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## Preventive health care given focus in public schools

Something heroic is happening in schools these days.

Education Secretary Jesli Lapus recently forged partnerships with the public and private sectors to bring preventive health care into the education system under the Health Education Reform Order (HERO).

HERO addresses the problems of malnutrition and poor health among public schoolchildren. It aims to enhance the health status of schoolchildren from poor families in order to boost their academic performance, and ultimately give them better chances of success in life.

The Memorandum of Cooperation was signed recently at the Legend Hotel in Puerto Princesa City attended by representatives from the DepEd, DOH, Department of Social Welfare and Development, League of Cities of the Philippines, League of Municipalities of the Philippines, City Government of Puerto Princesa, Philippine College of Physicians (PCP) and Philippine Medical Association (PMA).

Under the HERO, "PCP and PMA, together with their local chapters shall launch a yearly nationwide Expanded Universal Medical and Dental-Check-up for elementary and high school students. The check-up will also include teaching and non-teaching personnel of public schools nationwide."

The Expanded Universal Medical and Dental Check-up will focus not only on preventive health care but also in treating common illness and diseases prevailing in a given district and locality.

Lapus said, "This Executive Order not only brings public health awareness into the education system, but has also made preventive health care a multi-sectoral advocacy.

Since its initial launch in September 2007, HERO has benefited some half a million schoolchildren.

The DepEd's Adopt-A-School Program, which has raised private-sector involvement in public education, serves as the department's vehicle for the HERO initiative. Under this component, a number of feeding programs have been carried out to address hunger among schoolchildren and improve their capacity to learn.

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According to Lapus, the agreement among different stakeholders is a convergence of all our efforts to make preventive health care a national agenda.

“These efforts have presented new opportunities to provide adequate medical, dental, and nutritional care to public school students and teachers throughout the country,” Lapus added.

**END**

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