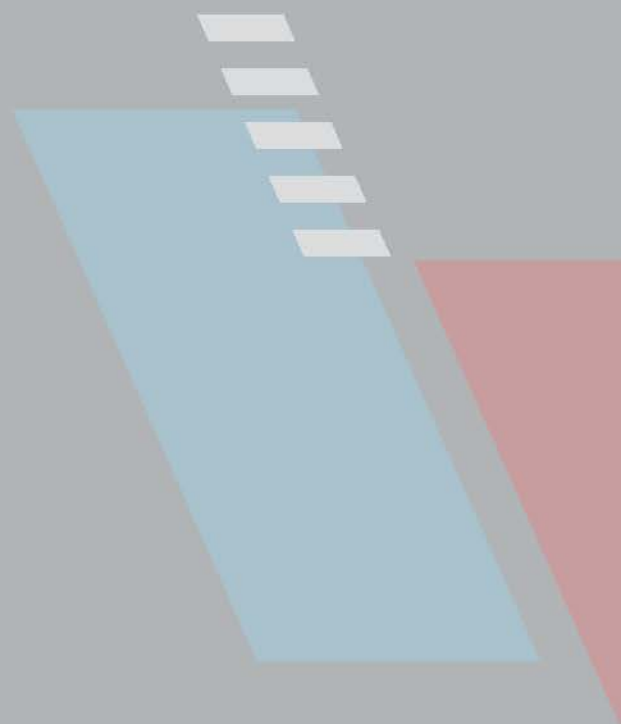


The National Committee on  
Prevention, Rehabilitation and Recidivism

# REPORT ON YOUTH DELINQUENCY

KEY TRENDS &  
UPSTREAM  
MEASURES





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**Central Youth Guidance Office**  
**Ministry of Social and Family Development**  
512 Thomson Road  
MSF Building, #08-00  
Singapore 298136  
Email: [MSF\\_CYGO@msf.gov.sg](mailto:MSF_CYGO@msf.gov.sg)



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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This report is a joint effort and collaboration  
by the following NCPR agencies:

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Central Narcotics Bureau

Family Justice Courts

Ministry of Education

Ministry of Home Affairs

Ministry of Social and  
Family Development

Singapore Police Force

Singapore Prison Service

State Courts






# FOREWORD

By the \_\_\_\_\_  
Co-Chairpersons  
of the National  
Committee  
on Prevention,  
Rehabilitation and  
Recidivism

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Every Singaporean child  
and young person matters.  
They are the future  
of Singapore.



Over the past five years, between 2014 and 2018, we have seen a gradual decline in the number of youth offenders arrested. While this is encouraging, more can be done to steer youth away from offending. To achieve this, we must work together as a community. We want to give our youth the best shot at life. This is why we set up the National Committee on Prevention, Rehabilitation and Recidivism (NCPR)<sup>1</sup> in April 2018, comprising both the Government and community partners. This committee aims to coordinate and amplify efforts in preventing crime, helping at-risk youth, and ensuring that ex-offenders are provided the support they need to reintegrate into society.

Prevention, early intervention and post-rehabilitation support are critical in addressing offending and reoffending behaviour. This is especially so for our youth. The NCPR works closely with our partner agencies, including government agencies, social service agencies, community organisations and volunteers, to deal with multiple and complex challenges. To develop targeted interventions that can truly make a difference to our youth, we analyse data and tap the experiences of ground practitioners.

This Report on Youth Delinquency – Key Trends and Upstream Measures seeks to provide such insight. Put together by the NCPR members, this report follows the first publication – National Report on Youth Crime in 2015. The studies and data in the report provide information that will guide us to review existing measures, anticipate emerging trends that may impact youth offending and plan ahead.



<sup>1</sup> The former National Committee on Youth Guidance and Rehabilitation was subsumed under the National Committee on Prevention, Rehabilitation and Recidivism.



This report will also support this year's Conversations on Youth (COY). We believe that the wealth of information contained within this report will spark conversation and enrich discussions on how to tackle and prevent youth delinquency and offending. The theme of the COY 2019 is Moving Upstream – Early Prevention of Youth Offending. This report has dedicated two chapters to pre-Court diversionary measures and upstream measures.

You will read about the Guidance Programme and the Enhanced Streetwise Programme, which target youth who had committed minor offences. These pre-Court programmes aim to rehabilitate these youth offenders without involving the criminal justice system. We can and must continue to do more upstream preventive work and strive towards building a culture of prevention by leveraging community resources.

We are encouraged to see our combined efforts bring about positive change in the prevention of youth offending and youth rehabilitation in Singapore. Let us build further on these efforts to provide a strong network of support for our youth. Where there are gaps, we encourage all stakeholders to put our heads and hands together to jointly create solutions – especially early interventions – to continue to uplift our youth.

**Mr Desmond Lee**

Minister for Social and Family Development  
Second Minister for National Development

**Mrs Josephine Teo**

Minister for Manpower  
Second Minister for Home Affairs





## ABOUT US

# CENTRAL YOUTH GUIDANCE OFFICE

In 2009, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) formed an Inter-Ministry Committee on the Prevention of Reoffending to address the problem of reoffending. The Committee recommended a more focused and comprehensive approach to effectively address the problems of offending and reoffending, with greater attention on upstream efforts to break the cycle of offending early.

In line with these efforts, the Central Youth Guidance Office (CYGO) was formed on 1 July 2010. Housed within the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF), it is staffed by officers from MSF, MHA and Ministry of Education (MOE).

As the co-secretariat to the NCPR, CYGO integrates efforts across agencies to identify, engage and intervene through all stages of a youth's life. CYGO provides a focal point to strengthen and facilitate inter-agency collaboration. It maintains an overview of offending and reoffending issues, as well as identifies and addresses gaps in current intervention measures.

Through inter-agency collaborative research, CYGO also seeks to facilitate data sharing and better understand the development of (re)offending, long-term outcomes of (re)offending, as well as inter-generational transmission of criminality and disadvantages in Singapore's context.

Social Service Agencies (SSAs) in the community are our important partners. Together with other government agencies, we collectively look into sector capability building to ensure a pipeline of competent youth workers under the ambit of the SkillsFuture Tripartite Taskforce Youth Work Sub-Team.

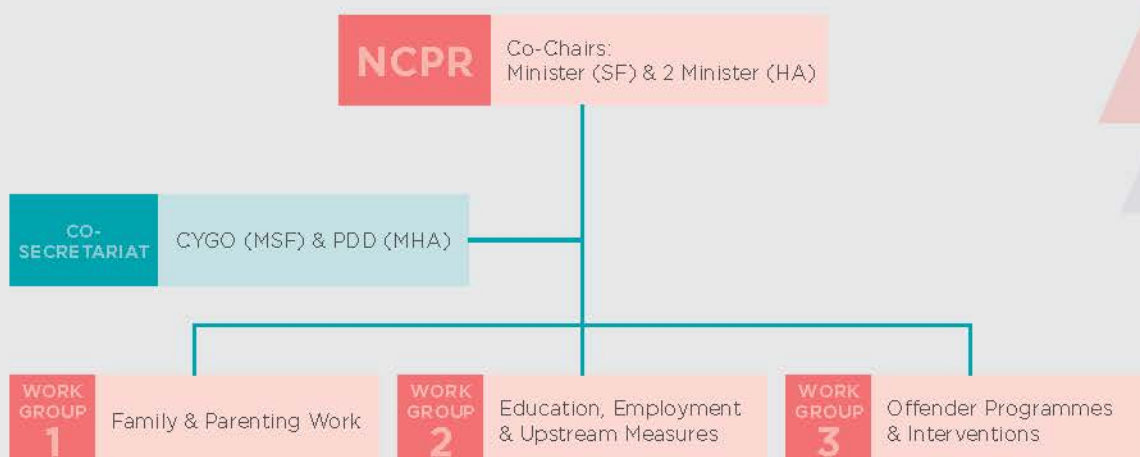
With support across the whole of our society, our youth will be able to realise their potential and achieve positive outcomes.

# NATIONAL COMMITTEE ON PREVENTION, REHABILITATION AND RECIDIVISM

The NCPR was set up in April 2018 to oversee national efforts to reduce offending and reoffending, and enhance rehabilitation of offenders. The scope of the NCPR includes at-risk children and youth, as well as offenders.

Co-chaired by Mr Desmond Lee (Minister for Social and Family Development & Second Minister for National Development) and Mrs Josephine Teo (Minister for Manpower & Second Minister for Home Affairs), the NCPR comprises representatives from the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth, MOE, Ministry of Health, MHA, MSF, the Attorney-General's Chambers (AGC), Central Narcotics Bureau (CNB), National Council of Social Service, National Crime Prevention Council, National Youth Council, Singapore Police Force, Singapore Prison Service, the State Courts, academia as well as the Self-Help Groups. The secretariat to the NCPR comprises officers from the CYGO under the MSF, and the Policy Development Division (PDD) under the MHA.

Under the ambit of the NCPR, there are three workgroups looking into family and parenting work; education, employment and upstream measures; and offender programmes and interventions. The workgroups comprise ministry officials, domain experts and community partners.





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# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

**AGC** Attorney-General's Chambers

**CBP** Community-Based Programme

**CBS** Community-Based Sentencing

**CNB** Central Narcotics Bureau

**COY** Conversations on Youth

**CRC** Community Rehabilitation Centre

**CRRP** Centre for Research on Rehabilitation and Protection

**CYGO** Central Youth Guidance Office

**CYP** Children and Young Persons

**CYPA** Children and Young Persons Act

**DRC** Drug Rehabilitation Centre

**EE21** Early Engagement of Offenders Below 21

**ESU** Enhanced STEP-UP

**ESWP** Enhanced Streetwise Programme

**GP** Guidance Programme

**HTBSC** Home Team Behavioural Sciences Centre

**IAC** Inhalant Abuse Centre

**ISA** Intoxicating Substances Act

**JRCs** Juvenile Rehabilitation Centres

**MDA** Misuse of Drug Act

**MHA** Ministry of Home Affairs

**MOE** Ministry of Education

**MSF** Ministry of Social and Family Development

**NCADA** National Council Against Drug Abuse

**NCPC** National Crime Prevention Council

**NCPR** National Committee on Prevention, Rehabilitation and Recidivism

**PAC** Progress Accountability Court

**PDE** Preventive Drug Education

**SCCSS** State Courts Centre for Specialist Services

**SPF** Singapore Police Force

**SPS** Singapore Prison Service

**SSAs** Social Service Agencies

**SWP** Streetwise Programme

**TFD** Taskforce on Drugs

**TOP** Time-Out Programme

**UML** Unlicensed Moneylending

**UNCRC** United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

**UNODC** United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes

**YES** Youth Enhanced Supervision

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since our inaugural publication of the National Report on Youth Crime (2007-2013) in 2015, we have enhanced programmes, legislation and research to protect our youth and keep them away from crime, rehabilitate youth offenders and prevent reoffending, as well as better reintegrate youth offenders into their families and society.

In this second publication written by members of the NCPR, Report on Youth Delinquency – Key Trends and Upstream Measures, we present youth arrest statistics from 2014 to 2018, discuss the refinements and enhancements to existing strategies and programmes, and consider further upstream measures to better tackle youth offending at the onset.

**Chapter 1** of this report begins with an overview of the general youth crime situation between 2014 and 2018, and common youth offences such as theft and unlicensed moneylending. It also presents the statistics on the use of drugs and inhalants by youth between 2014 and 2018.

**Chapter 2** focuses on drug and inhalant abuse among youth. It discusses the mission of the CNB, and presents the findings from two research studies on youth drug abusers and youth inhalant abusers in Singapore, emphasising the importance of early prevention and identification of youth substance abuse problems. This is followed by a discussion of various supervision schemes and specialised centres for abusers.

**Chapter 3** provides an overview of the relevant legislation for youth offenders, and its primary aim when dealing with youth offenders. It presents statistics on probation orders in the Community Court and Youth Courts between 2014 and 2018, followed by a discussion on the 2019 amendments to the Children and Young Persons Act.

