

## SECONDARY

### DRUGS PROBLEMS

#### ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

#### SCHOOL - ILLICIT DRUGS CASES - STUDENTS AND STAFF

(12.07.2022)

(No. B/795) **Dr. M. Gungapersad** (Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology whether, in regard to abuse of illicit drugs involving school students and staff, she will state the number of cases thereof registered since January 2015 within and outside school premises, respectively.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, as per established protocol in schools, drug related cases are categorized as criminal offences and are reported to the police. I am informed that since January 2015 to date, the number of reported cases involving students in relation to abuse of illicit drugs within school premises is 81 and the number outside school premises is 182. As regard cases involving staff over the past seven years, I am informed that there are six such cases, all outside school premises; four teachers, two in 2017, one in 2020, one in 2021 and two non-teaching staffs; one in 2020 and one in 2021.

**Dr. Gungapersad:** Will the hon. Minister inform the House whether any survey or study has been carried out to identify if there is any specific educational zone or region or school where the prevalence of drug abuse is more acute than elsewhere so that additional support could be given to rectors and educators dealing with those students or staff involved in drug abuse and if yes, to table same?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, no such survey has been carried out. However, the Ministry has a programme and has got all our schools and staff informed. Presently, there is an awareness programme being carried out. We are working with different institutions; La Brigade pour la protection de la famille, the CDU and other institutions, along with the National Education Counselling Services, Psychologists of the Ministry. We are working with the Heads of Schools and the staff so as to raise awareness about such cases and helping them to identify students showing certain signs of distress or of showing signs of addiction.

**Dr. Gungapersad:** Will the Minister inform the House what rehabilitation measures have been taken so far and to state the number of addicted students and staff who have benefitted from rehabilitation services and support from educational psychologists, working in the Ministry of Education up till now?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the Ministry of Education offers support to the students in the schools. We don't have rehabilitation services. However, our educational psychologists work with the parents, with the teachers, with the students and try to give them the right support. We follow the students, we give them support, we try to build up their self-esteem, we try to give them coping skills and we try to help them to develop their strength and to be aware of their strength and weaknesses but we do not have proper rehabilitation services as such. It's just an accompaniment and we help students with their school work but the students showing these problems are referred to the Ministry of Health and parents are encouraged to carry on the follow up with the Ministry of Health.

**Dr. Gungapersad:** Will the Minister inform the House whether an appraisal of the work done by Drug Use Prevention Rebound Programme for which Rs4 m. are voted annually has been done or should we review or revamp our drug use prevention inside and outside schools?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, for years now, we have been working with different institutions trying to bring information and trying to give students the support required. However, for the past two years, Mauritius has been working with the United Nations Office for Crime and Drugs and we have come up with a special programme in the curriculum and we have worked it out along with the MIE and today, we have a programme in schools, the 'getconnected programme,' targeting students of grade 8 trying to help them to build resilience and to be able to say no to drugs. Over and above this, in this present Budget, we have got funds available for coming up with a programme known as 'Rebound' which will be targeting students of Grade 10 onwards.