



KERALA STATE LEGAL SERVICES AUTHORITY

RECONNECTING YOUTH

Anti-Narcotics Campaign

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ABSTRACT

This initiative, rooted in Article 47 of the Indian Constitution, seeks to address the escalating challenge of drug abuse in Kerala, a state renowned for its social indicators but struggling with its rising substance abuse. Highlighting the alarming surge in psychotropic drug seizures, particularly among youth, the program, under the guidance of the Kerala State Legal Services Authority (KeLSA), aims to raise awareness, prevent drug abuse, and provide comprehensive treatment and rehabilitation. Operating at school and community levels, the initiative's multifaceted approach involves awareness classes, anti-drug oaths, peer vigilance cells, counselling, and collaboration with youth organizations. The role of KeLSA in coordinating various departments and executing preventive education, media campaigns, workshops, and interactions further enhances the program's impact. The comprehensive annual action plan underscores the urgency of addressing this issue to safeguard the future of the younger generation and create a resilient defence against the harmful effects of drugs.

List of Abbreviations

ABBREVIATIONS	FULL FORM
KeLSA :	Kerala State Legal Services Authority
Art. :	Article
MDMA :	Methylenedioxyamphetamine
LSD :	Lysergic acid diethylamide
CBSE :	Central Board of Secondary Education
ICSE :	Indian Certificate of Secondary Education.
NCC :	National Cadet Corps.
NSS :	National Service Scheme
NGO :	Non-Governmental Organisation
PLP :	

INTRODUCTION

“Duty of the State to raise the level of nutrition and the standard of living and to improve public health: The State shall regard the raising of the level of nutrition and the standard of living of its people and the improvement of public health as among its primary duties and, in particular, the State shall endeavour to bring about prohibition of the consumption except for medicinal purposes of intoxicating drinks and of drugs which are injurious to health.”

-Art. 47, Constitution of India

Article 47 of the Constitution emphasizes the State's responsibility to improve public health and living standards, and to combat the consumption of intoxicating substances that are harmful to health. This duty underscores the importance of addressing the growing drug abuse problem in India. Kerala, known for its high literacy rate and social indicators, has also been grappling with this challenge of drug abuse among its population.

In 2022, Kerala experienced a concerning surge in psychotropic drug seizures, including MDMA, methamphetamine, LSD, and cocaine. Enforcement agencies confiscated around 7775.425 gms of MDMA. The situation is exacerbated by an alarming rise in child involvement in drug addiction, with drug gangs exploiting them for distribution. A recent Kerala police survey revealed that 40% of drug users under 21 were below 18. Shockingly, over 1050 schools had student addicts, highlighting a pervasive crisis of substance abuse among adolescents. A January 2023 Excise Department survey found that 80% of teen drug use involved cannabis (ganja). However, experimentation with more dangerous substances, like glue, petrol, eraser fluid, and aerosols is also escalating.

The main sources of these drugs for students are the medical shops, bakeries, fancy stores, and street vendors near schools who are looking to make more profit. Students are also accessing drugs on the dark net. In 2002, the Excise Department identified 250 vulnerable schools susceptible to drug peddling, with peddlers attempting to lure students away from school premises and hours. They

know that there is strict monitoring inside the schools, but once on the street, on their way back home, the students are vulnerable to being approached.

Exacerbating this issue, the law enforcement agency is having lack of personnel and equipments. A notable challenge confronting the agency is the deficiency in both manpower and resources.

Notably, quantities as small as 10 grams of MDMA and 50 grams of methamphetamine are considered commercial quantities, while 0.5 grams of MDMA constitutes an intermediate amount. Consequently, the distribution of even a minute quantity of these drugs poses a significant threat to society. Paradoxically, due to their small size, traffickers find it convenient to conceal and transport these substances, unlike alcoholic beverages, which can be easily detected by smell or taste. Ensuring the proper identification of narcotic substances necessitates the availability of reliable detection kits. Regrettably, the enforcement agency's inadequate supply of these kits constitutes a major obstacle, further impeding thorough investigations. Consequently, a substantial volume of narcotics is entering the state with minimal hindrance. In light of this situation, an effective solution involves raising awareness, particularly among children and young adults, about the perils of drug abuse.