**Chapter 4** introduces the Triage System and discusses two programmes that focus on diversionary interventions, i.e., the Guidance Programme and the Enhanced Streetwise Programme. It highlights several merits of such pre-Court diversions for youth offenders who have committed minor offences.

**Chapter 5** concludes by discussing four upstream interventions: enhancing holistic support for youth from disadvantaged families; the Enhanced STEP-UP programme; public education and outreach efforts to prevent youth offending; and preventive drug education efforts. It also presents three main types of upstream measures that the various agencies have identified from research findings: strengthening families; preventing childhood maltreatment; and fostering protective factors.

In summary, this report looks at the recent youth offence situation in Singapore, and discusses the range of interventions from court processes involving youth who have committed major offences, to diversionary measures for youth who have committed minor offences, to upstream interventions targeted at at-risk youth. We hope that this report will prompt further thinking on how all stakeholders can work together to further strengthen support and preventive measures for our youth.



# GENERAL YOUTH<sup>2</sup> OFFENDING SITUATION, 2014 TO 2018<sup>3</sup>

## SYNOPSIS

This section presents the statistics of youth arrests in Singapore between 2014 and 2018, and the number of arrests of youth drug abusers and youth inhalant abusers in the same time period.

## KEY INSIGHTS

### *Overall Statistics on Youth Arrest*

There has been a gradual decline in the number of youths arrested between 2014 and 2018. This downward trend is observed for both juveniles<sup>4</sup> and young persons<sup>5</sup>, and for both male and female offenders.

### *Top Three Offences*

The most common youth offences remain as shop theft, cheating & related offences and sexual penetration.

### *Youth Drug Abusers*

The number of arrested youth drug abusers rose from 190 in 2014 to 360 in 2018.

### *Youth Inhalant Abusers*

The number of youths arrested for inhalant abuse dropped from 45 in 2014 to 4 in 2018.

## CHAPTER AT A GLANCE

- // Overall Statistics on Youth Arrest
- // Top Three Offences
- // Youth Involvement in Unlicensed Moneylending
- // Youth Drug Situation
- // Youth Inhalant Situation

<sup>2</sup> Youth include juveniles aged 7 to 15 years and young persons aged 16 to 19 years.

<sup>3</sup> Figures are revised for annual revision.

<sup>4</sup> The Children and Young Persons Act states that a juvenile is a male or female person who is 7 years or above and below 16 years.

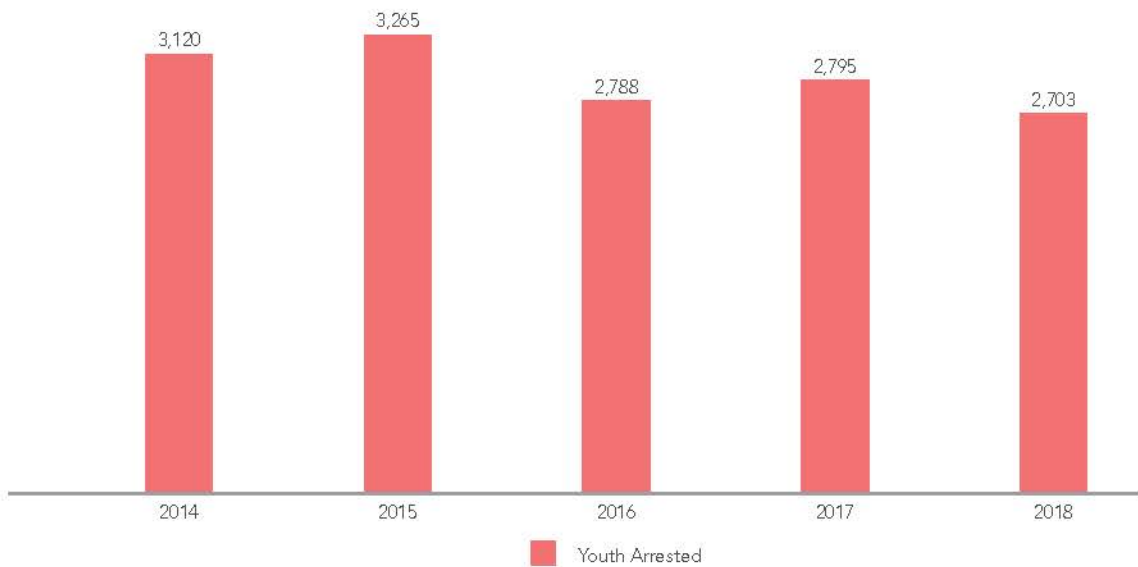
<sup>5</sup> This refers to young persons aged 16 to 19 years.

# OVERALL STATISTICS ON YOUTH ARREST

The number of youths arrested fell 13.4% (from 3,120 to 2,703) between 2014 and 2018 (Figure 1.1).

**Figure 1.1**  
Number of Youth Offenders, from 2014 to 2018

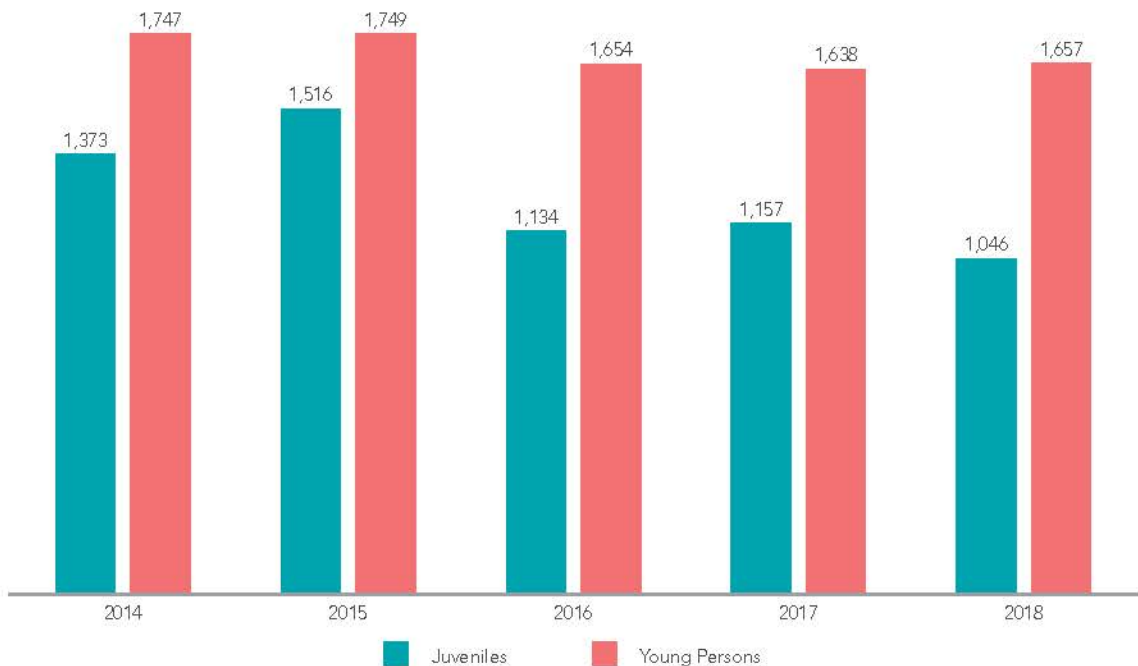
Source: Singapore Police Force



This downward trend was observed for both juveniles and young persons, with a 23.8% decrease for juveniles (from 1,373 to 1,046) and 5.2% decrease (from 1,747 to 1,657) for young persons, as seen in Figure 1.2.

**Figure 1.2**  
Number of Youth Offenders, by Age Group, from 2014 to 2018

Source: Singapore Police Force



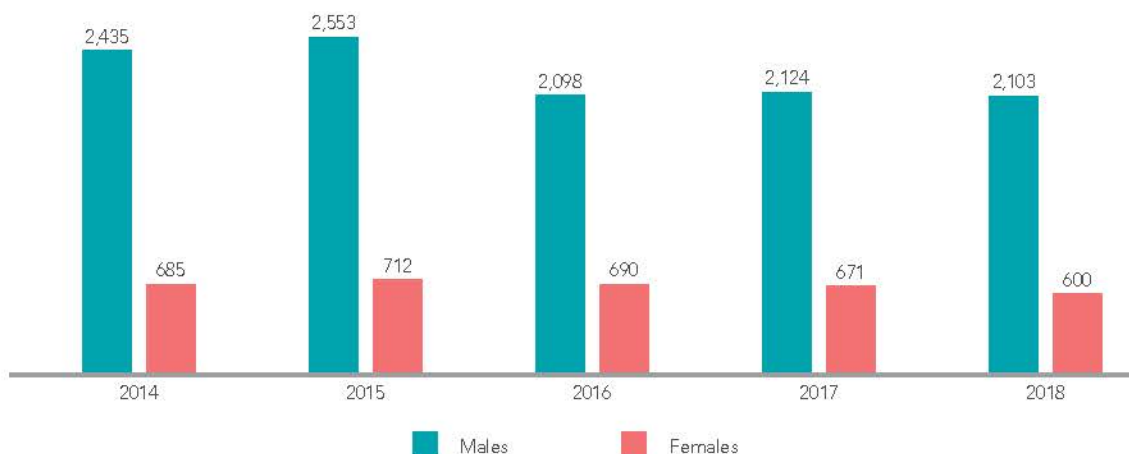


Similarly, the downward trend applied to both male and female youth offenders, though the number of male youth offenders remained about 3.5 times of female youth offenders (Figure 1.3).

Figure 1.3

Number of Youth Offenders, by Gender, from 2014 to 2018

Source: Singapore Police Force



## TOP THREE OFFENCES

Of the youth arrested between 2014 and 2018, the three most common offences committed were shop theft, cheating & related offences and sexual penetration. **Shop theft** generally involved culprits taking goods and merchandise from retail outlets, supermarkets, etc., and leaving without paying. Students<sup>6</sup> made up the vast majority. Most culprits were first-time offenders. **Cheating & related offences** mostly involved culprits cheating victims for financial gains, such as in e-commerce scams, cheating by personation and criminal breach of trust. **Sexual penetration** typically involved cases with known victim-culprit relationship, such as boyfriends/girlfriends, friends and acquaintances.

<sup>6</sup> These include MOE students and Non-MOE students.

## YOUTH INVOLVEMENT IN UNLICENSED MONEYLENDING

Another area of concern was the involvement of youth in unlicensed moneylending (UML) activities. Youth were generally involved in UML activities due to the attractive pay promised by the lenders. While looking for jobs, the youth were attracted to those that promised them “fast and easy” cash. Such advertisements posted by UMLs could state up to \$200 per job, thus luring the youth to contact these advertisers. These youth offenders were also mainly recruited through social media sites such as Facebook and online classified sites such as Gumtree.

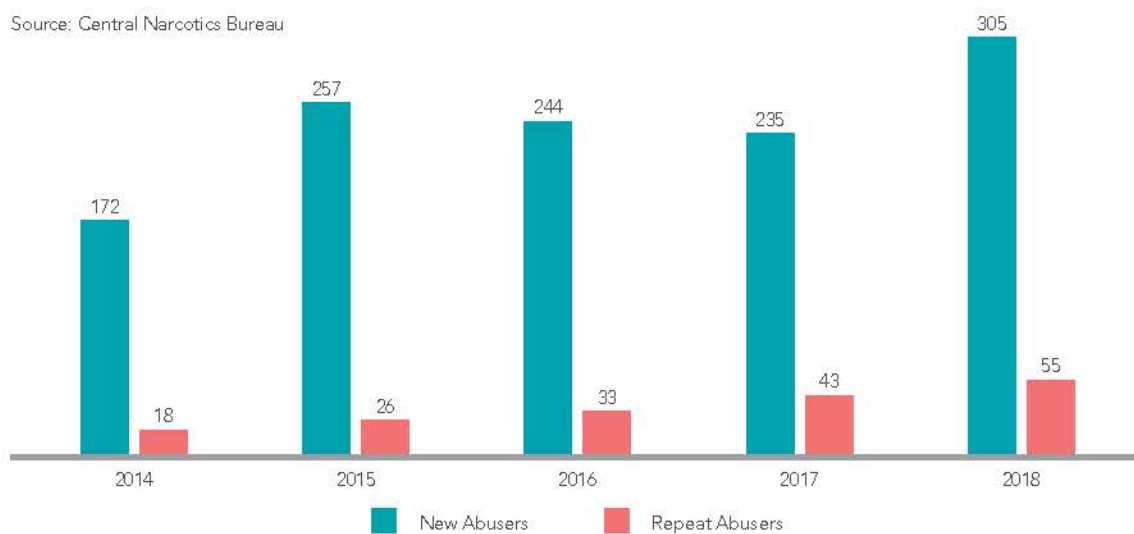
Some youth also had the perception that potential Police’s action against them for their involvement in UML activities would be lighter compared to that for adults. However, this was not the case as Police had prosecuted youth in Court for UML activities, and some were sentenced to Reformatory Training Centres (RTC) or imprisonment and caring.

