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Department of Social Work
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**Tung Wah Group of Hospitals
Community Services Division**

Engagement of Parents in Anti-drug Work

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Engagement of Parents in Anti-drug Work

Executive Summary

1 Introduction

This study was launched to develop an evidenced-based parent education program to enhance the engagement of Chinese parents with adolescent children in anti-drug work. In Phases I and II of the study, large-scale parent surveys and focus group discussions were used to explore the factors that motivate or discourage parents' participation in drug-prevention programs in Hong Kong. In Phase III, a three-level parent education group program equipping Hong Kong Chinese parents with the necessary knowledge and skills in drug prevention was developed. Its effectiveness was evaluated through randomized control-trial studies.

2 Assessment of Hong Kong parents' involvement in anti-drug programs

2.1 **Phase I: Large-scale parent surveys.** The surveys tried to assess parents' participation in and awareness of anti-drug programs, and factors that motivate or discourage their participation. Data was collected via self-administered questionnaires from 5612 parents (Parents) from 14 primary schools and 21 secondary schools selected through random sampling. In addition, 100 parents with drug-taking history (DrugP) were individually interviewed using the same questionnaire with additional items on their drug-taking attitude and habits.

2.2 **Phase II: Focus group discussions.** 39 parents with or without drug-taking history and professionals involved with drug prevention or rehabilitation work participated in focus group discussions to share their views and experience regarding how best to design an effective drug-abuse prevention program for parents. The questions for the focus groups included: perceived factors that motivate or discourage parents' participation in drug-abuse prevention programs, past experiences regarding such programs, perceived parents' preferences and role in adolescents' drug abuse prevention, types of activities that would attract parents' attention and increase program participation, and the do's and don'ts during intervention.

2.3 **Results:** Using SPSS 16.0 for Windows, the quantitative data was analyzed mainly by MANOVA, t-test and logistics regression. Phase I survey results indicated that compared to Parents, DrugP showed higher level of awareness and participation in local drug-prevention program. The average level of awareness was reported to be 27.2% and participation rate was only 2.5% among all parents. Parents in general considered the followings to be factors that discouraged their participation: insufficient publicity, lack of awareness to their child's

problem, limited confidence and skills in child management, and problems with program logistics. For motivational factors, parents perceived increased program publicity, appropriate logistic arrangements, support from others, emergence of child's behavioral problems and having a child with younger age to be essential to their participation. Parents with primary and secondary school children were generally comparable in demographic patterns. Parents with older children tended to report more child behavior problems and lower parental self-efficacy.

In Phase II, focus group participants suggested the followings to be essential elements in drug-abuse prevention programs for parents: sufficient and relevant content coverage matching the diverse needs of parents, interactive format of presentation, clearly themed sessions to facilitate immediate gains by the parents, provision of incentives and the adoption of appropriate logistics (free of charge, use of appealing promotional strategies, easy to access venues and convenient application method).

3 Development and evaluation of education program to enhance parents' knowledge and skills in anti-drug work

3.1 Phase III: Program development, implementation and evaluation.

Theory and goal-driven drug-abuse prevention group programs were tailor-made for primary, secondary and tertiary prevention purposes for three types of parents respectively: general parents (GenP), parents of at-risk youths (RiskP) who reported that their focal child had more than one behavior problems in the past 12 months, and parents with drug-using history (DrugP). A total of 140 education sessions were conducted through 44 groups for 621 parents. The effectiveness of the drug-prevention programs for these parents was evaluated using randomized-control trial study on experimental and control groups for the GenP and RiskP. A total of 437 parents finished their respective programs and completed evaluation questionnaires before and after the intervention. 27 workers from the 24 collaborative units which hosted the GenP and RiskP groups also gave feedback after the project regarding their perceived effectiveness of the program and their interest in further participation in the program.

3.2 Results: 64% of GenP, 79% of RiskP and 58% of DrugP finished over 75% of their respective group programs. More individualized approach was needed for the DrugP. Participants who completed the intervention generally reported lower parenting stress, increased drug knowledge and attitude, improved sense of self-efficacy, improved parent-child relationship and improved sense of parental competency. They also gave very high ratings on perceived program effectiveness at post-intervention. Regarding collaborative units' feedback, all the responding staff showed great satisfaction with the performance of the

instructors and said that the program should be continued. Workers from 22 units showed interest to further collaborate in this program in the future.

4 Discussion and Recommendations

This project adopted very rigorous quantitative and qualitative methods which yielded important information on why Hong Kong Chinese parents have limited exposure to anti-drug programs, how to effectively engage them, and how to help different types of parents to benefit from tailor-made anti-drug abuse parent education group programs. The project has proposed policy, service and research implications worthy of government and public attention. It is recommended that appropriate resources be allocated immediately to disseminate the programs to fight drug-abuse problems in Hong Kong. Dissemination should include mass production of the program packages, training of the right personnel to deliver the programs, and research resources to further demonstrate the sustainability of the program benefits over time.

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