

POLICY

DRUGS IN SCHOOLS

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Target Audience: Staff, parents, students and the school community

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This document should be read in conjunction with:

- Management of Drug-Related Incidents in Schools guidelines
- Drug Education guidelines

1. POLICY

All NT Government schools must plan for, and implement appropriate responses to drug related incidents, with an emphasis on prevention through curriculum-based drug education. Schools are required to deliver drug education as part of a standard curriculum program using the principles outlined in the Drug Education guidelines and in accordance with the Health and Physical Education area of the Australian Curriculum.

The department will assist schools to implement ongoing, sustainable drug education programs and policies that aim to reduce the adverse health, social and economic effects of drug use; recognising that schools are well placed to provide young people with the skills and knowledge to make sound choices and decisions.

The department does not tolerate the possession or use of drugs in schools and applies a harm minimisation approach to the management of suspected drug-related incidents. The possession, use and distribution of illicit and licit drugs in government schools is regarded as a serious breach of discipline and may constitute grounds for suspension under [Section 91 of the Education Act](#).

Schools must be prepared for situations where students may be suspected of possession, supply or use of drugs and have procedures for managing the incident in accordance with relevant legislation and departmental policy and guidelines.

The Management of Drug Related Incidents in Schools guidelines provide clear direction for schools in developing and implementing policies and procedures for responding to these situations in a timely and effective manner.

For the purpose of this policy, the terms “drug” and “drug use” refers to all illicit and licit substances and suspected substance use, possession or supply.

Please refer to section 4. Definitions for more information.

2. BUSINESS NEED

Drug use by students is a concern for the department, parents, educators and the community because of the potential for harm. Harmful drug use is associated with an increased risk of poor educational, social and health outcomes.

Schools can play an important role in the prevention of drug use by providing supportive environments that strengthen student resilience and protective behaviours, a curriculum that engages students and is relevant to their needs, and by encouraging students to stay at school. It is important for schools to have strategies in place to manage drug-related incidents, and for parents and students to receive strong, consistent messages about drugs that encourage a proactive approach to minimise the risks associated with drugs and drug use.

Students need to be equipped with the skills and knowledge to keep them safe in a society where drug use occurs and, in some circumstances, is condoned and/or encouraged. Engaging students in drug education assists them to make safe and healthy choices, identify risks and develop strategies to prepare them for challenging situations.

This policy will ensure a clear and consistent approach to the management of drug related incidents and the delivery of drug education in schools.

3. SCOPE

The policy applies to:

- the possession, supply and/or use of licit (e.g. alcohol, tobacco) and illicit drugs (e.g. cannabis) on school premises by students in Northern Territory Government schools
- inappropriate use of prescribed or over the counter medications
- inappropriate use of inhalants or volatile substances
- the strategies schools should undertake to control, regulate and respond to drug use, possession and distribution/supply in the school context and prevent and/or minimise student uptake of harmful drug use through curriculum-based drug education.

The policy does not apply to:

- medical or pharmaceutical drugs sanctioned in writing for students with notified medical conditions of a chronic (constantly recurring) or severe (critical or dangerous) nature. This is addressed in the Administration of Medications to Students with Notified Medical Conditions policy
- the use and possession of medication for the treatment of short-term illnesses and infections with antibiotics, or drugs commonly used for pain relief such as paracetamol. The administration of these medications requires written parental consent and is the responsibility of the First Aid Officer in the school (refer to the department's Administration of Medications to Students with Notified Medical Conditions policy for further information)
- the suspension, expulsion and detention of students as a result of drug-related incidents whilst in school. Schools should develop their own drug policy that includes consequences and roles and responsibilities tailored to the school's context and in accordance with the Management of Drug-related Incidents in Schools guidelines. For

more information regarding suspensions, expulsion and detention please refer to the department's [website](#)

- the use and consumption of alcohol or tobacco by departmental staff on school premises (refer to the Alcohol Consumption on Departmental Premises and Smoke Free Premises policies).

