

Ministry of Education and Ministry of Health & Family Welfare Issue Joint Advisory to States/UTs for Effective Implementation of Tobacco-Free Educational Institutions Guidelines and Manual

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In a significant move to combat tobacco use among youth, the Secretaries of the Union Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare have jointly issued an advisory to all States and Union Territories. The advisory, addressed to Chief Secretaries, calls for the rigorous implementation of the Tobacco-Free Educational Institution (ToFEI) manual, in line with the provisions of the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act (COTPA), 2003 in educational institutions.

This joint advisory, signed by the Secretaries of the Department of School Education, the Department of Higher Education, and the Department of Health & Family Welfare, underscores the alarming effects of tobacco consumption, particularly on children and adolescents. It draws attention to the findings of the Global Youth Tobacco Survey (GYTS) 2019, which revealed that 8.5% of school students aged 13 to 15 in India consume tobacco in various forms. Of particular concern is the fact that over 5,500 children in India begin using tobacco every day. Moreover, 55% of lifelong tobacco users initiate the habit before the age of 20, with many adolescents turning to other addictive substances as a result.

The advisory emphasizes the need for collaborative efforts of all the stakeholders to safeguard young people from the dangers of tobacco addiction. The goal is to protect future generations by raising awareness of the harmful effects of tobacco use and promoting tobacco control measures within educational institutions.

As part of the National Tobacco Control Programme (NTCP), the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India, released the Tobacco Free Educational Institutions (ToFEI) Guidelines for safeguarding minors and youth from tobacco and electronic cigarette use. Further, the Department of School Education and Literacy has developed and launched the ToFEI Implementation Manual on World No Tobacco Day (WNTD) in collaboration with Socio Economic and Educational Development Society (SEEDS). The Department issued the manual on 31st May 2024 to all States/UTs for compliance.

The ToFEI manual serves as a key resource for educational institutions to implement these anti-tobacco measures effectively. The manual outlines the following objectives:

- i. More awareness about the harmful effects and long-term health impact of tobacco use amongst the students, teachers, workers and officials in educational institutions;
- ii. Awareness about various avenues available for tobacco cessation;
- iii. A healthy and tobacco-free environment in educational institutions and all educational institutions becoming tobacco-free; and
- iv. Better implementation of legal provisions regarding the sale and use of tobacco products, especially those related to educational institutions, public places, statutory warnings and minors.

The advisory encourages educational institutions including schools at all levels, colleges for higher or professional education and universities, both in the public and private sector to adopt the ToFEI manual and guidelines as a comprehensive guide to safeguard the health and well-being of students.

Through collaborative efforts, the government aims to reduce tobacco use among children and prevent future

generations from falling prey to addiction. The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare will work closely with state and district-level officials to ensure these measures are effectively implemented in educational institutions.

URL to access the Implementation Manual for ToFEI Manual:
https://dse1.education.gov.in/sites/default/files/update/im_tofel.pdf

URL to access the ToFEI Guidelines:

<https://ntcp.mohfw.gov.in/assets/document/TEFI-Guidelines.pdf>

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