

PRESS RELEASE**Government agencies, CSOs, support DepEd in fight against tobacco**

PASIG CITY, November 9, 2016 – Officials from the Department of Health (DOH), the Civil Service Commission (CSC), and the Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA), and representatives from civil society organizations (CSOs) namely, HealthJustice Philippines, Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, and the Southeast Asia Tobacco Control Alliance (SEATCA), together expressed their commitment to help DepEd in building the capacity of the schools in ensuring the implementation of the comprehensive tobacco control policy. They have also committed to serve as members of the advisory committee for a project that DepEd is implementing in partnership with the Tobacco-Free Kids Action Fund.

In June, DepEd issued Department Order No. 48, s. 2016 or the Policy and Guidelines on Comprehensive Tobacco Control for the effective implementation of a cohesive and comprehensive tobacco control program to promote a healthy environment in and around schools and DepEd offices. The Department Order took effect on October 18, 2016.

"It is a great privilege for the DOH to be part of DepEd's advocacy for a comprehensive tobacco control project in the education sector. Aligned with the Philippine Health Agenda, the project will further strengthen multi-sectoral collaboration towards the protection of our youth from initiating tobacco use, being the future generation of the country," said Health Secretary Paulyn Jean Rosell-Ubial who was represented during the meeting by Dr. Ma. Elizabeth I. Caluag.

The Civil Service Commission, represented during the meeting by Assistant Commissioner Ariel Ronquillo, said that such collaboration between the agencies is instrumental in sharing key learnings and experiences among tobacco control advocates to strengthen the tobacco control agenda of the government.

On the other hand, Commissioner Robert S. Martinez in a letter of support to DepEd said, "The continued collaboration of government agencies is vital in heightening the efforts against tobacco use and its ill effects."

Dr. Ulysses Dorotheo, a long-time tobacco control advocate, said that SEATCA is privileged to be a partner of DepEd in ensuring the effective implementation of the comprehensive tobacco control policy.

The comprehensive tobacco control policy aims to ensure strict implementation of bans such as the absolute smoking ban in schools and DepEd offices, the ban on the sale of tobacco products in and within the 100-meter perimeter of schools and the ban on the sale of tobacco products to minors anywhere, the ban on tobacco advertising within the 100-meter perimeter of schools, the ban on promotional items for minors and the ban on the distribution of samples of tobacco products to minors, and the ban on tobacco sponsorships of any school activity.

"The DepEd's comprehensive policy on tobacco control is a major contribution towards protecting our Filipino youth from the danger of tobacco companies that target them as replacements for those who quit smoking or die from a tobacco-caused disease," Dr. Dorotheo said.

DepEd Undersecretary for Legal Affairs Atty. Alberto Muyot welcomed the commitment of the partners, recognizing how they have been always supportive of DepEd not only then in helping draft the comprehensive tobacco control policy, but even now in helping ensure its implementation.

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