## YOUTH DRUG SITUATION

The number of youth<sup>7</sup> drug abusers arrested rose from 190 in 2014 to 360 in 2018, although there was a slight dip to 277 in 2016, as illustrated in Figure 1.4. Majority of these abusers were new.

Figure 1.4  
Number of Youth Drug Abusers, from 2014 to 2018

Source: Central Narcotics Bureau



<sup>7</sup> Definition of youth for the section on drug and inhalant situation refers to those aged below 20 years old.

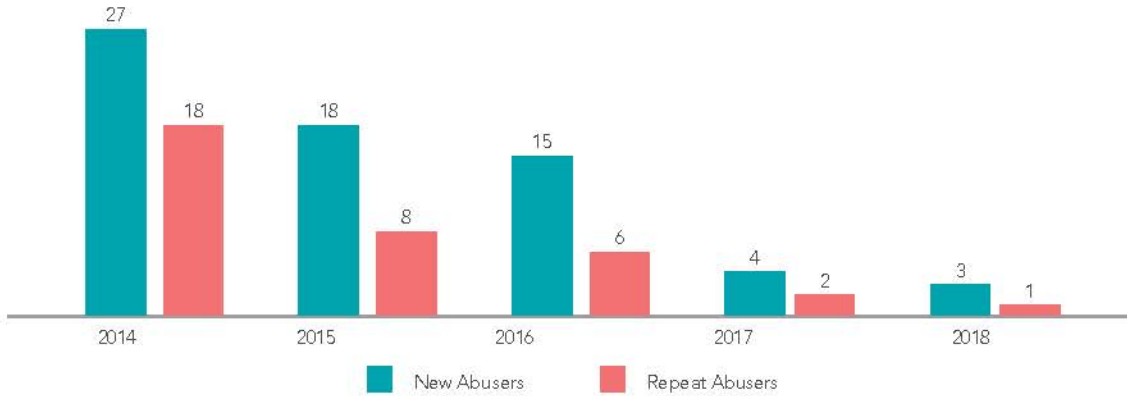


# YOUTH INHALANT SITUATION

Four youth inhalant abusers were arrested in 2018, continuing a decreasing trend from 2014 when 45 were arrested (Figure 1.5).

**Figure 1.5**  
Number of Youth Inhalant Abusers, from 2014 to 2018

Source: Central Narcotics Bureau



## CONCLUSION

Although there had been a reduction in the number of youth offenders arrested over the past five years, there were some persistent activities that youth tended to be involved in, such as theft, cheating and UML. In addition, the number of youths arrested for drug abuse increased by 89.5% between 2014 and 2018. The supervision and diversionary efforts to curb drug and inhalant abuse are discussed in Chapter 2.



# SUPERVISION AND REHABILITATION MEASURES TO YOUTH<sup>8</sup> DRUG ABUSERS

## SYNOPSIS

This section dives into the profiles and behaviours of young drug and inhalant abusers in Singapore. It also touches on recent enhancement to the Misuse of Drug Act (MDA) and existing rehabilitation programmes to further resolve the problem of youth drug and inhalant abuse.

## KEY INSIGHTS

### *Research Studies on Youth Drug Abusers*

Key findings of studies conducted in the reporting period suggested that youth substance abuse behaviours were associated with family and peer substance use. Understanding the negative consequences of drug abuse and cutting off access to drugs in the community appeared to be effective preventive interventions.

### *Amendments to the MDA*

To enhance enforcement powers and strengthen the drug rehabilitation regime, new drug legislations have been introduced, and the Central Narcotics Bureau (CNB) has authority to compel parents and guardians of young drug abusers to attend counselling. In addition, suitable drug abusers may be directed to the Drug Rehabilitation Centre (DRC) for treatment and rehabilitation instead of being sentenced to Long-Term Imprisonment.

## CHAPTER AT A GLANCE

- // CNB's Mission
- // Research Studies
- // Enhancing the Anti-Drug Framework and Strengthening the Drug Rehabilitation Regime: Legislative Amendments to the MDA
- // Supervision Schemes: Youth Enhanced Supervision Scheme, Inhalant Supervision Scheme
- // Specialised Centres: DRC, Community Rehabilitation Centre (CRC), Inhalant Treatment Centre

<sup>8</sup> Definition of youth for this chapter refers to those aged below 20 years old.



# INTRODUCTION

The number of youth drug abusers had increased, raising a concern that more youth were increasingly liberal in their attitudes towards drugs. Since 2011, the Central Narcotics Bureau (CNB) has been working in close partnership with other agencies, including the Singapore Police Force (SPF) and the Ministry of Education (MOE) schools, to deter drug use in a concerted manner.

## CENTRAL NARCOTICS BUREAU'S MISSION

CNB's mission is to *Enforce, Educate and Engage* for a drug-free Singapore. In its rigorous *Enforcement* against drug activities, CNB prevents the proliferation of drugs through intelligence, operations and investigations, guided by robust laws and policies. It collaborates with the Home Team, and local and international partners to stem the flow of drugs into and within Singapore. Through Preventive Education, it *Educates* the community on the harms of drugs and strengthens the resilience of youth to stay drug-free. In its *Engagement* efforts, it works actively with the local community to garner strong societal support to create a Singapore without drugs. CNB also works with like-minded international partners to uphold the international zero-tolerance approach against drugs.

## RESEARCH STUDIES

### Study on Youth Drug Abusers

As part of the Task Force on Youth and Drugs, a team of psychologists from the Singapore Prison Service (SPS), CNB and Home Team Behavioural Sciences Centre (HTBSC) conducted an in-depth study on youth drug abusers in 2015. Due to the rising trend of cannabis use among youth drug abusers, one particular focus of the study was to better understand the trend and motivation surrounding this group of abusers.

The study used both quantitative and qualitative research methods, and surveyed a total of 700 participants aged 12 to 29 years, comprising both abusers and non-abusers. Participants completed a set of questionnaires that measured the risk and protective factors of drug abuse and their perception towards preventive education. The research team also conducted individual case history interviews with 28 drug abusers, and focus group discussion with 109 non-abusers. Through this process, the team obtained a richer understanding of the factors influencing drug abuse behaviour, and the participants' thoughts on the current preventive education efforts.

### The main findings of the study were:

- a) Cannabis and Ice abusers had different profiles: Cannabis abusers were more ethnically diverse and came from households of either middle or high socio-economic status (SES).
- b) Cannabis abusers were similar to non-abusers in that they have strong family support and good academic performance.
- c) Cannabis abusers and Ice abusers both had peers who abuse drugs, and these peers provided access to drug initiation.
- d) Cannabis abusers were influenced by social media, and they perceived that cannabis was less harmful and addictive than it actually was.
- e) Non-abusers were deterred by legal and health consequences, and lack of access to drugs in the community.
- f) More engaging and targeted Preventive Drug Education (PDE) programmes were required to enhance the effectiveness of outreach efforts.



## Longitudinal Study on Youth Offenders

The Ministry of Social and Family Development's (MSF) Centre for Research on Rehabilitation and Protection (CRRP) and National University of Singapore's Social Service Research (SSR) Centre teamed up to conduct a 10-wave longitudinal study of three cohorts of youth offenders aged 12 to 19 years. Commenced in 2016, this Enhancing Positive Outcomes in Youth and the Community (EPYC) study focuses on the overarching themes of crime prevention, rehabilitation and societal reintegration of youth offenders.

### The broad aims of the study were to:

- a) Investigate factors that contribute to youth offenders' initial offending and drug abuse;
- b) Examine factors that influence successful rehabilitation and other long-term outcomes;
- c) Determine factors that sustain rehabilitative effects and contribute to the successful reintegration of youth offenders into society;
- d) Identify factors that protect non-offending youth from offending and abusing drugs; and
- e) Track and compare the long-term outcomes of non-offending youth with youth offenders.



## Substance Use

A major area of investigation for the EPYC study was substance use. The term "substance use" referred to the consumption of tobacco products (e.g., cigarettes) or alcohol (e.g., beer or wine), and the use of inhalants (e.g., glue), controlled drugs (e.g., cannabis) and uncontrolled drugs (e.g., prescription tablets, cough syrup).

Among EPYC's first two cohorts of participants ( $N = 786$ ), only 3% abstained from using tobacco, alcohol and drugs completely. Tobacco (95%) and alcohol (82%) consumption was widespread among EPYC's youth offenders. 57% of participants reported having used controlled and/or uncontrolled drugs in the year leading up to their interviews.

84% of the youth in EPYC engaged in poly-substance use (i.e., the consumption of more than 1 type of substance). Nearly half of them (46%) reportedly consumed all three substances. Further, while only 2% of the alcohol users reported signs of alcohol dependency, 32% of the drug users exhibited drug dependency, which was indicative of severe drug abuse problems.

## Problems Associated with Substance Use

Examinations of youth drug users' backgrounds and characteristics revealed several important findings. Firstly, family substance use was found to be associated with an increased likelihood of drug use among youth offenders. In other words, youth living in households where other members smoked, consumed alcohol and/or drugs were at a higher risk of using drugs themselves. This could be due to the ease of access to drugs or early exposure to substance use.

Secondly, youth drug users reported having more symptoms associated with depression and conduct disorder. Conduct disorder refers to a serious behavioural disorder characterised by a persistent disregard for the rights of others.

Lastly and crucially, as compared to youth offenders who had never abused drugs, youth drug users tended to have more pro-criminal attitudes, express more intent to engage in antisocial behaviour and associate with criminal others<sup>9</sup>. Our research suggested that these problems were exacerbated by an early onset of substance use.

<sup>9</sup> Criminal others refer to friends who are criminals.





The EPYC team identified three main clusters of substance users among the study's participants: those who started abusing substances during their childhood years (10 to 13 years old), early-teen years (13 to 15 years old) and late-teen years (15 years old and older). Among these clusters, youth offenders who started abusing substances early (i.e., those in the childhood and early-teen onset groups) tended to:

- a) Have more pro-criminal attitudes and associate more with criminal others;
- b) Exhibit more problematic personality traits, such as being impulsive and thrill-seeking;
- c) Exhibit symptoms of drug dependency;
- d) Engage in more problematic behaviours such as rule-breaking and aggressive behaviours; and
- e) Engage in more types of risky behaviours such as risky sexual behaviours<sup>10</sup>, criminal and online sexual behaviours<sup>11</sup>, and affiliating with gangs.

### Implications

Taken together, the findings from these two studies underscored the importance of instituting systems to ensure the early prevention and identification of youth substance use problems. A concerted effort from families, schools, communities, social services, and the government will be required to tackle this problem head-on.

Given the heightened risks and problems associated with early substance use and the finding that tobacco potentially served as a gateway substance, it is vital that we adopt preventive measures to pre-emptively protect our youth from using such substances. For instance, more anti-smoking campaigns and stress management workshops can be conducted in Primary and Secondary schools as well as student welfare centres. Knowledge of stress management and coping techniques may discourage youth from resorting to substance use to relieve stress.

Interventions should also target at-risk youth. Social workers can reach out to youth from families with a known history of incarceration or substance use, and ensure that such youth are aware of the various helplines and services available in Singapore (e.g., the talk2SANA Live Chat service for drug-related issues). Parental training and family therapy conducted by social workers may also help to curb some of the aforementioned familial risks in substance use.

