

Guidance Note including frequently asked questions (FAQS) on the Pan American Health Organisation's (PAHO) Report on the Adolescent Health and Sexuality Survey (AHS) of the Cayman Islands 2013

The Ministry of Health, in collaboration with the Adolescent Health and Sexuality Survey Committee “the Committee” has reviewed the PAHO Adolescent Health and Sexuality Survey Report for the Cayman Islands. Together the Ministry of Health and the Committee have prepared this guidance note as the first step in a process to ensure the PAHO Adolescent Health and Sexuality Survey Report is viewed within context and to determine the next steps the country needs to take to address the weaknesses outlined in the PAHO Health and Sexuality Survey Report.

What is the background and objectives of the report?

The Ministry of Health in collaboration with PAHO, the Ministry of Education, the school principals of both public and private secondary schools, the National Drug Council, and the Public Health Department embarked on an Adolescent Health and Sexuality Survey for the Cayman Islands in 2012. This wide-ranging study of adolescent health included the majority of 15-19 year olds attending schools in the Cayman Islands and was conducted under the remit of “strengthening the integration of British and Dutch OCTs in the regional response to HIV”

The objectives of the survey, the results of which are based on the targeted population of school youth age 15 -19 years, were to conduct a holistic assessment of the health of youth in the Cayman Islands, in order to strengthen existing services including programming and intervention for young people, and provide baseline data to inform the development of targeted interventions.

Why has the report not been publicly released prior to now?

Although the survey title notes the year 2013, the survey was not actually finalised by PAHO technical advisors until 2014 and the final copies of the report were received by the Cayman Islands Government in early 2015.

What were some of the positive findings of the report?

The majority of the participants thought their teachers were supportive towards their academic pursuits. Regarding educational ambitions, 36.5% of participants reported wanting to go on to complete university whilst 32.7% would like to gain an advanced degree.

The adolescents also generally reported they received family care and support through ensuring that rules are followed and encouraged to do their best.

The use of drugs (other than marijuana) was relatively low with only 6.8% of participants reporting using psychoactive drugs other than marijuana, alcohol and cigarettes.

What were some of the negative findings of the report?

The study uncovered substantial levels of mental ill-health, including loneliness, anxiety, depression and suicidal ideation. One-third of the females and a quarter of the males reported one or more of the following taking place among adults at home: drinking, mental health problems, drug use, violence.

About one-tenth of participants stated they had been sexually abused by a member of their family or another person, with the prevalence of sexual abuse being six times higher among females (18.6%) than males (3.1%).

Details of the findings are available within the report.

How does the Ministry of Health along with other stakeholders within the Cayman Islands Government plan to mitigate the negative findings of this report?

The Ministry of Health will continue to meet along with the Committee which was responsible for working with PAHO to enable this survey and report, along with stakeholders within the other relevant ministries, in order to develop actionable steps to address all of the negative findings of the AHS Report.

Additionally, various initiatives have already been put into place:

1. The Ministry of Health has with stakeholders developed the CI National Health Policy and Strategic Plan and is underway to develop the National Health Operational Plan to accompany the Policy. The Operational Plan will initiate and strengthen areas of health care that will support the health of adolescents in the Cayman Islands.
2. The Ministry of Health has also commenced, along with the newly formed Mental Health Commission, training to accompany the Mental Health Law 2013, for front line personnel and others who in the performance of their duties may interact with adolescents.
3. The Cayman Islands Government along with various private stakeholders created the CI National Sports Policy, and the Ministry of Sports is now working with the Strategic Sports Advisory Group (SSAG) to develop the comprehensive plan to accompany it, which will include aspects specifically tailored for our adolescent population.
4. Since 2012, the Ministry of Education has ensured that canteen guidelines and policies are in place in the government schools, which will help with adolescent nutritional concerns.
5. The Ministry responsible for Gender Affairs has noted that if the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) is extended to the Cayman Islands one requirement is for both sexes to have access to information on health services, which will mitigate some of the concerns highlighted by the report.
6. The Ministry of Health is looking at ways to improve adolescent health services. Recently there has been discussion to have practitioners receive training in the provision of care for the adolescent population.
7. A programme is currently being conducted by CI Red Cross with funding from the Cayman Islands Government in the high schools “It’s not your fault”, and another

conducted at the Early Childhood Centres with a focus on “touching.” Both programmes are to mitigate sexual abuse.