive episodes that can eventually lead to suicide attempts (Anda, 2018). Furthermore, they are likely to have worse health outcomes such as an increase in heart problems and diabetes. Physical health is not the only area in life that takes the blow from drugs; the long-lasting effects of a dysfunctional family due to drug abuse create an environment that hinders these children from excelling in other aspects of life, such as academic performance. For instance, children of drug users often face conduct problems and disciplinary issues in school, which can result in suspensions, further impeding their educational progress (Lowthian, 2022). Their issues in schools do not just stop there as these children are also likely to view themselves as average or below-average students, a reflection of the low self-esteem fostered by their home environment (Lowthian, 2022). Though we may see the above as individual problems in itself, parental drug abuse can disrupt a child's home life which can cause a plethora of issues.

As the twig is bent, so grows the tree. From parent to child, their child is a reflection of their parent's upbringing. Sow their childhood with love and care and watch their precious flourish in life. However, as this essay has shown, life rears its ugly head on the innocent. The dwindling mercurial highs of drugs are not worth the lifetime of lows their child faces. I would like to think that after all these years my mother has gotten over her father's constant relapses but I know that the girl within her knows she deserves a better life. A life away from the bitterness of her younger days, and perhaps a true chance to reconnect with her father.

Wherever my grandfather is now, I pray that he finds peace after all these years.



AS AMERICA'S MARIJUANA USE GROWS, SO DO THE HARMS (THE NEW YORK TIMES)

AT A GLANCE...

As marijuana legalisation spreads, there is a rise in serious cannabis-related health problems. An article by New York Times highlights concerns about addiction, severe vomiting syndrome, and psychosis. The article also emphasises the need for improved public awareness, research, and regulations to address these issues.

AS AMERICA'S MARIJUANA USE GROWS, SO DO THE HARMS

THE NEW YORK TIMES, 4 OCT 2024

CONTEXT

Marijuana legalisation has spread across the U.S., with tens of millions of Americans using the drug for medical or recreational purposes.

18 MILLION



4.5 MILLION

81%

Americans show symptoms of cannabis use disorder (CUD)

young adults between the ages of 18 to 25 use the drug daily

of them meet the criteria for CUD

Cannabis products today are more potent and bear little resemblance to the marijuana available decades ago when states began legalising it for medical use. This has inevitably resulted in enduring health consequences on a widespread level.

CANNABIS: THEN VS NOW

U.S. lawmakers & voters began legalising medical marijuana in the 1990s, moved by the testimonials of AIDS & cancer patients who claimed it relieved their suffering, & by doctors who endorsed its therapeutic effects.

The marijuana industry has transformed drastically since then. **Today, vape pens, edibles & pre-rolled joints with potency enhancers and concentrates can contain up to 99% THC.**



Despite these developments, marijuana is still being commercially touted for its health benefits.

“What we’re talking about now, what people are using, is a whole different beast”.

-- Ziva Cooper, Director of UCLA Centre for Cannabis and Cannabinoids. She found that previous studies on withdrawals were done with cannabis containing 3-7% THC, making them significantly outdated considering the increasingly popular THC concentrates today.

In 2017, the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine published a review of research on the health effects of cannabis and warned that the lack of evidence-based information posed a public risk.

“Until we do research on the drastically transformed cannabis in all its forms, I think putting them under the umbrella of safe, legal drug is wrong.”

-- Yasmin Hurd, neuroscientist and leader on the report

CHS is insidious in nature. Because marijuana has been known to soothe nausea, patients do not identify it as the root cause of their symptoms.

Many suffer for months or years before getting an accurate diagnosis.



#1

HEALTH RISK: CANNABIS HYPEREMESIS SYNDROME (CHS)

CHS, marked by **severe nausea, vomiting and pain**, has been increasingly diagnosed in emergency rooms. 1/3 of near-daily cannabis users exhibit these symptoms.



6 million Americans are potentially affected

In extreme cases, CHS can lead to **dehydration, seizures, kidney failures and cardiac arrests**. There have been **at least 8 CHS-related deaths** in the U.S.