### Enhancing the Anti-Drug Framework and Strengthening the Drug Rehabilitation Regime: Legislative Amendments to the Misuse of Drugs Act

In 2019, legislative amendments were made to the MDA to enhance the anti-drug framework and enforcement powers, and also to strengthen the drug rehabilitation regime. New offences were introduced, to target (a) acts of contamination which facilitated or promoted drug abuse; and (b) acts of endangerment, to better protect children and young persons from the harms of drugs. It is also mandatory for parents and guardians of young drug abusers under CNB's supervision order to attend counselling.

With the amendments to the MDA, repeated drug abusers with no concurrent penal and other MDA offences and who had admitted to their drug use may be directed to the DRC for treatment and rehabilitation instead of being sentenced to long-term imprisonment. To reduce the risk of recidivism, they will be placed on a supervision period which has been increased from 2 years to up to 5 years.

The rehabilitation pathways of youth drug abusers and inhalant abusers are outlined in Diagrams 2.1 and 2.2 respectively. The Supervision Schemes and specialised Centres are elaborated below.

<sup>10</sup>Examples of risky sexual behaviours are having sex without the use of protection, and engaging in underage sex. For instance, participants were asked, "Have you been sexually active in the past year? How often do you use condoms during sex?"

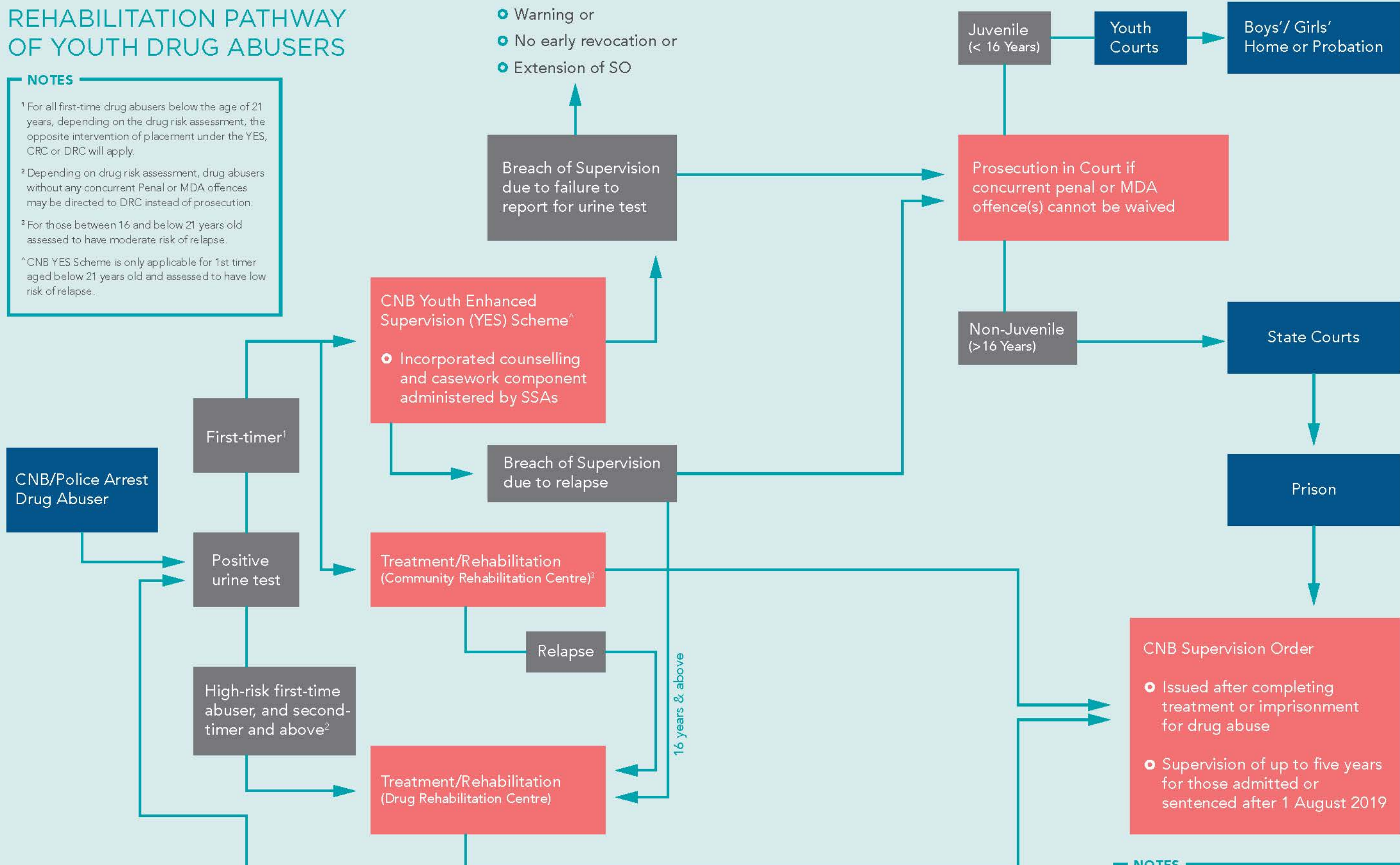
<sup>11</sup>Examples of sexual behaviours in online domains are surfing porn, and downloading explicit content. For instance, participants were asked to agree or disagree to this statement: "I have received sexual images from someone."

Diagram 2.1

# REHABILITATION PATHWAY OF YOUTH DRUG ABUSERS

**NOTES**

- <sup>1</sup> For all first-time drug abusers below the age of 21 years, depending on the drug risk assessment, the opposite intervention of placement under the YES, CRC or DRC will apply.
- <sup>2</sup> Depending on drug risk assessment, drug abusers without any concurrent Penal or MDA offences may be directed to DRC instead of prosecution.
- <sup>3</sup> For those between 16 and below 21 years old assessed to have moderate risk of relapse.
- <sup>4</sup> CNB YES Scheme is only applicable for 1st timer aged below 21 years old and assessed to have low risk of relapse...

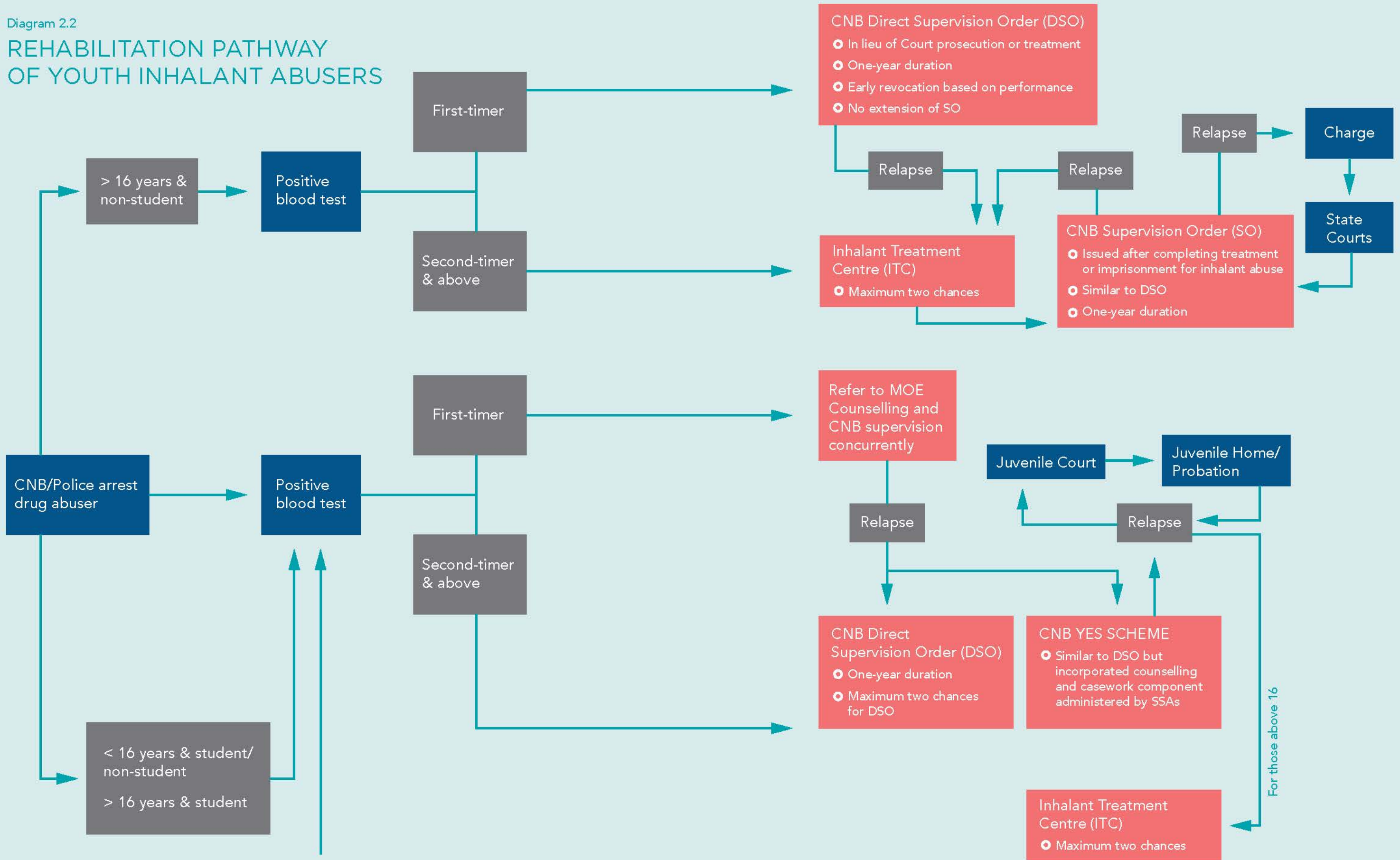


- NOTES**
- Breaches of Supervision Order include both relapses into drug taking or inhalant abuse (as indicated by a positive test result by HSA) and administrative breaches such as a failure to report for urine test. CNB's definition of recidivism is based solely on relapses.



Diagram 2.2

# REHABILITATION PATHWAY OF YOUTH INHALANT ABUSERS



**NOTES**  
 The above guideline is applicable on the premise that the abuser does not have any concurrent MDA or penal offence(s) that cannot be waived.

## YOUTH ENHANCED SUPERVISION SCHEME

For drug supervisees aged 20 years and below, they are assigned to the designated Young Persons Reporting Centre located at SPF Cantonment Complex. The Young Persons Reporting Centre was set up in 2012 to prevent recalcitrant abusers from adversely influencing the young drug abusers.

In addition, the Youth Enhanced Supervision (YES) Scheme was introduced at the Young Persons Reporting Centre in July 2013, in line with the recommendations by the Taskforce on Drugs (TFD) to enhance supervision orders<sup>12</sup> for young abusers. CNB partners the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF) and Social Service Agencies (SSAs) to administer this scheme.

The YES is a diversionary programme for youth aged 20 years and below, who were arrested for first-time drug abuse and assessed to be of low risk of relapsing. The objectives of the YES are to deter supervisees from abusing drugs again, and to detect relapses quickly.

The enrolment profiles in the YES from 2016 to 2018 may be found in Tables 2.1 and 2.2, while the completion rate may be found in Table 2.3.

Instead of treatment and rehabilitation at the DRC, the YES comprises a Direct Supervision Order and a compulsory casework and counselling component, to strengthen the current urine test regime of CNB. Under the compulsory casework and counselling component guided by social workers, youth offenders undergo individual, group-based and family sessions aimed at motivating them to stay away from drugs and equipping them with relapse-prevention skills.

The families of young abusers are also engaged, as family support is integral to rehabilitation. With the amendments to the MDA in 2019, CNB can compel uncooperative parents/guardian to participate in the family counselling sessions. Failure to do so without reasonable excuse constitutes an offence.

