



RUSTENBURG HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

SUBSTANCE ABUSE POLICY

Revised February 2009

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to make clear to the entire school community the position this school holds with regard to the use of nicotine, alcohol and other mood altering substances, and the consequences and procedures applicable to incidences involving these substances.

Opening Statement

Both the process and the consequences regarding incidences involving mood altering substances should be seen as an honest attempt to identify and assist learners in crisis at an early stage and not as a process of victimization. This policy aims to provide both opportunities for assisting those who genuinely want help, and the consequences for those who don't.

The cornerstones of this policy will therefore rest on:

- Prevention through information and awareness programmes
- Providing channels for students to seek help without fear of punishment
- Fair and considered disciplinary action
- Parental, staff and student involvement in the above

Our School doesn't have a Drug Problem

A common response initially. Few of us can say this with absolute certainty. One can only state that we are not aware of a drug problem in our school. No school can divorce itself from the rest of society and therefore, whether our school has a drug problem or not, our learners are at risk and need to be informed and educated.

Be aware that:

- We are part of a greater community in which mood altering substances are marketed, often
- We are part of a greater community in which mood altering substances are marketed, often with adolescents as the target market
- The realities of our society are such that it is likely that at some point most of our learners will have access and be pressured to experiment with mood altering substances
- A wide variety of addictive or habit forming substances, both legal and illegal, are available within our community
- Our learners, parents and staff are not always equipped with sufficient information
- Substance misuse at any level is detrimental in various ways (social, psychological, physical, cognitive/mental, etc), particularly for adolescents, and involves a loss of potential
- We have to stay relevant and adapt to changing times and circumstances
- We have to equip our learners with the necessary skills in order to deal with life and all its challenges and in so doing make them less vulnerable to substance misuse.

Prevention/Intervention

We undertake to do the following:

- Appoint a member or members of staff to co-ordinate all incidents relating to the misuse of mood altering substances and to organize staff, parent and learner prevention work
- Include issues relating to substance abuse as part of a life skills programme facilitated by trained school staff
- Offer staff and parents educational programmes relating to prevention, identification, intervention and general information
- Investigate situations where there is an overall change in the mode of a learner's behaviour i.e. a change in a pattern of behaviours (decrease in academic performance, changing dress, slang and friends, lack of interest in school activities, lack of interest in appearance, etc). Individual symptoms and rumours will not be considered as indicators of substance misuse. The school also acknowledges that the above behaviours could also be the result of factors besides substance abuse e.g. sexual abuse.
- Involve outside organizations with expertise in this field as part of a team approach, particularly for interventions, assessments and treatment. Parents/guardians may be asked to participate and contribute financially to these programmes.

School Rules relating to Substance Abuse

The school does not permit learners:

- The use of illegal substances
 - The inappropriate use or misuse of legal, prescribed and/or any other mood altering substances, including solvents
 - The inappropriate and unsupervised consumption of alcoholic beverages
 - The use of tobacco in any way or form
 - Possession of any of the above
 - The possession of drug related paraphernalia such as cigarette papers, pipes, etc.
 - To be under the influence of alcohol and/or other mood altering substances
 - To deal in drugs, i.e. selling, swapping, exchanging, supplying, distributing and trading
- *NOTE: If any learner is suspected of, or caught dealing in, illegal or legal drugs, the school will investigate and if necessary refer to the authorities.**

Where does the policy apply?

The policy applies to a learner when:

- In school uniform (on or off school grounds/ property)
- Participating in a school related activity (on or off the school grounds/property; in or out of school uniform)
- Anywhere where they may be associated by the public as a learner of the school

Disciplinary Process

This will include:

- Information gathering
- Parental involvement – both initially and for the duration of treatment
- Identifying the level of use/assessment, recognizing that levels of use for individuals can include experimentation, occasional use, frequent use and addiction; and that the response of the school will vary accordingly
- Discussion with relevant parties
- A disciplinary hearing

Testing and Searching

Random testing will NOT be undertaken and testing will NOT be used as the FIRST recourse to identifying substance misusers. However, with reasonable suspicion, and if other approaches fail and a learner remains unresponsive, testing may be conducted. Testing may also be used as part of treatment. In such cases the learner will be sent to a pathology lab for testing (urine or blood). A member of staff should not administer the test itself, nor should it take place on the school grounds.

Where the school reasonably suspects that a learner has a prohibited substance in their possession, then that student and her possessions may be searched. Should this be necessary, the search will take place in the presence of the learner, a second adult witness and someone of the learner's choice.

In both the above procedures, the school undertakes to make every reasonable endeavour to contact the parents/ guardians as soon as possible, but reserves the right to proceed should the parents/ guardians be unavailable.

Consequences

Each case of infringements on the above rules will be dealt with individually and all circumstances and all information will be taken into account e.g. an assessment by a trained professional. Distinction shall be made between dealers, suspects, level of use, those caught in possession or in the act, those admitting guilt and those requesting help. For these reasons the school may respond differently to similar offences.

If a learner turns to a counsellor or member of staff for help with regard to substance misuse or an addiction problem this will be treated as confidentially as possible and appropriate counselling and help will be sought in conjunction with the parents. This will not involve any form of disciplinary process but a contract as set out on the following page will be drawn up. This amnesty does not apply to a learner caught breaking the school rules as far as they relate to substance abuse.

The range of sanctions may include:

- A contract drawn up between the learner and the school, with parental consultation, outlining the support to be provided by the school and the actions required by the learner. This contract is to include the consequences for the learner if these actions are not carried out.
- Withdrawal of certain rights and privileges
- Prescribed appropriate community service
- The writing of an essay on an appropriate topic related to the offence
- Attendance of like skills programmes e.g. Cape Town Drug Counselling Centres
- Suspension in order that appropriate counselling may be received

The principal may, after due process and if the circumstances warrant, ask a learner to leave the school.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the Cape Town Drug Counselling Centre for their suggested policy which provided the basis for this one.

DECLARATION:

I declare that:

I have read Rustenburg Girls' High School's policy with regard to substance abuse/misuse and that I accept the consequences of any breach of this policy.

Signed at _____ on this

_____ day of _____ 2_____

Learner's Signature: _____

Parent/Guardian's Signature: _____