

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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DepEd's EHCP to keep school children healthy

The Department of Education is going full throttle in implementing its essential health care program (EHCP) among public school children to improve their academic performance and reduce drop-out rate.

"Health concerns and poverty are the two major causes of low school performance and drop out rate, prompting us to prioritize these two issues," Education Secretary Jesli Lapus said.

The EHCP is a simple, cost-effective school-based health program of DepEd in partnership with the local government units, the private sector and other community stakeholders.

Lapus disclosed that there are over 600,000 children in public elementary schools and daycare centers who have benefited from the program. Under the EHCP, each child gets a kit that has a toothbrush, soap, deworming tablets and access to toothpaste. The kit which costs P25 per child per year is given free.

"Part of the strategy to improve the school children's performance is keeping them healthy especially in this time of Influenza A (H1N1) pandemic."

The EHCP also aims to reduce diarrhea incidence by 30-40%, reduce respiratory infections by 20-30%, reduce worm infections by 50%, reduce dental caries by 40-50%, and reduce infection in the mouth by 50%.

DepEd hopes that with the EHCP in place, school attendance would improve by 20% and so is academic performance. "The quality of health of the pupils determines their academic performance," Lapus said.

DepEd, DOH and UP studies showed that diarrhea and respiratory tract infections are leading cause of death among school children. It also revealed that 67% of children are infected with intestinal worms and 97% have tooth decay, with toothache as the main reason for absenteeism in school.

"Not many realize their huge impact on the physical and mental development of children, their school attendance, their school performance and ultimately their quality of life" Lapus said.

EHCP is taught in schools and daycare centers as venues for health promotion and behavior change. They are the most appropriate places to reach children in a structured and organized way.

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