**Table 2.1: Enrolment in YES, by Age Group and Gender, from 2016 to 2018**

AGE	GENDER	YEAR		
		2016	2017	2018
7 to below 12 years	M	0	0	0
	F	0	0	0
12 to below 14 years	M	2	0	1
	F	0	0	1
14 to below 16 years	M	20	13	26
	F	8	5	11
16 to below 19 years	M	63	38	51
	F	35	21	23
19 to 21 years	M	52	29	23
	F	27	16	10
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>207</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>146</b>

Source: Ministry of Social and Family Development, Central Narcotics Bureau

<sup>12</sup>Supervision of all former drug abusers is done by carrying out regular urine tests, unannounced urine tests and periodic interviews. Case reviews are conducted, and supervisees who perform well are eligible for early revocation of their Supervision Order; conversely, non-compliance could result in court prosecution, or the Supervision Order being extended for a period not exceeding two years under MDA Section 34(4A).

**Table 2.2: Enrolment in YES, by Schooling Status, from 2016 to 2018**

AGE	SCHOOLING STATUS	YEAR		
		2016	2017	2018
7 to below 12 years	Student	0	0	0
	Non-Student	0	0	0
12 to below 14 years	Student	1	0	2
	Non-Student	1	0	0
14 to below 16 years	Student	24	18	30
	Non-Student	4	0	7
16 to below 19 years	Student	56	29	38
	Non-Student	42	30	36
19 to 21 years	Student	24	10	17
	Non-Student	55	35	16
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>207</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>146</b>

Source: Ministry of Social and Family Development, Central Narcotics Bureau

**Table 2.3: YES Completion Rate, from 2016 to 2018<sup>13</sup>**

	YEAR		
	2016	2017	2018
<b>Total no. of cases closed</b>	129	157	125
<b>YES Completion Rate</b>	<b>79.5%</b>	<b>79.5%</b>	<b>75.0%</b>

Source: Ministry of Social and Family Development, Central Narcotics Bureau

<sup>13</sup> Completion rate is the percentage of cases satisfactorily closed in a year. It excludes cases closed as 'Others' (e.g., migrated overseas during the programme) and 'Pending Outcome' (i.e., breached and investigations are ongoing). The completion rate reported is correct as of publication date – please contact the Ministry of Social and Family Development for the latest statistics.



## INHALANT SUPERVISION SCHEME

The Inhalant Supervision Scheme derives its powers from the Intoxicating Substances Act (INSA) Cap 146A, Sections 16(1) and 16(2). Under INSA, the Inhalant Supervision Order is served on former inhalant abusers for a period not exceeding one year. They are required to report to CNB for inhalant supervision after their release from the Inhalant Abuse Centre (IAC) or prison. The objectives of this scheme are to deter supervisees from abusing intoxicating substances again and detect them quickly should they relapse.

Inhalant supervisees aged 20 years and below are assigned to the Young Persons Reporting Centre. Supervision of former inhalant abusers is done by regular reporting to their Supervision Officers and periodic interviews. Blood tests may be conducted on supervisees who are suspected of inhalant abuse, while surprise urine tests are conducted to ensure that they stay away from drugs. Case reviews are conducted, and supervisees who perform well are eligible for early revocation of their Supervision Order. Conversely, non-compliance could be treated as an offence and shall be liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding \$1,000 under INSA Section 16(4).

Direct Inhalant Supervision Order is similar to the Inhalant Supervision Scheme. It refers to first-time abusers who are directly placed on supervision after arrest, without undergoing treatment at the IAC or incarceration in prison.

## DRUG REHABILITATION CENTRE

A drug abuser may be detained at an approved centre to undergo treatment and rehabilitation for 12 to 36 months, under MDA (Cap. 185) Section 34.

During the period of detention, a drug abuser undergoes a drug treatment programme that is calibrated according to his or her risk profile and needs. The programme includes Psychology-based Correctional Programmes (PCPs), family programmes and employability skills training. PCPs directly address and mitigate the drug abuser's addiction issues by educating them on the costs of drug use and equipping them with relapse prevention skills. Other programmes aim to upskill and increase the overall support given to the abuser in his or her rehabilitation and reintegration. After completing their interventions in the DRC, drug abusers are able to serve the tail-end of their detention in the community under the Community-Based Programme (CBP). During CBP, they will be further supervised through urine testing, curfew, electronic tagging and counselling. These measures aim to strengthen their resolve to lead a sustained drug-free lifestyle.





## COMMUNITY REHABILITATION CENTRE

The CRC is established as a step-down arrangement for young male drug abusers aged 16 to 20 years, after they have served a short period of detention in the DRC. For this group of youth drug abusers, they have been assessed to have moderate risk of drug reoffending, thus requiring a higher level of intervention. The eventual transfer to the CRC is meant to enhance rehabilitation upstream, while facilitating education or employment.

The CRC aims to provide a six-month drug intervention programme in a residential setting. At the CRC, casework and counselling services will be provided to (a) the youth, to support him in desisting from drug addiction, to reject negative influence, being resilient and assimilating back into the community; and (b) both the youth and his family, to strengthen their relational bonds.

Following the six-month residential period, the youth are emplaced on the Home Leave phase for another six months. During this phase, the youth put into practice the skills and learning that they acquired at the CRC, while receiving support to maintain and hone the skills needed to resist falling back into their old habits.

## INHALANT TREATMENT CENTRE

Under Section 17 of INSA (Chapter 146A), an inhalant abuser may be admitted to an approved centre to undergo treatment and rehabilitation for a period not exceeding 12 months. All inhalant abusers, regardless of number of admissions, undergo the same treatment programme.

The programme covers several areas revolving around meaningful rehabilitative, recreational and social activities. Counselling also plays an important role and forms a major portion of the treatment programme.

## CONCLUSION

Chapter 1 showed an increasing trend in the number of youth drug abusers from 2014 to 2018, where majority of them were new abusers, and a decreasing trend for youth inhalant abusers. This chapter dives into the profiles of these youth drug abusers. Recent research findings suggested an association between youth substance abuse behaviours and family and peer substance use. The recent amendments to the MDA give CNB greater authority to compel parents or guardians of these youth offenders to participate in the rehabilitation programmes. In addition, the youth offenders are assessed on their risk of relapse and likelihood of reoffending, and placed on the most suitable supervision scheme or specialised centre. Preventive and upstream efforts on drug and inhalant abuse are discussed in Chapter 5.

# RELEVANT LEGISLATION FOR YOUTH OFFENDERS

## SYNOPSIS

This section begins with an overview of rehabilitative options for youth offenders aged below 21 years. It shows the Youth Courts sentencing trends, and concludes with the 2019 Children and Young Persons Act (CYPA) amendments that aims to enhance youth offender rehabilitation.

## KEY INSIGHTS

### *Rehabilitative Options Available for Youth Offenders*

These are covered under the Criminal Procedure Code, Probation of Offenders Act and CYPA.

### *Community Court*

The Community Court deals with the majority of youth offenders aged 16 to below 21 years. The Community Court can make use of the Community-Based Sentencing and a variety of other programmes and initiatives, to more effectively rehabilitate and reintegrate youth offenders back into the community.

### *Youth Courts*

The Youth Courts has flexibility to order youth offenders aged 7 to below 16 years to reside in a secured care facility, or choose family- or community-centric approaches. The intent is to facilitate rehabilitation and reintegration.

### *2019 Legislative Amendments*

Amendments were passed to provide youth offenders aged 16 to below 18 years with age-appropriate rehabilitative options.

## CHAPTER AT A GLANCE

- // Youth Justice System
- // Rehabilitative Options Available for Youth Offenders
- // The Community Court's Role in Youth Offenders' Rehabilitation
- // The Youth Courts' Role in Youth Offenders' Rehabilitation
- // Statistics on Courts Orders Involving Youth Offenders
- // 2019 Amendments to the CYPA



## YOUTH JUSTICE SYSTEM

When sentencing offenders, the Court takes into account the need to punish and rehabilitate the offenders, deter potential offenders, and protect the public. The weight of each imperative is informed by factors such as the offender's age and severity of crime. There is consensus that younger offenders lack cognitive maturity to fully process right and wrong, creating greater impetus for their rehabilitation.

Across the world, jurisdictions have recognised the importance of reforming younger offenders during their formative years. This has led to the development of a youth justice system, which emphasise rehabilitative sentencing for youth offenders. Singapore is no exception.

## REHABILITATIVE OPTIONS AVAILABLE FOR YOUTH OFFENDERS

### **Probation and Community Service Orders (under CYPA and the Probation of Offenders Act), and Juvenile Rehabilitation Centres**

The CYPA provides for the welfare, care, protection, and rehabilitation of children and young persons (CYPs). The Act is undergirded by two principles: first, parents and guardians are primarily responsible for the care and welfare of CYPs. Second, the welfare and best interests of CYPs should be the first and paramount consideration. The Act also sets out the key considerations of the Court when hearing cases involving CYPs in need of care and protection, or who have offended.

Under section 44 of the CYPA, the Court can order a youth offender to be supervised under a probation order, do community service, or pay fines, among others. The Probation of Offenders Act (POA) complements this by spelling out conditions for probation orders. For cases where a probation order is not appropriate, the Court can order youth offenders to undergo rehabilitation for a maximum period of three years, in secure residential facilities such as Juvenile Rehabilitation Centres (JRCs).



Boys and staff from the Singapore Boys' Home participated in a charity fitness movement dedicated to supporting youth-at-risk.



Esplanade conducted the Theatre for Dreams programme to allow the boys from the Singapore Boys' Home to express their dreams and aspirations through body movement, sounds and theatre skills.



### **Reformatory Training (under the Criminal Procedure Code)**

Besides the range of rehabilitative options available under the CYPA, the Court, pursuant to section 305 of the Criminal Procedure Code, can order a youth offender to undergo Reformatory Training (RT), if it is satisfied that it is expeditious for the youth offender's rehabilitation.

Typically, unruly and recalcitrant youth offenders are given RT orders. The Reformatory Training Centre (RTC) is located within the Changi Prison complex, which provides high-security facilities to house such youth. Offenders may undergo RT for at least six months or 12 months, depending on what the Court deems as appropriate for the offender's rehabilitation, and be supervised for up to 54 months.

## **THE COMMUNITY COURT'S ROLE IN YOUTH OFFENDERS' REHABILITATION**

The Community Court was launched in 2006. It deals with specific categories of offenders including youth offenders aged 16 to below 21 years. Between 2016 and 2018, 1,062 youth offenders were convicted by the Community Court. This comprised 37% of the Community Court cases.

The Community Court can make use of the Community-Based Sentencing (CBS), which was introduced in January 2011 as an additional sentencing option to enhance the offenders' chances of rehabilitation. There are four types of community orders: mandatory treatment order, day reporting order, community service order and short detention order. The key feature of these sentences is that upon the successful completion of the sentence, the conviction is rendered spent.

The Community Court introduced the Progress Accountability Court (PAC) Review in September 2014 to reinforce the rehabilitative process of offenders, particularly for those placed on probation orders or community orders. The PAC Review aims to motivate youth offenders to address the underlying problems that led to the crimes and focus on setting goals for the future to prevent reoffending. In appropriate cases, offenders may be issued a court warning if their progress had been found wanting in key areas which hinder their effective rehabilitation and integration into the community.

In addition, the State Courts Centre for Specialist Services (SCCSS) (previously known as the Community Court Secretariat) enhanced its rehabilitative-focused case management approach in July 2018. The SCCSS works closely with various community agencies to provide more comprehensive counselling and psychological services for offenders. The SCCSS tracks cases to monitor the offenders' progress on court programmes, and also encourages rehabilitative efforts on resolving the root causes of such offenders' criminal behaviour.

The SCCSS also manages programmes and initiatives such as the Early Engagement of Offenders Below 21 (EE21). EE21 is a programme that takes place between the time youth offenders are charged in court and the time they are sentenced, which may take several months. During this period, these youth offenders are often unengaged and tend to be early school drop-outs. Without any constructive engagement in education or employment, the risk of their re-offending is higher. EE21 thus helps to have the youth offenders engaged in constructive activities and/or attend counselling, with a view of rehabilitating them, before sentencing.

## THE YOUTH COURTS' ROLE IN YOUTH OFFENDERS' REHABILITATION

The former Juvenile Court was renamed the Youth Courts on 1 October 2014, under the Family Justice Act. Its primary aim is to rehabilitate, reform and reintegrate youth offenders, while balancing the need to punish and deter.

