

71% of Parents Support the School Drug Testing Trial

A survey released by the Bauhinia Foundation Research Centre today (17 September 2009) showed that more than 70 percent of parents supported the Government's trial scheme on school drug testing.

To understand parents' views on the trial scheme, a telephone survey was conducted between August 26 and September 5. Target respondents are parents and guardians of students studying in secondary schools or programmes leading to qualification equivalent to secondary education.

71% of the respondents said they supported the school drug testing trial scheme, and only 9.9% said they did not. When asked whether they supported the idea of seeking parents' consent before a student receives a test, 70.7% of the respondents answered "yes". 61.9% of the respondents said consent of students has to be sought in advance.

41% of the respondents said that they had discussed the school drug testing trial scheme with their children. About 50% of the respondents said their children supported the scheme; only 7.4% of the respondents said their children did not support the scheme.

Chairman of the Centre, Mr Anthony Ting Yuk Wu said, "The survey shows that most parents are in support of the school drug testing trial scheme. It is also clear that there is strong support for the idea of seeking both parents' and students' consent for the drug test."

He added, "But we also find that only 36.1% of parents surveyed understand the scheme. What is needed is more communication with parents, students and relevant stakeholders to facilitate better understanding of the scheme, including its objectives, execution and supporting services."

Moreover, 68.2% of the respondents believed that the school drug testing trial scheme would be effective in preventing secondary school students from taking drugs. 71.1% of the respondents said the scheme is effective in promoting anti-drug messages among secondary school students.

In addition, about 90% and 80% of the respondents answered respectively that parents and students should know students' drug test results. About 60 to 70% of the respondents said that school social workers, school principals, class teachers and teachers responsible for student counseling should know the test results. About 40% of the respondents said police liaison officers at schools should know the test results, and two-thirds of the respondents (66.9%) agreed that the police should question students with positive drug test results about the drug sources. More than half of the respondents (56.5%) were worried that students who had taken drugs would try to manipulate the drug test results through different means.

On the topic of personal information, 38.8% of the respondents were confident that students' drug test results would not be made known to those who were not supposed to know the results, and about one-third (34.6%) were not. 75.4% of the respondents take the view that the personal records of the drug test results should be destroyed after completing all the necessary procedures.

Mr Wu added, "Most parents agree that the school drug testing trial scheme is effective in drug prevention and promotion of anti-drug messages among secondary school students. In view of the concern over students' personal information, there is a need to explain to parents why and how the data will be collected. They should also be assured of the measures that will be in place to protect personal data."

A total of 719 respondents were successfully interviewed. The margins of error were estimated to be $\pm 3.5\%$ at 95% confidence level.