



本署檔號 Our Ref.: () in DH ACA/101/1/1 (2011-2014)
來函檔號 Your Ref.:
電話 Tel.: (852) 3143 7228
圖文傳真 Fax: (852) 2337 0897

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Dear Principal,

**Life skills-based education on HIV/AIDS and sex
at junior level of secondary schools**

In response to the growing number of sexually transmitted Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) cases involving young people, the Hong Kong Advisory Council on AIDS (ACA) has set a target for having more than 50% of students to have acquired the necessary personal skills for HIV prevention at or before the age of 15. To achieve the aim, a task force was therefore set up under ACA, and the *Survey on HIV/AIDS and sex education at junior secondary level in Hong Kong*, which was territory wide, was also conducted by the government in early 2013. Situation of life skills-based education (LSBE) at junior secondary level, which is the teaching mode recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO) for HIV/AIDS and sex education for strengthening personal skills against HIV infection, was the main focus of the survey.

With the participation of 360 secondary schools, the survey was completed in April 2013. **Annex I** is a fact sheet summarizing the results. In summary, a majority of schools (72% out of the 134 schools that completed the full questionnaire) reported provision of LSBE on HIV/AIDS and sex at junior secondary levels, often through external parties such as non-governmental organizations (NGO). A number of factors were found to be effective ways to improve the implementation of LSBE in school. These include presence of a health-related school policy, effective teaching and learning resources, adequate teachers' training, classroom assessment and integrating HIV/AIDS education into LSBE of other cross-cutting issues, such as drug abuse. Details on the content of LSBE and the skills acquired by the students, however, were not captured by this questionnaire survey.

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aspire to be an internationally renowned public health authority***

Infection with HIV can weaken a person's immunity, causing the development of AIDS (Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome) in late stage and even death. In Hong Kong, more than 10% annual rise of newly infected cases, mostly transmitted through sexual contact, was recorded in past two years, a rising trend seldom seen in other infectious diseases today. Besides, according to Youth Sexuality Study 2011 conducted by the Family Planning Association of Hong Kong (FPAHK) on Form 3 to Form 7 students, 9.8% of male and 7.4% female interviewees reported having sexual experience. However, less than 40% of them used condoms as the primary means to protect themselves, reflecting their insufficient self-protection awareness. The ACA therefore recommended to strengthen HIV/AIDS education in junior secondary levels, ensuring students acquire sufficient knowledge and skills to protect themselves.

Scientific research has provided evidence that LSBE is effective in reducing high risk sexual or delinquent activity causing pregnancy or sexually transmitted infections, and not hastening sexual debut. It is therefore recommended by international agencies including WHO and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization as a means of HIV and sex education in schools. LSBE on HIV/AIDS has clear health goals and cover skills on decision-making, creative and critical thinking, self-awareness, communication and interpersonal relations, coping skills and practical skills of using condoms, through participatory approach made appropriate to gender, culture and development of students.

In view of the survey results, the ACA has made certain recommendations to the government, which include raising schools and public awareness about LSBE on HIV/AIDS, strengthening teachers' training, involving more community organizations to provide relevant education, and providing efficient teaching and learning resources to secondary schools.

In response to the ACA's recommendation as stated above, the EDB and DH have carried out a series of follow up actions. To enhance the understanding on this survey of relevant stakeholders and to encourage schools to implement LSBE on HIV/AIDS, **a half-day multi-sectoral seminar** on the topic of learning and teaching strategy for preventing sexually transmitted diseases and AIDS will be organized by EDB in the **afternoon on 5 March 2014**. Speakers include representatives from the DH and NGO, and the target audience include **primary and secondary school principals, social workers and teachers**. We hope that schools and teachers' understanding on LSBE HIV/AIDS can be deepened through discussion during the seminar. Application can be made through the EDB Teacher Training Calendar System in due course.

Besides, the Department of Health has also set up a “Red Ribbon in Action - AIDS Education Funding Scheme” for schools application. The coming deadline is 30 April 2014. Interested parties may make reference to the information enclosed, or visit our website <http://www.rrc.gov.hk/english/action.htm> for details.

You may also make reference to **Annex II** for various on-line teaching and learning resources, and the list of organizations that had provided relevant education in secondary schools, as found from the survey.

For the key components, teaching approaches and critical success factors of LSBE on HIV/AIDS and sex, you may visit <http://www.rrc.gov.hk/english/index.htm> for more details. We sincerely hope that you will incorporate suitable elements into LSBE on HIV/AIDS in your school.

We are looking forward to working with all secondary school colleagues to further promote sexual and reproductive health among our younger generation! Please feel free to contact Dr SHU Bo-yee at 3143 7228 if you have any comments or questions.

Yours faithfully,



(Dr SHU Bo-yee)
for Director of Health

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Annex I - Fact sheet on Survey of Life Skills-based Education on HIV/AIDS at Junior level of Secondary School in Hong Kong.

Annex II - List of teaching and learning resources and non-governmental organizations that provided LSBE