The Youth Courts is presided over by a District Judge or Magistrate, who is appointed by the Chief Justice as a judge of the Youth Courts. The jurisdiction and powers of the Youth Courts are defined in legislation such as the Criminal Procedure Code, POA and the CYPA, to support the rehabilitation of youth offenders.

At present, youth offenders below 16 years are predominantly charged in the Youth Courts, unless charged with offences triable only by the High Court or jointly charged with an adult offender. Besides CYPA rehabilitative orders, the Youth Courts also has power to make RT orders.

As a specialist court that focuses on youth offenders' interests, early intervention, reformation and care, the Youth Courts prioritise youth offender interests by practicing restorative justice<sup>14</sup>.

During Youth Courts proceedings, young offenders are not labelled as criminals nor exposed to adult criminals, and are shielded from the full glare of the public. Words such as 'criminal', 'conviction' and 'sentence' are replaced with terms such as 'offender', 'found guilty' and 'probation'. Young offenders charged in the Youth Courts are also separated from adult offenders from the point of arrest up to trial. Their identities are kept confidential, and there is restricted publication of information relating to proceedings. This prevents stigmatisation of these youth.

Once a young offender is found guilty, the Courts may call for a probation report which is prepared by a Probation Officer from the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF). The Courts will then sit with two Panel Advisors, Court Family Specialists and the Probation Officer for a discussion of the case before deciding on the appropriate orders.

<sup>14</sup>Restorative Justice recognises the potential for change and reform in young offenders, and seeks to reintegrate them back into their families and the community. This is balanced with the need for effective deterrence.

## STATISTICS ON COURT ORDERS INVOLVING YOUTH OFFENDERS<sup>15, 16</sup>

In 2014 and 2015, more than 1,000 cases involving youth aged 16 to below 21 years were brought before the State Courts. This number declined gradually over the next three years to about 700 cases in 2018. More than 200 cases involving youth aged 7 to 16 years were brought before the Youth Courts. This number declined to about 140 in 2016, and remained relatively stable since then, as shown in Table 3.1.

**Table 3.1: Number of Cases Involving Youth Offenders, by Age Group, from 2014 to 2018**

YEAR (By Filing Year)	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Offender aged 7 to below 14 years	46	38	15	16	18
Offender aged 14 to below 16 years	200	184	121	124	127
Offender aged 16 to below 21 years	1,384	1,066	841	736	689
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,630</b>	<b>1,288</b>	<b>978</b>	<b>876</b>	<b>843</b>

Source: State Courts, Family Justice Courts

<sup>15</sup>The age information provided by the enforcing agencies is not complete and cases where the age information is unknown to the State Courts and Family Justice Courts are excluded from the data tables. This inevitably resulted in the undercounting of the number of cases involving youth offenders.

<sup>16</sup>The count of cases involving youth that are Singaporeans, Singapore Permanent Resident (PRs) and foreigners, as registered in the State Courts Case Recording and Information Management System II (SCRIMSII) charged with a criminal case (excluding Town Council summonses) and the Integrated Case Management System (IGMS).



From 2014 to 2018, among cases involving youth aged 16 to below 21 years, around 40% were placed on Probation Orders while around 20% were sentenced to Reformatory Training. Majority of the cases involving youth aged 7 to below 16 years were given Probation Orders by the Youth Courts (Table 3.2). The proportion of cases that were placed on Probation Orders declined, relative to that of JRCs.

**Table 3.2: Number of Cases Involving Youth Offenders, by Age Group and Order, from 2014 to 2018**

YEAR	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
<b>OFFENDER AGED 7 TO BELOW 14 YEARS (BY FILING YEAR)</b>					
Probation Orders <sup>17</sup>	31	18	9	11	9
JRC Orders	3	8	4	5	8
Others <sup>18</sup>	2	1	0	0	1
<b>OFFENDER AGED 14 TO BELOW 16 YEARS (BY FILING YEAR)</b>					
Probation Orders	128	110	79	76	69
JRC Orders	32	27	18	33	38
Others	12	5	2	6	3
<b>OFFENDER AGED 16 TO BELOW 21 YEARS (BY DISPOSITION YEAR)</b>					
Probation Orders	477	362	309	299	273
Fines	324	262	132	62	75
Imprisonment <sup>19</sup>	236	181	149	104	87
Reformatory Training	126	152	134	108	118
Community-Based Sentence	17	13	14	7	6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,388</b>	<b>1,139</b>	<b>850</b>	<b>711</b>	<b>687</b>

Source: State Courts, Family Justice Courts

Nonetheless, the number of youth offenders placed in JRCs remained low, indicating that youth offender rehabilitation predominantly took place within the family and community. This is an encouraging trend that is congruent with the CYPA principle of having the family as a first line of care.

<sup>17</sup>Probation Orders given for cases involving offenders aged 7 to below 16 years, may be given together with other sentencing options, e.g., 'Probation Order + Community Service Order' and 'Probation Order + Detention Order'.

<sup>18</sup>Others refer to cases issued with standalone 'Place of Detention Order' or 'Reformatory Training'.

<sup>19</sup>Imprisonment given for cases involving offenders aged 16 to below 21, may be meted out together with sentencing options, e.g., 'Imprisonment + Caning' and 'Imprisonment + Caning + Fine'.

# 2019 AMENDMENTS TO THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PERSONS ACT

Together with the MSF, the Youth Courts' efforts are part of a larger mission to break cycles of youth offending. If youth are not effectively rehabilitated, this could exacerbate long-term trends of inter- and intra-generational offending.

The 2019 CYPA amendments aim to better equip our youth justice system in breaking cycles early on, thus preventing long-term economic and social costs from being incurred. The amendments centre on themes that focus on providing age-appropriate interventions for youth who turn to crime and successfully reintegrating them into society. These rehabilitative efforts are in turn balanced with safety and security considerations.

## Theme #1: **Expand Coverage for Youth Offenders**

Neurological studies indicate that cognitive maturity may not be fully developed till persons reach their 20s. At present, the CYPA defines a CYP as below 16 years of age. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) defines a "child" as below 18 years of age. In the UNCRC Committee's view, "children in conflict with the law" should not be treated as adult criminals.

The amendments to the CYPA address these gaps by raising the CYPA's youth offender age limit to below 18 years<sup>20</sup>. This expands the pool of youth offenders that benefit from more targeted and age-appropriate interventions provided by MSF and the wider community, including juvenile rehabilitation, detention and community service orders.

Other relevant legislation has also mirrored this raised age limit, such as the POA. Under the amended POA, the Court will be able to place a youth aged below 18 years under probation or vary a probation order without seeking consent from the youth, as well as enforce an order for damages or compensation against a probationer aged below 18 years or their parents/guardians. These related amendments strengthen the Courts' and MSF's efforts to help these youth offenders rehabilitate and reintegrate into society.

<sup>20</sup> Concurrently, the minimum age of criminal responsibility is raised from 7 to 10 in view of the Penal Code amendments, which were passed in mid-2019.

## Theme #2: **Enable Rehabilitation while Ensuring Safety**

Anticipated benefits in expanding our rehabilitative regime should be balanced against potential risks. For example, older male youth offenders present additional security concerns in MSF's residential facilities. They have greater physical strength and likelihood of ties to secret societies, and may negatively influence younger residents.

To mitigate such risks, the Court will be given discretion to calibrate sentencing for youth offenders who are unruly, or had committed serious offences. For example, the amendments enable the Youth Court to make RT orders for unruly youth at the first instance, dispensing with the requirement of a prior JRC order. Provisions will also be made to strengthen security capabilities in MSF's residential homes to better manage residents. The measures ensure that staff and youth are situated in a safe environment conducive for rehabilitation.

## Giving Youth Offenders a Second Chance

To reduce the stigma faced by youth offenders, the CYPA amendments enhance protection of identities as long as youth do not reoffend when they are older. The amendments allow youth offenders' criminal records to be deemed as spent once they successfully complete their Youth Courts orders. For example, when JRC, Community Service or Detention Orders have been completed, the youth can declare 'no' if asked whether he/she has been convicted, or has a criminal record. The youth's record will also not be disclosed during background checks which are commonly practised by prospective employers. These facilitate reintegration into society.

In consideration of CYPA principles, amendments also provide the Court with further legislative guidance when making orders. Section 28 is being amended to stipulate that the Court should facilitate the protection, rehabilitation and reintegration of CYPs with their family and society. In practice, this means that family- and community-centric options are preferred over institutionalisation.

## CONCLUSION

This chapter laid out existing rehabilitative options for youth offenders aged below 21 years, and illustrated sentencing trends through the Community Court and Youth Courts orders made over the past five years. Many youth offenders have been successfully rehabilitated and reintegrated into society. The CYPA amendments expand and enhance these efforts, allowing MSF and our partners to better break cycles of offending amongst our youth, including those aged 16 to below 18 years.



# EARLY INTERVENTION AND DIVERSIONARY MEASURES

## SYNOPSIS

This section talks about two key programmes to divert youth offenders from the Courts: Guidance Programme (GP) and Enhanced Streetwise Programme (ESWP). It also introduces the Triage System, which aims to stream youth offenders into appropriate rehabilitation programmes, and concludes with a discussion of the merits of pre-court diversionary measures.

## KEY INSIGHTS

### GP

This is a six-month pre-Court diversionary programme that aims to help youth offenders develop pro-social mindsets and life-skills. It focuses on counselling and rehabilitation, with the active involvement of parents.

### ESWP

This programme is designed for youth offenders who had played minor roles in gang-related offences. Its components include (i) regular and in-person reporting to the Singapore Police Force (SPF) by the youth; (ii) restrictions on places that the youth may visit to keep them away from gang haunts; and (iii) restrictions on people (such as gang members) whom the youth may associate with.

### Triage System

This system aims to gain insight into youth offenders' social backgrounds. It makes an assessment of how likely the youth would reoffend, which better informs SPF's decision on appropriate interventions for the youth.

## CHAPTER AT A GLANCE

- // Guidance Programme
- // Streetwise Programme (SWP) and Enhanced SWP (ESWP)
- // Triage System
- // Merits of Pre-Court Diversionary Measures

# INTRODUCTION

The Government has put in place a range of rehabilitation options to target the specific risks and needs of each offender. Diversionary programmes are available for youth who had committed minor offences. The youth are issued with police warnings when they are placed on a diversionary programme. If they complete their assigned diversionary programme such as the GP or ESWP, the youth are diverted away from the criminal justice system.

## GUIDANCE PROGRAMME

The GP was launched in 1997 to rehabilitate first-time youth offenders who had committed minor offences. It was recommended by the 1994 Inter-Ministry Committee (IMC) on Dysfunctional Families, Juvenile Delinquency and Drug Abuse, to address the rising juvenile crime rate. The IMC noted that on average, one in three youths who had been let off with a police caution without any intervention would subsequently reoffend.

The GP is a six-month pre-Court diversionary programme that focuses on counselling and rehabilitation, with the active involvement of parents. It seeks to help the youth offenders develop pro-social mindsets and life-skills. The programme is conducted by Social Service Agencies (SSAs) appointed by the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF), and the activities include individual sessions, group work and family sessions. Tables 4.1 and 4.2 show the profile of participants in the GP from 2014 to 2018, and Table 4.3 shows the completion rate.

### Enhancement to Guidance Programme

In 2014, GP (FRIENDS) was piloted to target sexualised offending behaviours in young persons aged between 10 and 18 years. It was administered by the Child Guidance Clinic, Institute of Mental Health. MSF took over the management of the programme and started GP (Positive Adolescent Sexuality Treatment [PAST]) in April 2018, for youth who had committed minor sexual offences. The programme aims to address risk factors associated with sexual offending, and covers topics such as healthy sexuality, boundaries and self-management skills.

Recognising that theft was the most common offence which youth were placed on GP for, theft intervention modules were also introduced to the programme curriculum in April 2018, to better equip youth with skills to stop their stealing behaviours.