4. DEFINITIONS

Drug

For the purpose of this policy, drugs include alcohol, tobacco, illicit drugs and any other substance that alters brain function, resulting in changes in mood, perception, consciousness, cognition and behaviour. In some cases, drugs can also include over-the-counter and prescribed medications (pharmaceuticals) that can induce a drug-like state.

Drug-related incident refers to situations where students are suspected of being under the influence of a drug, in possession of a drug, drug-use implement or substance suspected of being illicit or unsanctioned, or are presenting something as an illegal substance.

Illicit drug refers to a substance that the use, possession, cultivation or trafficking of is prohibited (illegal) by law. Illicit drug use occurs when drugs are used in an illegal manner e.g. cannabis, methamphetamine. This can also include using a drug for an improper purpose or using a product or substance that is not intended to be a drug in a way which produces a drug like state.

Licit drug refers to drugs that are able to be purchased legally e.g. alcohol, tobacco and caffeine. This can also include medication used to treat illness, over-the-counter drugs used as directed, and prescription medicines used by the intended person for the prescribed usage. When these drugs are used in a manner that is against the law e.g. alcohol purchased by or supplied to someone who is underage, they become unsanctioned. Students purchasing or supplying licit substances illegally (e.g. alcohol) can be issued with a fine by the police.

Harm minimisation involves a range of approaches to prevent and/or reduce drug-related harm and can include abstinence from drug use, prevention, early intervention, specialist treatment, supply control and safer drug use.

Parent signifies a child's father, mother or any other person who has parental responsibility for the child, including a person who is regarded as a parent of the child under Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander customary law or tradition.

Volatile substances are also known as inhalants or solvents and can include volatile solvents (petrol), aerosols, gases, glues and nitrites. These substances give off vapours and fumes at room temperature and contain psychoactive properties that can be potentially intoxicating when inhaled. Volatile substances carry significant risk and have the potential to cause cardiac sensitisation which can result in cardiac arrest or heart failure. Where a student is suspected of being under the influence of a volatile substance it is important that they are treated carefully and avoid sudden shock and/or over-exertion (e.g. physical activity such as running).

Youth Engagement Officer is a police officer designated to primary, middle and senior schools within their area of responsibility with particular focus on crime prevention and enhancing relationships between police and the community through positive interaction with youth.

5. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Principals are responsible for:

- ensuring that the school's policy reflects the department's policy and aligns with relevant legislation
- ensuring that all students and parents are aware of the policy and the consequences of possession, supply or use of drugs at school
- ensuring that all staff are familiar with the policy and procedures for managing drug related incidents
- establishing procedures for management of the situations where school staff have reported suspected drug related behaviours.

Teachers are responsible for:

- the delivery of drug education programs and curriculum that addresses the needs of the students.

School Counsellors (where applicable) are responsible for:

- supporting students who are at risk of harm related to the misuse of drugs
- working with the school to develop support plans for 'at risk' students
- where appropriate, initiating referrals to outside agencies.

All staff are responsible for:

- demonstrating positive role modelling to students and the school community
- informing the principal in circumstances where they reasonably suspect that a student may be involved in drug related behaviours
- reporting suspected abuse or neglect (that may be related to student drug use) via the appropriate channels.

Youth Engagement Officers are responsible for:

- operating in accordance with NT Police requirements
- conducting interviews on school premises in exceptional circumstances only.

6. RELATED POLICY, LEGISLATION AND DOCUMENTS

- Management of drug-related incidents in schools guidelines (**will be hyperlinked**)
 - Att A – Flowchart: Management of drug related incidents in schools
- Drug education guidelines (**will be hyperlinked**)
- [Administration of Medications to Students with Notified Medical Conditions policy](#)
- [Police in Schools policy and guidelines](#)
- [Misuse of Drugs Act](#)
- [Education Act](#)
- [Youth Justice Act](#)
- [Tobacco Control Act](#)
- [Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act](#)
- [Liquor Act](#)

