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International Standards on Drug Use Prevention

Second updated edition

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Introduction

The first edition of these Standards was published in 2013, summarizing the evidence of drug use prevention at the global level with a view to identify effective strategies, ensuring that children and youth, especially the most marginalized and poor, grow and stay healthy and safe into adulthood and old age.

Member States and other national and international stakeholders recognised the value of this tool, with the Standards acknowledged multiple times as useful basis to improve the coverage and quality of evidence-based prevention.¹ In addition, in 2015, the Member States of the United Nations made a series of wide-ranging commitments in the Sustainable Development Goals to be achieved by 2030 and Target 3.5 pledges to strengthen the prevention and treatment of substance abuse. In April 2016, the Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly on the world drug problem heralded a new era for addressing drug use and drug use disorders through a balanced and health-centred system approach.

In the context of this renewed emphasis on the health and wellbeing of people, UNODC and WHO are pleased to join forces and present this updated second edition. As in the case of the first edition, the Standards summarize the currently available scientific evidence on the basis of overview of recent systematic reviews, and describe interventions and policies that have been found to improve drug use prevention outcomes. In addition, the Standards identify the major components and features of an effective national prevention system. This work builds on, recognizes and is complementary to the work of many other organizations (e.g. EMCDDA, CCSA, CICAD, CP, NIDA²) which have

¹ The Joint Ministerial Statement on the mid-term review of the implementation by Member States of the Political Declaration and Plan of Action; CND Resolution 57/3 - Promoting prevention of drug abuse based on scientific evidence as an investment in the well-being of children, adolescents, youth, families and communities; CND Resolution 58/3 - Promoting the protection of children and young people, with particular reference to the illicit sale and purchase of internationally or nationally controlled substances and of new psychoactive substances via the Internet; CND Resolution 58/7 - Strengthening cooperation with the scientific community, including academia, and promoting scientific research in drug demand and supply reduction policies in order to find effective solutions to various aspects of the world drug problem; CND Resolution 59/6 - Promoting prevention strategies and policies; Outcome Document of UNGASS 2016 on the World Drug Problem.

² European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA), www.emcdda.europa.eu; Canadian Centre on Substance use (CCSA), www.ccsa.ca/Eng/; Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD) at the Organization of the American States, http://cicad.oas.org/main/default_eng.asp; the Colombo Plan for Cooperative Economic and Social Development in Asia and the Pacific <http://www.colombo-plan.org/>; National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), www.drugabuse.gov/.

developed other standards and guidelines on various aspects of drug use prevention.

It is our hope that the Standards will continue to guide policy makers and other national stakeholders worldwide to develop programmes, policies and systems that are a truly effective investment in the future of children, youth, families and communities.

1. Prevention is about the healthy and safe development of children

Whilst the primary focus of the Standards is prevention of drug use, the approach of the document is holistic, taking into account the use of other psychoactive substances. With regard to the terminology as utilised in the Standards, the reader should consider that 'drug use' is used to refer to the use of psychoactive substances outside the framework of legitimate use for medical or scientific purposes in line with the three International Conventions³. 'Substance use' is used to refer to the use of psychoactive substances regardless of their controlled status, including hazardous and harmful use of psychoactive substances. In addition to drug use, this includes the use of tobacco, alcohol, inhalants and new psychoactive substances (so-called 'legal highs' or 'smart drugs').

For the purposes of this document, we considered the following primary objective of the prevention of the use of psychoactive substances: to help people, particularly but not exclusively of younger age, to avoid or delay the initiation of the use of psychoactive substances, or, if they have started already, to avert the development of substance use disorders (harmful substance use or dependence).

The general aim of substance use prevention, however, is much broader than

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