**Table 4.1: Enrolment in GP, by Age Group and Gender, from 2014 to 2018**

AGE	GENDER	YEAR				
		2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
7 to below 12 years	M	30	21	19	9	23
	F	5	2	3	7	2
12 to below 14 years	M	80	67	52	58	61
	F	18	15	12	12	17
14 to below 16 years	M	205	219	140	156	149
	F	55	58	38	34	27
16 to below 19 years	M	153	129	105	126	149
	F	33	35	56	36	34
19 to 21 <sup>21</sup> years	M	5	5	0	3	3
	F	2	1	1	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>586</b>	<b>552</b>	<b>426</b>	<b>441</b>	<b>465</b>

Source: Ministry of Social and Family Development, Singapore Police Force

<sup>21</sup>GP referrals for youth aged between 19 to 21 years are considered on a case-by-case basis.



**Table 4.2: Enrolment in GP, by Schooling Status, from 2014 to 2018**

AGE	SCHOOLING STATUS	YEAR				
		2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
7 to below 12 years	Student	35	23	22	16	25
	Non-Student	0	0	0	0	0
12 to below 14 years	Student	97	82	63	70	77
	Non-Student	1	0	1	0	1
14 to below 16 years	Student	246	267	168	184	170
	Non-Student	14	10	10	6	6
16 to below 19 years	Student	152	126	126	140	161
	Non-Student	34	38	35	22	22
19 to 21 years	Student	7	5	1	3	2
	Non-Student	0	1	0	0	1
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>586</b>	<b>552</b>	<b>426</b>	<b>441</b>	<b>465</b>

Source: Ministry of Social and Family Development, Central Narcotics Bureau

**Table 4.3: GP Completion Rate<sup>22</sup>, from 2014 to 2018**

	YEAR				
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Total no. of cases closed	578	529	490	349	430
GP Completion Rate	<b>85.4%</b>	<b>90.1%</b>	<b>85.0%</b>	<b>81.9%</b>	<b>91.6%</b>

Source: Ministry of Social and Family Development, Singapore Police Force

### Recidivism Rate for the Guidance Programme

MSF tracks the graduates of GP for three years after the programme. Recidivism is measured by the percentage of these youth who commit offences within three years of programme graduation. The recidivism rate for GP was halved from 14.9% in 2010 to 7.8% in 2014 (Table 4.4), suggesting that the GP had been effective in curbing reoffending tendencies.

**Table 4.4: Recidivism Rate, for 2010 to 2014 cohorts**

	YEAR				
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Total no. of cases closed	14.9%	12.8%	3.8%	5.2%	7.8%

Source: Ministry of Social and Family Development, Singapore Police Force

<sup>22</sup> Completion rate is the percentage of cases satisfactorily closed in a year. It excludes cases closed as 'Others' (e.g., migrated overseas during the programme) and 'Pending outcome' (i.e., breached and investigations are ongoing). The completion rate reported is correct as of publication date – please contact the Ministry of Social and Family Development for the latest statistics.



## STREETWISE PROGRAMME AND ENHANCED STREETWISE PROGRAMME

The Streetwise Programme (SWP) was launched in 1997 together with the GP as a recommendation from the 1994 IMC. It is a voluntary early intervention programme for youth associating with gangs.

In 2012, the SWP was enhanced to become a pre-Court diversionary programme. This ESWP is for youth offenders who had played minor roles in gang-related offences. The additional components include: (i) regular and in-person reporting to the SPF by youth; (ii) restrictions on places that the youth may visit, to keep them away from gang haunts; and (iii) restrictions on people (such as gang members) whom the youth may associate with. Similar to the GP, a conditional warning is given to the youth offender when they are placed on the ESWP.

Under the ESWP, the caseworker engages the youth in a series of individual, group-based and family sessions. Through the sessions, the youth are guided to dissociate from gangs, solve conflicts in a pro-social manner, and form healthy relationships with peers of more positive influence instead. Tables 4.5 and 4.6 show the profile of participants in the GP from 2014 to 2018, and Table 4.7 shows the completion rate.

**Table 4.5: Enrolment in SWP<sup>23</sup>, by Age Group and Gender, from 2014 to 2018**

AGE	GENDER	YEAR				
		2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
7 to below 12 years	M	0	0	0	0	0
	F	0	0	0	0	0
12 to below 14 years	M	5	8	7	3	2
	F	0	0	0	0	0
14 to below 16 years	M	35	32	28	14	12
	F	0	0	0	0	0
16 to below 19 years	M	55	40	35	34	18
	F	0	0	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>95</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>32</b>

Source: Ministry of Social and Family Development, Singapore Police Force

<sup>23</sup> Numbers reported include cases from SWP and ESWP.

**Table 4.6: Enrolment in SWP, by Schooling Status, from 2014 to 2018**

AGE	SCHOOLING STATUS	YEAR				
		2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
7 to below 12 years	Student	0	0	0	0	0
	Non-Student	0	0	0	0	0
12 to below 14 years	Student	5	7	7	3	1
	Non-Student	0	1	0	0	1
14 to below 16 years	Student	34	31	28	14	12
	Non-Student	1	1	0	0	0
16 to below 19 years	Student	48	35	26	23	13
	Non-Student	7	5	9	11	5
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>95</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>32</b>

Source: Ministry of Social and Family Development, Singapore Police Force

**Table 4.7: SWP Completion Rate<sup>24</sup>, from 2014 to 2018**

	YEAR				
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Total no. of cases closed	99	98	71	59	40
SWP Completion Rate	<b>94.9%</b>	<b>91.8%</b>	<b>85.5%</b>	<b>89.5%</b>	<b>92.3%</b>

Source: Ministry of Social and Family Development, Singapore Police Force

<sup>24</sup> Completion rate is the percentage of cases satisfactorily closed in a year. It excludes cases closed as 'Others' (e.g., migrated overseas during the programme) and 'Pending outcome' (i.e., breached and investigations are ongoing). The completion rate reported is correct as of publication date – please contact the Ministry of Social and Family Development for the latest statistics.

## TRIAGE SYSTEM

In September 2011, a multi-agency Workgroup on Diversionary Measures led by the Attorney-General's Chambers (AGC) recommended that a triage system be set up. Since March 2016, AGC, MSF and SPF have implemented the triage system at the police land divisions for arrested young persons aged 18 years and below. This system helps prosecutors make more informed decisions (e.g., whether to emplace a youth offender on a diversionary programme) using information on the youth's social background, risk and needs gathered by the Triage Officer (appointed by MSF). The triage system also serves to detect social issues early and link youth offenders and their family to support services such as Family Service Centres and Social Service Offices. In April 2017, the triage system was extended to youth undergoing investigations by the Central Narcotics Bureau (CNB).

## MERITS OF PRE-COURT DIVERSIONARY MEASURES

There are merits to diverting youth who had committed minor offences from the Courts to suitable rehabilitation programmes. First, the programmes are targeted to meet these youth offenders' rehabilitation needs, so they are less likely to reoffend in the future.

Second, prosecution can be stigmatising and traumatising for youth offenders and their family. By diverting them away from the criminal justice system, these youth offenders can avoid the associated stigma and consequences, and may be better reintegrated into the community.

Third, the diversion frees up Court resources, which can be channelled to youth offenders with higher risk of reoffending, and support their rehabilitation.

## CONCLUSION

Various concerted measures, including the GP, the ESWP and the Triage System, have been put in place to divert youth offenders away from the youth justice system at the earliest possible stage. These interventions help to rehabilitate and reintegrate youth who had committed minor offences, and free up Court resources for youth with higher likelihood of reoffending.



# UPSTREAM MEASURES

## SYNOPSIS

In this section, we focus on upstream measures for preventing youth offending. We highlight existing key efforts by agencies to prevent youth from committing crimes and misusing substances. We also discuss findings from recent research studies which highlight the importance of family-related measures.

## KEY INSIGHTS

### *Existing Upstream Efforts*

Agencies have implemented a range of upstream efforts, including school-based and community-based programmes, along with drug-focused prevention efforts.

### *Recent Research Findings*

Findings from several recent studies highlighted the importance of strengthening the family, preventing childhood maltreatment, and customising intervention strategies to promote protective factors and minimise risk factors according to a youth's family profile.

## CHAPTER OUTLINE

### ■ *Existing Upstream Efforts*

- > Enhanced Holistic Support for Students
- > Enhanced STEP-UP
- > Public Education & Outreach Efforts
- > Preventive Drug Education Efforts
- > Engagement Strategy

### ■ *New Focus of Upstream Measures*

- > Strengthening Families
- > Prevention of Childhood Maltreatment
- > Strength-Based Approach Towards Fostering Protective Factors

## INTRODUCTION

In this section, we first showcase the range of upstream programmes helmed by various agencies: enhanced holistic support for youth from disadvantaged families; Enhanced STEP-UP (ESU); public education and outreach efforts; and Preventive Drug Education (PDE). Then, we present research findings that reinforce the importance of focusing upstream efforts on family-related measures, including strengthening families, preventing childhood maltreatment, and using the family profile to inform intervention measures.

## EXISTING UPSTREAM EFFORTS

### Enhanced Holistic Support for Students

While we acknowledge that student attrition is a multi-factorial problem, positive attitude towards school and positive influence in school can be protective factors against youth offending behaviour amongst other potential positive outcomes (e.g., improved academic performance). With this in mind, the Ministry of Education (MOE) is committed to enhancing school-based after-school support for disadvantaged students, to strengthen their educational outcomes and mobility.

Schools are given funding and manpower to support students along a spectrum of needs, to set up after-school centres and to ensure programme sustainability. Programmes are designed and customised based on the student profiles and needs in different schools, and run by schools in partnership with the community to enhance holistic development of disadvantaged students through activities such as academic coaching, and developing students' non-academic interests such as sports or culinary skills. MOE will also help coordinate efforts by schools to work with community partners to provide customised programming and support to students. MOE will enhance and scale up the after-school programmes to 120 schools by 2020.

On a broader level, MOE provides support to schools to strengthen the engagement of and support for students. This includes counsellors and student welfare officers who help students with school attendance issues and motivate them to return to schools. For students who are struggling with issues and are unable to cope, they will be referred for intervention by the school counsellor or to relevant external agencies for further support.

Specifically, at the primary level, school-based Student Care Centres (SCCs) provide a safe and supportive environment and adult supervision for students who need these after school hours. To date, there are 162 SCCs in primary schools. By 2020, all primary schools will have a SCC.

At the secondary level, schools offer after-school engagement programmes to engage students meaningfully after school hours. GEAR-UP (Guiding and Empowering Students for Affiliation and Resilience to Unlock their Potential) integrates two anchor programmes in secondary schools: the Time-Out Programme (TOP)<sup>25</sup> and the After-School Engagement<sup>26</sup> – both of which have helped to improve students' connectedness to their learning, peers and schools. Schools will focus on early identification of students' needs and strengthening of protective factors by providing a caring and supportive after-school environment, mentoring by significant adults and peers, and opportunities for the students to learn and serve. Schools will also work with community partners to strengthen students' social-emotional competencies and social skills through GEAR-UP.

<sup>25</sup>Started in 2007, the TOP seeks to reduce attrition rate by targeting students-at-risk. It provides a modified curriculum that emphasises resilience and social-emotional skills to help students overcome barriers that prevent them from attending school.

<sup>26</sup>Started as a pilot in 2014 and now implemented in 60 schools, the After-School Engagement (ASE) seeks to provide upstream early intervention for vulnerable students who have weaker home support.



### Enhanced STEP-UP

ESU is a 12-month support programme catered to youth<sup>27</sup> at risk of dropping out or have dropped out of school. ESU is an upstream measure that targets youth who have not offended but exhibit frequent absenteeism. The objectives of ESU are to help the youth to:

- a) Remain in school and improve attendance;
- b) Enrol into alternative academic institutions; or
- c) Be engaged in vocational training or be employed.

### Public Education & Outreach Efforts

Continued education and engagement of our youth on crime prevention and the consequences of crime is important. Therefore, the Singapore Police Force (SPF) and the community policing officers engage both Primary and Secondary School students through regular school talks. Police officers will cover various crime concerns during the school talks and advise the students to stay away from common crimes committed by youth, by highlighting case studies and the punishments for committing the crimes.