Objectives

The central aim of this initiative is to prioritize preventative education, raise awareness, facilitate identification, provide counselling, and ensure comprehensive treatment and rehabilitation. Initial emphasis will be placed on fostering awareness and enlightening students about the detrimental repercussions of drug use on individuals, families, workplaces, and the broader societal fabric.

Awareness Programmes

In the on-going battle against drug abuse and its detrimental effects on individuals, children, families, and society, an imperative initiative has been set forth to implement comprehensive awareness programmes at various levels. The first step in that regard has to begin at schools and villages.

School Level Awareness Programmes

Recognising the need for a concerted effort to equip the younger generation with knowledge and tools to combat the scourge of drugs, programmes at school levels have to be conducted with the aim to infiltrate various types of schools across the state, including government, aided, unaided, CBSE, and ICSE institutions. This multi-faceted strategy has to be done at various levels:

1. Introduction of Awareness Classes and Programs from Class 5

The first step of awareness involves the meticulous designing of awareness classes and programs for students, starting from Class 5. These sessions have to be led by trained and adept faculties, with the objective to illuminate the intricacies of the perils associated with drug usage. Here, students are educated about the profound impact of drugs on their personal well-being, their families, and the broader society.

2. Administration of Anti-drug Oath

The next stage and one of the program's cornerstones involves administering an anti-drug oath to all students. This solemn pledge underscores the collective responsibility of the students to prevent and combat drug abuse, fostering a sense of commitment towards a drug-free environment.

3. Establishment of Peer Group Vigilance Cells

Another vital aspect of this initiative is the establishment of Peer Group Vigilance Cells in every classroom, which would comprise of select students, guided by a teacher. These cells will serve as vigilant eyes and ears within the student community, identifying and reporting any vulnerable

cases. It is essential that these vigilance cells have an active collaboration with established youth organizations, such as Students Police Cadet, NCC, and NSS, which would act as crucial conduits for intervention and support.

4. Nodal Teachers

Nodal teachers play a pivotal role in orchestrating the efficacy of the Peer Group Vigilance Cells and other associated activities. These designated educators assume the responsibility of overseeing the awareness program's execution and related matters. Regular monitoring ensures the program's continuity and adaptability to the evolving challenges of drug abuse.

5. Compassionate Counselling

To address the needs of those found vulnerable, a comprehensive counseling framework is established. Special attention is dedicated to students from single-parent households or those with addicted parents. Timely and compassionate counselling is extended to these students, and even their parents, if required. This proactive approach aims to prevent drug abuse by addressing its potential root causes.

6. Public Helpline Number and Complaint Boxes

A proactive approach to reporting and immediate action is facilitated by a public helpline number, connecting individuals to the Kerala State Legal Services Authority (KeLSA). A complaint box, stationed within each school, further encourages the reporting of drug-related concerns, fostering a safe and open environment for communication.

7. Publication of handbooks

A handbook is disseminated among students, outlining the various dangerous drugs, their physiological impacts, and the legal consequences of drug-related offenses.

8. Other Activities

Harnessing the power of culture and media, the program integrates regular cultural programs, short films, and advertisements that serve to sensitize the community at large to the gravity of the drug menace.

At Panchayat/Municipality Level

Moving beyond school boundaries, the program should also extend its reach to the grassroot level, i.e., in Panchayats and Municipalities:

1. Anti-Drug Committees: Anti-Drug Committees are established at the ward level, headed by dedicated Ward Counsellors.
2. Youth Vigilance Clubs: Youth Vigilance Clubs are formed in collaboration with local public libraries, arts and sports clubs, and NGOs.
3. Anti-Drugs Campaigns and Surveys: Anti-Drug Campaigns shall be done in each Ward. A Survey in each Ward shall be conducted with the aid of PLPs to identify vulnerable persons and families.

