CONSULTATIONS ON DRAFT NATIONAL POLICY ON ALCOHOL

A series of consultations on the draft National Policy on Alcohol, will be held commencing in October 2014. This process will be spearheaded by the Drug Control Secretariat, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Social Security. The objectives of the consultations are:

i. To facilitate discussion among stakeholders on the draft alcohol Policy.

ii. To input comments received into the draft Policy.

Meanwhile, members of the public who may be unable to attend the consultations would be invited to submit comments on the draft Policy to the Drug Control Secretariat. In addition, a several presentations on the draft Policy would be made to community-based organizations, schools, churches and interested groups.

The purpose of the Policy is to reduce the burden of harms related to alcohol in Grenada and the resulting impact on the individual, families, and communities. The National Policy on Alcohol is intended to promote the health and safety of the general public, through the following objectives:

i. To reduce the incidence of alcohol consumption;

ii. To reduce the prevalence of alcohol consumption;

iii. To reduce access to and availability of alcoholic beverages among minors;

iv. To reduce alcohol-related morbidity and mortality, and

v. To increase awareness of the adverse health outcomes of alcohol use.

While the policy applies to all populations, vulnerable populations are considered explicitly through this policy. These include: pregnant women, children under the age of 18 years, and persons who drink excessively.

The expected outcomes of the Policy are:

i. Delayed age of initiation.

ii. Reduced alcohol-related morbidity and mortality.

iii. Reduced per capita alcohol consumption.

iv. Increased collaboration to address alcohol-related health harms.

Alcohol consumption in Grenada is a growing national concern. Approximately 6% of males and 1% of females suffer from alcohol use disorders. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), Grenada’s total adult per capita consumption of alcohol (defined as the per capita amount of alcohol consumed in liters of pure alcohol among individuals 15 years of age or older) is 10.35 liters annually, compared to an average of 6.15 liters worldwide and 8.67 in the Americas. As a regional comparison, adult per capita consumption is 6.28 liters in Trinidad and Tobago and 5.44 liters in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) will fund the consultations. It is expected that the final document will be ready for review by Cabinet in early 2015.
The formulation of a National Policy on Alcohol, will provide the Government of Grenada with the necessary framework, to address the growing problem of alcohol consumption. According to the results of the Third Secondary Schools’ Drug Prevalence Survey, 2013, in Grenada, alcoholic beverages were the most prevalent substances used by secondary students. Seventy-two percent of secondary students reported having at least one alcoholic beverage in their lifetime and 35% have consumed alcohol in the 30 days prior to the survey. These numbers are alarming, and every effort must be made to stem this situation, which, can contribute to alcohol-related morbidity and mortality.

The draft National Policy on Alcohol, addresses two fundamental matters. It seeks to:

- Regulate physical availability of alcohol through restrictions on time, place, and density of alcohol outlets.
- Regulate alcohol advertising and other marketing of alcohol.

Several measures will be measures implemented in these two area in 2015, regarding the sale, distribution and consumption of alcohol. As indicated in various fora, the consumption of alcohol in Grenada is too high. As a nation, we must address this problem, and seek to reduce consumption.

Inmates at Her Majesty’s Prisons, Grenada, have completed the drug prevention component of a comprehensive education program. The program targeted inmates with a high rate of recidivism, and provided them with appropriate knowledge and social skills which they can use to resist drugs and associated negative forms of behaviours. Statistics indicated that 470 persons, comprising of 442 males and 28 females were sentenced to Prisons for drug-related offences between 2006 and 2012.

Issues covered in the program included: Consequences of drug use, Linkages between drug use and sexually-transmitted infections, Peer Pressure, Stress Management and Decision Making Skills. The sessions were conducted by the Drug Control Secretariat, and Counselors from Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development. Similar programmes will be repeated in 2015.

PROCCER is a program for the development and institutionalization of training and certification mechanisms for drug prevention and treatment personnel. The main objective is to improve the quality of services in drug prevention programs and treatment facilities through training, technical assistance and the application of technology. The prevention component of PROCCER will commence later in 2014, while the treatment component will begin in 2015. Professionals involved in the areas of drug demand reduction, and treatment and rehabilitation will benefit from the training, which is funded by the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD).
Decrease In Prevalence Of Marijuana Use Among Students

The prevalence of marijuana use among secondary schools students in Grenada has declined. This decline was recorded in the findings of the 2013 Secondary Schools Drug Prevalence Survey, when compared with the results of similar surveys in 2003 and 2005. Overall, the trend in marijuana use decreased in all time periods in 2013 when compared to 2005 (Figure 1). The lifetime prevalence decreased by 7.8%, past year 2.8% and current 1.6%.

In a comparison of marijuana use by gender, males increased their prevalence of marijuana use in 2013 and females reduced their prevalence (Figure 2). Males’ prevalence increased by 8.2% and females decreased by 6.8%. There was little difference in the current use of marijuana.

Overall, 2nd and 4th Form students reduced their use of marijuana in 2013. Second formers reduced marijuana use by 4.4% and 4th formers by 7.4% (Figure 3). Interesting, 2005 is characterized by an increase in marijuana use in 4th Form.

This increase coincides with Hurricane Ivan, which devastated Grenada in 2004. The current use of marijuana remained approximately the same.
IN THE NEWS

Economic Study On Drugs

Grenada has embarked on a second study on the economic costs of drugs. This study, which would be an expansion of a similar study done in 2009, seeks to determine the costs to the Government for the provision of care to persons who encountered problems associated with drug use. Areas of focus for the study are: Costs due to law enforcement and crime (Law Enforcement and Incarceration); and Health Costs (Treatment and Rehabilitation). Findings of the study should be available the end of 2014. The Drug Control Secretariat and St. George’s University, are conducting the study.

Increase in Taxes On Alcohol and Tobacco

Government has passed legislation to impose a 10% tax increase on alcohol and cigarettes. Parliament amended the Excise Tax Order (No. 2), 2014, which will increase prices of Beers, Stout, Wines, Spirits, Brandy, Rum. Cigarettes or High End Tobacco that attracted Excise Tax of 95%, increased to 105%; and reconstituted tobacco moved from 25% to 35%. According to Honourable Gregory Minister Bowen, who piloted the Bill in the House of Representatives, said the 10% increase in taxes on alcohol and cigarettes is aimed at closing the fiscal gap and at the same time curb certain illegal and immoral activities in the country.

Funds For PROCCER

St. George’s University (SGU), has received funds from the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD), to evaluate the implementation of the Caribbean Prevention and Treatment Training and Certification Program (PROCCER). Presentation of the funds was done by Ambassador Terence Craig, OAS Representative, Grenada, to Professor Omawale Amuleru-Marshall of SGU, on 26 June 2014. Professor Amuleru-Marshall would be responsible for the evaluation exercises, which would examine inter alia the delivery of the training by the Trainers. PROCCER is a program for the training and certification mechanisms for drug prevention and treatment personnel.

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Ambassador Terence Craig (right)
Prepares Cheque To Professor Omawale Amuleru-Marshall,
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