

**For discussion  
10 November 2003**

**LegCo Panel on Health Services**  
**The Adolescent Health Programme of the Department of Health**

**Introduction**

This paper reports on the latest development of the outreaching adolescent health programme of the Department of Health (DH).

**Background**

2. Adolescence is a period of rapid physical, psychological, social and intellectual development. It is also a time when health-compromising behaviours are prone to occur. In addition to obesity, eating disorder and some mental health problems, risk behaviours such as smoking, alcohol use, substance abuse and casual sex are observed among adolescents and on the rising trend. Unhealthy habits not only undermine adolescents' health but pose a threat to healthy adulthood.

3. DH's Student Health Service (SHS) was established in 1995 to improve the physical and psychosocial health of adolescents, initially through center-based services. To reach adolescents who choose not to receive center-based services, an outreaching interactive approach is required. SHS therefore launched in 2001 the Adolescent Health Programme (AHP) as an outreaching service for adolescents.

**Aims**

4. AHP seeks to equip adolescents, their parents and teachers with knowledge, attitudes, and skills to improve psychosocial wellbeing of adolescents. Specifically, the programme aims at –

- (a) enabling adolescents, parents, and teachers to understand the physical, psychosocial, emotional, intellectual changes and needs relating to adolescence in order to help build self-image and self esteem;
- (b) helping adolescents manage stress and emotion;

- (c) empowering adolescents with skills to cope with adversity and solve problems in order to be better equipped for life challenges;
- (d) enabling adolescents to interact effectively with peers, siblings, parents, and teachers and broaden their social circle in preparation of wider participation in society; and
- (e) helping adolescents set realistic life goals which are attainable and a source of satisfaction and achievement as active members of society.

### **Scope and Target Population**

5. AHP targets secondary school students, their parents, and teachers. Two types of programmes are offered –

- (a) Basic Life Skills Training (BLST) designed for Forms 1 to 3 students conducted sequentially over three years; and
- (b) topical programmes designed for secondary school students, teachers and parents.

6. Core components instituted in the BLST programme include stress and emotional management, problem solving skills and effective communication. More advanced concepts for these topics are introduced in the programmes for in Forms 2 and 3. Details of BLST topics are shown in **Appendix 1**.

7. Major themes covered by the topical programmes target not only at students but their parents and teachers. They center on understanding adolescents, emotional and stress management, suicide prevention, sex education, healthy lifestyles, building harmonious relationships, etc. Details of these programmes are shown in **Appendix 2**.

### **Progress of Implementation**

8. AHP uses an interactive approach with activities carried out during school lessons or as extra-curricular activities. These activities include role-play, group discussion, quiz, debate, mass game, problem solving and experimental games. Social workers, nurses and health promotion officers are the regular programme facilitators and they work with teachers in running the activities.

9. Based on in-depth research, all programmes are developed and delivered by multi-disciplinary teams with a mix of doctors, nurses,

psychologists, social workers, dietitians, and health promotion officers according to the nature and level of complexity of the activities.

10. The pilot team established in June 2001 has carried out programmes in eighteen secondary schools. The Programme was rolled out to 161 schools for more than 50,000 students in the school year 2002-03. In school year 2003-04, the Programme will serve more than 360 schools.

11. Participants of the Programme are expected to benefit in the following ways -

- (a) Knowledge – increased understanding of adolescents’ physical and psychosocial health, and health needs;
- (b) Attitudes and psychosocial aspects – improved self-efficacy and concept, emotion and stress management, problem solving competency, conflict resolution, interpersonal relationships, refusing substance abuse, and positive attitudes towards life;
- (c) Behaviours – reduced risk-taking behaviours such as smoking, alcohol consumption, drug abuse, etc

### **Evaluation**

12. The Programme has undergone continuous evaluation and monitoring, and its contents are being reviewed and refined continuously with the assistance from the academic sector. The Programme has been highly rated by students with satisfaction level of 70-80%. Besides, the BLST improved students’ health-related knowledge, psychosocial well-being and behaviour in the longer-term. Positive effects on students, parents and teachers were also identified from focus group studies.

### **Participation of Schools and the Community**

13. DH strongly encourages active participation of teachers, school social workers, parents and relevant Government departments in the AHP. By sharing manuals and activity kits, AHP staff work closely with school staff in running the programmes. This facilitates transfer of skills which in turn makes it easier for the programme to be integrated into the school curriculum. Moreover, teachers reinforce key messages at appropriate times and may organize extended activities matching various themes of AHP. School social workers will also follow up selected students where necessary.

14. Representatives from the Parents-Teachers Associations of the schools are invited to participate in programme briefing and debriefing sessions, where their ideas and feedbacks are actively sought. Some topical programmes are indeed targeted at parents.

15. In running the Programme, DH has actively involved the Education and Manpower Bureau and the Social Welfare Department (SWD) to ensure that the AHP fills a service gap which is otherwise not catered for in the current system. The Understanding of the Adolescent Project managed by SWD complements the AHP by providing more intensive services to students in need of in-depth counselling.