Role of KeLSA

The role of KeLSA involves overseeing and coordinating with various departments, such as social justice, police, and excise, to effectively execute the program. The role of KeLSA would be as follows:

1. Collaborating with multiple departments for preventive education, treatment, and rehabilitation.
2. Continuation of the School level programs to the University level
3. Preventive education and awareness generation through media publicity.
4. Implementing well-targeted media campaigns to spread the message against the effect of drug abuse through social, electronic, print, digital and online media.
5. Workshops, Seminars and Interactions with parents

Annual Action Plan

This comprehensive and multi-tiered initiative represents a determined and strategic effort to curb the rising tide of drug abuse. By instilling awareness, fostering peer support, and promoting community involvement, this program endeavours to create a resilient and united front against the insidious influence of drugs at both the school and village levels.

To achieve and implement these objectives, an annual action plan has to be devised. The program addresses the significant issue of drug abuse and related disorders among children and youth, which, in turn, negatively impact their academic, social, psychological, economic, and physical development. Hence, timely intervention, through a dedicated action plan, is essential to safeguard the younger generation from falling victims to substance abuse. Therefore, the programme should be implemented as early as possible.

CONCLUSION

The alarming surge in the seizure of psychotropic drugs, especially among the youth, underscores the urgent need for comprehensive and proactive measures. The pervasive problem of drug abuse, particularly prevalent among adolescents, has been worsened by the involvement of vulnerable children in both addiction and distribution. The prevalence of drug abuse in Kerala can be attributed to various factors, including:

- a. **Geographical Vulnerability:** Kerala's strategic coastal location renders it susceptible to drug trafficking and smuggling from foreign sources.
- b. **Youth Demographics:** With a significant young population, the susceptibility to peer pressure and experimentation contributes to the risk of drug abuse.
- c. **Socio-Economic Dynamics:** Socio-economic disparities, unemployment, and limited opportunities can push individuals towards drug abuse as a coping mechanism.
- d. **Educational Stress:** Intense academic competition and pressure may lead students to turn to drugs as a means of escape from stress.
- e. **Tourism and Nightlife Influence:** The booming tourism industry and nightlife in certain areas have spurred an increased demand for drugs, fostering an environment conducive to abuse.
- f. **Awareness Deficit:** Inadequate awareness regarding the risks of drug abuse, coupled with limited access to rehabilitation and treatment services, adds to the problem.

Addressing drug abuse in Kerala necessitates a concerted effort from governmental bodies, civil society organizations, educational institutions, and the broader community. By adopting a comprehensive approach that encompasses prevention, enforcement, treatment, and awareness, the state can make significant strides towards reducing the prevalence of drug abuse and its associated harms. With this in mind, the Kerala State Legal Services Authority (KeLSA) has formulated a comprehensive action plan to address this issue, emphasizing the following components:

Prevention and Awareness: Effective and targeted awareness campaigns must be conducted within schools, colleges, and communities to educate individuals about the perils of drug abuse and its consequences.

- i. **School-Centric Initiatives:** Introduction of preventive education programs within educational institutions can empower students with essential life skills and coping mechanisms to resist drug abuse.
- ii. **Rehabilitation and Treatment Facilities:** The establishment and promotion of rehabilitation centers and treatment facilities, providing comprehensive medical, psychological, and social support, are crucial for aiding addiction recovery.
- iii. **Community Involvement:** Collaborating with local communities, religious institutions, and non-governmental organizations in anti-drug initiatives can establish a robust support network for prevention and intervention.
- iv. **Data-Driven Strategies:** Continuous monitoring, research, and data collection regarding drug abuse trends should inform evidence-based policies and interventions.

The proposed initiative offers a comprehensive approach that spans various tiers of society, ranging from educational institutions to local communities. The engagement of KeLSA, in coordination with diverse departments and media platforms, will amplify the outreach and effectiveness of preventive education. In the face of this critical challenge, the initiative symbolizes a beacon of hope, driven by the collective commitment to fulfil the State's duty in safeguarding the well-being and future of its citizens. Through addressing the fundamental causes of drug abuse, promoting awareness, and extending support, Kerala can pave a path towards a healthier, safer, and more promising future for both its youth and the entire society.