#2

HEALTH RISK: CANNABIS-INDUCED PSYCHOSIS & SCHIZOPHRENIA

While many people turn to marijuana for temporary relief from mental health issues, physicians observed that **it can cause temporary psychosis** and is **increasingly associated with the development of chronic psychotic disorders** (e.g. schizophrenia).

In cases of cannabis-induced psychotic episodes which last from hours to days, **symptoms of dread, paranoia and hallucinations** were reported.




Marijuana use can affect brain development, especially during the critical period of adolescence before 25. This is the same period where psychotic disorders typically emerge, contributing to growing evidence that they are associated risks of marijuana use.

Research shows that:



Regular marijuana users are **20%** more likely to develop a psychotic disorder compared to non-users.
based on a study conducted across 11 European sites

The risk of developing a psychotic disorder is **11x** higher for teenage users compared to non-users.
based on a study conducted in Ontario

Paediatricians who see teens and young adults noted that chronic marijuana use causes many to miss out on important developmental markers, e.g., getting a driver's license or holding a job.

Common withdrawal symptoms include



Physical pain

Poor appetite

Poor sleep

#3

HEALTH RISK: CANNABIS USE DISORDER (CUD)

The 2023 National Survey on Drug Use and Health found that among people aged 18 to 25:



16.6%
Rate of Cannabis Use Disorder

VS



15.1%
Rate of Alcohol Use Disorder

People are considered to have CUD if they meet criteria of **craving the drug, building tolerance, and continuing to use it even if it interferes with work and social activities.**

Quitting marijuana is challenging. While there is medication available for opioid users to relief their withdrawal symptoms, there are no F.D.A approved drugs to help people quit marijuana.

Overall, more needs to be done to identify, track and address the harms of cannabis. A growing number of doctors and consumers recognise the urgency of balancing easy legal access to cannabis with:



Research & Education



Regulation



Public Health Warnings

Scan for the full article:



COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Curious to learn more about the harms of drugs and our drug prevention efforts as well as how you can contribute to it? Join us at the upcoming community roadshows!

Event Name	Date/Time	Venue
CERT Family Carnival Punggol Shore 2024	7 Dec 2024, 10am - 9.30pm	Punggol 21 Community Club, 80 Punggol Field, S(828815), Level 3



CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS

Interested in sharing the drug preventive message at the following event? Email us at:

 CNB_Community_Partnership@cnb.gov.sg

Event Name	Date/Time	Venue
International Migrants Day Celebration 2024	15 Dec 2024, 6 - 9pm	No. 1, Jalan Papan S(619392) & No. 27, Penjuru Walk S(608538)



FOR MORE INFORMATION ON OUR PARTNERS



The **National Council Against Drug Abuse (NCADA)** was formed in January 1995. As the advisory council to the Minister and the Ministry of Home Affairs, NCADA's mission is to serve as an effective conduit between the Government and the public by championing -

1. Advocacy on policies and measures against drug abuse
2. Community engagements and outreach to public to promote Singapore's zero drug tolerance stance with the support of community partners



DrugFreeSG Champions are appointed by the Minister for Home Affairs who chairs the Inter-Ministry Committee on Drug Prevention for Youths to amplify drug-free messages to our youths through their respective networks. They comprise educators, student leaders, counsellors, youth workers, NS and healthcare communities, who seek to promote the #DrugFreeSG message within their spheres of influence. They are empowered to engage and safeguard our community, particularly youths, against the harms of drugs to keep Singapore drug-free.



The **DrugFreeSG Advocacy Network** Scheme brings together volunteers who identify with and promote the drug-free cause. Our DrugFreeSG Advocates play a vital role by being active voices in amplifying anti-drug messages within their spheres of influence, inspiring others to take a firm stand against drugs. Be part of the movement for a Singapore without drugs, where everyone can live, work and play safely.

Help us grow the Network by telling your friends about us and the volunteering opportunities with CNB. Drop us an email at cnb_community_partnership@cnb.gov.sg for more information about the Network or if you are keen to sign up as a volunteer.

**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.*

Drop us an email at CNB_Community_Partnership@cnb.gov.sg if you would like to add your 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