### **Way Forward**

16. DH aims at extending the AHP to all secondary schools eventually. In the longer term, we aim at incorporating the AHP into the school curriculum so that all students will benefit from the programme. In the meantime, we will continue to actively involve school staff in conducting the AHP.

17. Members are invited to note and comment on the AHP.

**Department of Health**  
**November 2003**

**Basic Life Skills Training****Form 1 Programme**

<b>Session</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Learning Objective</b>
1	Knowing Each Other	To know about the Basic Life Skills Training Programme and meet Adolescent Health Programme Facilitators
2	My Body	To learn about the physical changes during puberty and face these changes with a positive attitude
3	Self-Appreciation	To discover their own strengths and uniqueness and appreciate themselves
4	Goal-Setting	To know the importance of and skills in setting practicable goals
5	Learning	To know the importance of learning and skills in effective learning
6	Problem- Solving	To learn the steps and correct attitudes in solving problems effectively
7	Emotion (1)	To differentiate and handle various emotions
8	Emotion (2)	To learn appropriate ways of expressing and handling emotions
9	Dealing with Stress	To know the sources and ways of dealing with stress
10	Communication (1)	To learn the correct attitudes and acquire self-expression and listening skills in effective communication
11	Communication (2)	
12	Communication (3)	
13	Smart Choices	To know the harmful effects of smoking, drinking and substance abuse and acquire skills to refuse these substances
14	Review	To review the Basic Life Skills learned

## Form 2 Booster Programme

<b>Session</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Learning Objective</b>
1	Basic Self Care	To know the definition of health, skills in health maintenance and self-care of health problems
2	Active Listening	To learn the skills in listening effectively
3	Self-esteem Building	To learn to appreciate self from different perspectives and hence to improve self-esteem
4	Appreciation of Daily Life	To appreciate people around and learn to express it with appropriate actions to strengthen relationships
5	Personal Value Reflection	To reflect upon one's personal value system
6	Assertiveness Training	To know how to be assertive and express themselves appropriately
7	Anger Management	To learn appropriate ways to manage anger
8	Conflict Resolution	To learn ways to resolve conflicts and maintain harmonious relationships with family members

## Form 3 Booster Programme

<b>Session</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Learning Objective</b>
1	Mutual Support	To learn practical interpersonal skills to develop supportive and trusting relationships
2	Analytical Thinking	To know the importance of and skills in objective analysis in decision-making
3	Time Management	To value time and learn skills in efficient time management
4	Money Management	To value money and learn skills in handling money more appropriately
5	Coping with Adversity	To learn ways to face adversity and handle negative emotions appropriately
6	Complete Health	To consolidate the concept about health and encourage healthy living

**Topical Programmes**

*I. Parents/Teachers*

**1. Understanding Adolescents**

This programme aims at teaching parents and teachers about the social and psychological changes in adolescence and ways of communicating effectively with them.

**2. Emotion and Stress Management**

This programme aims at teaching parents and teachers the skills in handling emotion and stress.

**3. Suicide Prevention**

This programme aims at teaching parents and teachers about suicide in adolescents. It covers the reasons and the triggering factors behind suicidal behaviour. Myths about suicide are clarified. They are also taught how to prevent adolescent suicide and to recognize various pre-suicide “indicators” as well as ways to intervene.

**4. Substance Abuse Prevention**

This programme aims at teaching parents and teachers about the effects and consequences of substance abuse. Causes of adolescent substance abuse are highlighted and ways to prevent such behaviour are also introduced.

*II. Students*

**1. Nutrition Series**

This series covers various aspects of healthy eating. Students are taught basic concepts of balanced diet and weight management with clarification of myths about weight loss and dieting. They are also taught how to read food labels, choose healthy snacks and how to make healthy food choices in different types of eating outlets.

**2. Sex Education Series**

This series covers broad aspects of sex. Students are taught about pubertal changes, relationships with the opposite sex including how to differentiate between love and friendship. There is also discussion about intimate relationships, casual sex and its consequences with the introduction of the concept of safe sex. There is also teaching about contraception. This series also covers issues of sexual harassment and pornography.

**3. Reaching for the Goal Series**

This series teaches students the importance of and skills in goal-setting. They also practise to set goals for themselves.

#### **4. Learning to Learn Series**

This series teaches students various aspects of learning. They are taught the importance of learning and skills in setting their own learning goals. Various learning skills like memorization methods and ways to improve concentration are introduced. The need for having examination is also explained and examination skills as well as relaxation skills are taught.

#### **5. Harmonious Relationships Series**

This series covers basic concepts of communication followed by effective communication skills with parents, friends and lovers.

#### **6. Self-Image Series**

This series aims at empowering students to think independently to resist external influences and develop their own uniqueness.

#### **7. Substance Abuse Prevention Series**

This series teaches students about the harmful effects of smoking, drinking and substance abuse as well as the refusal skills.