



政府總部 禁毒處
香港金鐘道六十六號
金鐘道政府合署高座三十樓

NARCOTICS DIVISION
GOVERNMENT SECRETARIAT
QUEENSWAY GOVERNMENT OFFICES,
HIGH BLOCK, 30TH FLOOR,
66 QUEENSWAY,
HONG KONG

本處檔號 Our Ref. :NDJ/3/12/(09)pt2
來函檔號 Your Ref. :
傳真機 Fax: (852)-2810 1790/2521 7761
電話 Telephone : 2867 5220

31 December 2009

Clerk to the Panel on Security
Legislative Council Building
8 Jackson Road
Central
Hong Kong
(Attn: Mr Raymond LAM)

Dear Mr LAM,

Panel on Security
Meeting on 25 November 2009

At the above meeting, members requested the Administration to provide supplementary information comparing conducting drug testing during school and after school. The requested information is at the Annex for your reference.

Yours sincerely,

(David Wong)
for Secretary for Security

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**c.c. Secretary for Education
Director of Social Welfare
Director of Health
Director of Home Affairs**

**(Attn: Mr Steve Lee)
(Attn: Mr ML Fung)
(Attn: Dr Tina Mok)
(Attn: Mr Kesson Lee)**

Annex**Comparison between conducting drug testing during school and after school**

	Drug testing during school	Drug testing after school
Possible interference with students' learning and/or activities	<p><i>No interference with after-school activities</i></p> <p><i>Minimal interference with in-class learning</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - After receiving the list of selected students one day before the school visit, the school principal will schedule the testing time of each selected student in a way to minimize interference with the students' timetable (e.g. avoiding clash with laboratory lesson or quiz). Each test will take only around 15 minutes. 	<p><i>Interference with after-school activities</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Drug testing is randomized and unannounced before hand. It may affect students' pre-arranged after-school activities, thus creating inconvenience to them. <p><i>No interference with in-class learning</i></p>

	Drug testing during school	Drug testing after school
<p>Possible labeling effect</p>	<p><i>Minimal labeling as selected students</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It is not uncommon for students to be called out during class. School will notify selected students individually in conventional, appropriate ways. Arrangements are in place to avoid selected students to meet each other during testing. <p><i>Possible labeling as drug-abuser</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The SDT team will carry out drug testing properly and keep the whole process for each student (whether tested positive or not) in about 15 minutes. If appropriate, the identified student may return to class after immediate counseling. In case more time is required for counseling, this should be accommodated in the best interest of the students. 	<p><i>Possible labeling as selected students</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A group of selected students are informed to stay behind after school to undergo drug testing. Such information may not be contained among themselves during school hours. Other students may identify them as undergoing drug testing. The selected students may also identify one another during the testing process. <p><i>Possible labeling as drug-abuser</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - As most students are not in school, even if an identified student needs more time for on-the-spot counseling, other students should not notice it, thus reducing possible labeling on them. However, other selected students staying behind for drug testing might take possible notice.

	Drug testing during school	Drug testing after school
Confidentiality	<p><i>Better information protection of the drug testing dates</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Only the SDT team, Project Officer and school principal know the dates of drug testing before hand. Individual selected students may only know the conduct of drug testing after it started during class. Such an arrangement will better ensure that information will not be revealed to unconcerned parties. 	<p><i>Potential risk of revealing the drug testing dates to unconcerned parties</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Selected students will be informed in advance to stay after school. They may be tempted to spread the news thus causing gossip and unease. Unwanted media attention is resulted.
Student participation	<p><i>No disincentive to participation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Selected students are informed to undergo drug testing one-by-one and spontaneously at the scheduled testing time. - Testing is conducted during school hours as part of the school routine and has no interference with students' pre-arranged after school activities. Students would not be discouraged to undergo drug testing. 	<p><i>Less incentive to participate</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Selected students are informed during school hours to undergo drug testing. They may have less incentive to stay behind after school at the testing time. - Interference with students' pre-arranged activities may discourage students from participation and undergoing drug testing at the appointed time.

	Drug testing during school	Drug testing after school
School administrative support	<p><i>Easier and better administration</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It is easier to administer and conduct drug-test one-by-one during class. 	<p><i>Extra resources needed and extra workload to school personnel resulted</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Schools may need to provide extra resources (e.g. staff, classroom) to administer and monitor the group of selected students staying behind in school and may create extra workload to school personnel.
Drug testing logistics	<p><i>More flexible arrangements</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Selected students on the drug testing day do not know the testing until they are called. In case of any contingency, the SDT team may revise the testing arrangements on schedule (e.g. omitting a scheduled student) depending on the situation without troubling the students before they are called. 	<p><i>More rigid arrangements</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All selected students are informed to stay after school at the appointed time. In case of any contingency, the SDT team may not be able to revise the testing arrangements flexibly.

	Drug testing during school	Drug testing after school
Number of students tested	<p><i>Better utilization of time and more students to be tested in the Scheme</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The SDT team plans to go to two different schools to conduct drug testing everyday, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. This can only be done if drug testing is conducted during class. 	<p><i>Less students to be tested in the Scheme</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There is limited time for the SDT team to conduct drug testing after school. The number of students to be tested under the Scheme will be reduced significantly. - If group testing is done, there would be no confidentiality and it may be easier to mix up samples.
Tampering with samples	<p><i>More difficult to tamper with samples</i></p>	<p><i>Possible tampering with samples</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Selected students are informed during school hours to undergo drug testing after school. Students may have greater chance to tamper samples as time is available from the moment they are informed to the appointed drug testing time.
Social work intervention by the SDT team and the school social workers	<p><i>Less difficult for social workers to provide intervention/ arrange services during office hours</i></p>	<p><i>Difficulties for social workers to provide intervention/ arrange services after office hours</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - As the Scheme involves social workers (school social workers as well as social workers from the CCPSA) to provide immediate on-the-spot counseling to students who are tested positive, and discuss with other concerned parties to work out

	Drug testing during school	Drug testing after school
		<p>appropriate support programmes for them, there would be difficulties for the social workers to locate these concerned parties after office hours for necessary discussion and arrangements, especially if community resources e.g. urgent residential placement are required.</p>
Workload of school social workers	<p><i>No interference with existing duty</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Scheme involves school social workers to give immediate on-the-spot counseling to students and discuss with other concerned parties the appropriate support program for students. - School social workers are already in school for their existing daily duties. It does not require much additional after-school working hours for the Scheme. 	<p><i>Possible interference with existing counseling work</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It requires school social workers to stay behind after school to provide counseling, if any for selected students. It may clash with the counseling schedule that school social workers have pre-arranged with students for other purposes and further lengthen their working hours.