

Developing a Substance Misuse Policy

The following guidelines provide a checklist for formulating a school Substance Misuse Policy. Remember that schools vary, and face different issues and that this should be kept in mind when developing the policy.

Elements of a substance abuse policy

1. A statement of the schools attitude towards the use of illegal substances. The schools philosophy and it's substance abuse programme should be included. Include issues like the possession and illegal use of drugs, solvents, tobacco, alcohol and prescribed medicines.
2. Include a definition of where, when and to whom the policy applies. Consider issues like the limits of the school site, school trips, after hours at school, out of school but in uniform. Also consider who it applies to: learners, staff, support staff, etc.
3. Include a section on how parents and guardians will be involved. Provide opportunities for parents to comment on the policy, to be educated about substance abuse and how they will be involved when misuse is expected.
4. Include a statement of disciplinary sanctions that will be applied when the policy is breached. Consider issues of exclusion, possession for own use and supplying substances.
5. Liaison with the police and when the police will be called in to deal with incidents and in what situations.
6. Liaison with organisations like SANCA.
7. The attitude of the school to admitting learners who may have been excluded from another school after being involved in substance misuse.
8. The appointment of a key staff member who will be responsible for managing substance related instances.
9. Training of staff in managing substance abuse incidents.