In addition, SPF introduced the Young Police Buddy (YPB) initiative in October 2018 to raise crime awareness amongst Primary School students. Through completing a list of activities on the YPB activity card, students learn how to stay away from crimes and understand the different aspects of policing work. Activities such as the designing of crime prevention posters and board games were also included to serve as a platform for students to showcase their creativity. The YPB initiative has been implemented in nine primary schools under the jurisdiction of Bedok Division thus far. Going forward, the SPF will work with MOE to expand the introduction of YPB in other primary schools.

*Participants of the Delta League celebrated their victory at the Grand Finals 2019.*





Delta League, a signature youth engagement programme by the SPF and the National Crime Prevention Council (NCPC), is organised biannually. Delta League aims to meaningfully engage youth through football during the school holidays. In addition to honing their footballing skills, the youth develop greater discipline, sportsmanship, diligence and teamwork through the games. The youth are also mentored and kept engaged throughout a series of self-improvement programmes and crime awareness activities. Through these, they learn about prevailing crimes of concern and are empowered to educate their families and friends on crime prevention. As of June 2019, SPF has a total of 130 Delta League Mentors, who are mostly SPF's Community Policing Units (CPU) officers. Police officers are also assigned to each team and serve as role models and mentors to the youth. Delta League has since grown to be the largest youth football league in Singapore with more than 2,000 youth participants every year.



Participants of the Delta League designed crime prevention posters with their mentor from the SPF.

Finally, youth hanging out late at night and falling into bad company has been a concern. To address this, police officers have been checking on these youth<sup>28</sup> as part of the Youth Hanging Out Late (YHOL) initiative and notifies the parents and schools of these youth (if they are still schooling) through letters. This initiative aims to prevent the youth from becoming targets of crime and from committing crimes.

### Preventive Drug Education Efforts

The fight against drug abuse is increasingly challenging amidst rising supply of drugs in the region and louder calls for drug decriminalisation around the world. It is more difficult to limit young Singaporeans' exposure to drugs in today's highly-connected world. Hence, we need to urgently keep out negative influences and misleading information on drug use, and more aggressively promote a drug-free lifestyle.

PDE is a pillar of the Central Narcotics Bureau's (CNB) overall drug control strategy. CNB continues to be guided by the recommendations by the Taskforce on Drugs (TFD) to improve its PDE content and outreach, such as the following measures implemented between 2016 and 2017:

- a) Developed toolkits for parents, educators, counsellors and National Service (NS) commanders;
- b) Enhanced PDE in Institutes of Higher Learning (IHLs) and among Full-Time National Servicemen;
- c) Dispelled myths regarding cannabis through online videos and printed advertorials;
- d) Expanded use of online platforms<sup>29</sup> and social media;
- e) Adopted peer advocacy approaches by forming the Anti-drug Abuse Advocacy (A3) Network with the National Council Against Drug Abuse (NCADA); and
- f) Enlisted partners to establish a United Against Drugs Coalition (UADC).

<sup>28</sup>Youth here refers to people who are 18 years and below.

<sup>29</sup>In 2016, CNB embarked on a social media rebranding campaign to consolidate the various assets (i.e., Facebook, Instagram, YouTube) under the brand name of CNB.DrugFreeSG.

## Engagement Strategy

In 2017, CNB launched a National Campaign Against Drugs that continued through 2018 and 2019. CNB's key strategy is to place continued emphasis on PDE in schools, to develop a strong PDE foundation that inoculates our youth population from young, and to encourage fellow Singaporeans to actively promote a drug-free culture in our society.

The following work streams were developed as part of the National Campaign Against Drugs:

### Government Narratives

CNB works with Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) to identify strong government narratives for Political Office Holders to deliver at high-profile platforms<sup>30</sup>, with the aims of alerting Singaporeans to the key challenges in the global drug landscape, and publicly reaffirming Singapore's firm stance against drug abuse.

### Media Campaigns

- CNB focuses on messages of strong deterrence and evidence-based narratives of Singapore's drug policies through social media campaigns.
- On the other hand, the NCADA focuses on messages of community responsibility and advocacy through nationwide media campaigns (e.g., TV commercials, outdoor ads, print advertorials and NCADA's social media platforms).
- In 2018, NCADA rolled out a "Feed Your Ambition" media campaign that aimed to motivate young people to follow their dreams, not drugs. Three key opinion leaders, who have experienced the temptation of drugs in different ways, shared their experiences and encouraged youth in a real-world manner, to be ambitious about their dreams, to work hard and never give up in the fight against temptations. Videos of them mentoring shortlisted youth were featured on social media.

### Continuous Education

- CNB continues to engage youth at MOE Primary and Secondary schools, IHLs and NS Agencies to inoculate them in different contexts through a continuous process.
- To resonate better with youth, CNB also collaborates with IHLs and young local filmmakers to produce videos that embrace youth-centric perspectives on drug abuse.
- In 2018, CNB collaborated with two Polytechnic students to conceptualise and produce a first-of-its-kind PDE illustrated book *Captain Drug Buster vs Dr. Wacko: The Final Showdown* to educate younger youth on the harms of drugs and useful refusal tips. The book also serves as an anti-drug resource for parents to engage in conversation on the topic of drugs with their children.
- CNB also engages Youth-at-Risk through targeted sharing sessions and through familiarising MSF officers on drug abuse knowledge and tell-tale signs for early intervention.

<sup>30</sup>E.g., Committee of Supply (COS) debate and international forums including Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND), ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Drug Matters (AMMD) and ASEAN Senior Officials on Drug Matters (ASOD).



## Public Events

- CNB and NCADA co-organise large-scale public events to prominently showcase our national support for the Drug-Free SG vision. They include the annual Anti-Drug Abuse Campaign (ADAC) with DanceWorks!<sup>31</sup> as the anchor event. The 20<sup>th</sup> edition of DanceWorks! as well as the inaugural DrugFreeSG Light-up event were held in June and July 2018.
- In April 2018, an inaugural Community Roadshow was also held to bring PDE beyond schools and closer to the heartlands. Apart from live demonstration of CNB's capabilities and fringe activities to raise anti-drug awareness among youth and their parents, CNB also launched the Drug-Free Zone Decals to garner our partners' support.



The grand finals of the 20<sup>th</sup> edition of DanceWorks!, an anti-drug dance competition for youth, were held at Clarke Quay in July 2018.

- CNB introduced ambient marketing initiatives such as the GURD<sup>32</sup> Club in 2017 in the form of a novel pop-up event outside The Cathay Cineplex to simulate a clubbing environment with light effects similar to the psychedelic properties of drugs and to garner youth's anti-drug support and pledges. In 2018, 3D Lift Stickers "Drugs will mess with your perception" were installed in educational institutes and public shopping malls.

## Building Advocacy

- Building on the existing foundations of the UADC, A3 Network and Anti-Drug Advocate (ADA) Programme<sup>33</sup>, CNB and NCADA continues to engage our partners and advocates through networking sessions, team bonding sessions as well as advocacy training programmes, to enhance the compositions of these advocacy networks and spur co-creation efforts from the ground up.
- Some examples of ground-up initiatives by the youth advocates included distribution of exam welfare packs in NUS to remind students to adopt a drug-free lifestyle amidst exam stress.
- One of CNB's youth advocates, Nur Afikah Bte Norazmi, became Singapore's first-ever youth representative at the annual United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Youth Forum in 2018, where participating youth exchanged ideas and perspectives on running effective programmes to promote health and prevent drug use. She also delivered a joint statement to global level policy makers to urge them to adopt policy and regulatory frameworks to support evidence-based prevention strategies.

## Regional PDE

On the regional level, CNB works closely with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) counterparts. In 2018, CNB completed a proof-of-concept ASEAN PDE Portal project to facilitate online sharing of PDE best practices and resources among ASEAN Member States, and eventually to strengthen content quality and encourage the use of effective PDE tools to engage youth in ASEAN. CNB also supported NCADA in the organisation of the inaugural Asia-Pacific Forum Against Drugs (APFAD) in 2015 and the second forum in 2017.

<sup>31</sup>This is an anti-drug dance competition for youth and young adults.

<sup>32</sup>GURD is "drug" spelt backwards.

<sup>33</sup>The ADA Programme was implemented in 2017 to develop and empower youth advocates to help correct misconceptions of drug abuse and policies, and amplify anti-drug messages within their communities.



## NEW FOCUS OF UPSTREAM MEASURES

### Strengthening Families

Looking forward, we consider what recent research findings have suggested about the importance and direction of upstream measures. In a study conducted by MSF's Centre for Research on Rehabilitation and Protection (CRRP), Chng et al. (2016)<sup>34</sup> examined the family profiles of Singaporean youth offenders based on eight family variables. With a sample of 3,744 youth offenders who were charged between 2004 and 2008, three subtypes of families and the corresponding family risk were identified: (1) intact functioning families were associated with low family risk; (2) families with criminality were associated with higher probabilities of family criminality, drug/alcohol abuse, and being non-intact; and (3) poorly-managed families i.e., poor parenting) were associated with higher probability of being non-intact. The study also found that youth offenders from the latter two subtypes of families were arrested and charged at younger ages, and reoffended at a quicker rate.

A study by Xu et al. (2018)<sup>35</sup> tested family subtypes of Singaporean youth offenders using more recent cohorts of 922 youth probationers whose orders ended in 2014 and 2015. The results were consistent with Chng et al. (2016). Three subtypes of families were identified:

- a) Intact functioning family;
- b) Family with criminal and drug abuse history; and
- c) Poorly-managed family. Compared to youth from intact functioning families, youth from the other two subtypes of families were admitted to probation at younger ages, and less likely to complete probation orders.

The findings of these two studies highlighted the importance of strengthening the family system as part of the Government's upstream efforts to prevent early entry to the youth justice system.

### Prevention of Childhood Maltreatment

Prevention of childhood maltreatment is another important area of the Government's upstream efforts. Li et al. (2015)<sup>36</sup> examined the impact of childhood maltreatment on youth offenders in Singapore. Within a sample of 3,744 youth offenders, about 6% had a childhood maltreatment history. Compared to non-maltreated counterparts, maltreated youth offenders were more likely to have had family/parental issues, such as non-intact family, parental criminality, financial or accommodation problems, parents' drug or alcohol abuse, or parents' marital conflict. Furthermore, maltreated youth offenders were 1.38 times as likely as their non-maltreated counterparts to reoffend.

The findings of this study implied that it is important for maltreated youth to be promptly provided with relevant treatment services. In addition, the Government's prevention programmes should focus on dealing with such youths' early entry into the juvenile justice system, including addressing their families' difficulties and promoting effective parenting skills, to prevent youth with childhood maltreatment history from offending.

<sup>34</sup>Chng, G. S., Chu, C. M., Zeng, G., Li, D., & Ting, M. H. (2016). A latent class analysis of family characteristics linked to youth offending outcomes. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 53(6), 765-787.

<sup>35</sup>Xu, X., Li, D., Chng, G. S., Ting, M. H., Chu, C. M., & Ruby, K. (2018). *Examining effects of family factors on youth delinquency: Mediation of protective factors*. Presented at the Australian Institute of Family Studies 2018 Conference, Melbourne, Australia.

<sup>36</sup>Li, D., Chu, C. M., Goh, J. T. L., Ng, I. Y., & Zeng, G. (2015). Impact of childhood maltreatment on recidivism in youth offenders: A matched-control study. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 42(10), 990-1007.

## Strength-Based Approach Towards Fostering Protective Factors

Adoption of a strengths-based approach may help foster protective factors and minimise risk factors surrounding youth development. In a study by Li et al. (2019)<sup>27</sup>, a typology of risk and protective factors based on the respective relationship with outcomes was proposed. Using a sample of 701 youth offenders whose probation orders ended in 2013 and 2014, the study identified different strengths, which were the *booster* and *buffering* factors for family supervision. A *booster* factor referred to a protective factor that increased the effect of another protective factor, or a risk factor that augmented the effect of another risk factor. A *buffering* factor, in contrast, referred to a protective factor that reduced the effect of a risk factor. The study observed that for youth with high family supervision, significant *protective booster* factors included positive attitudes toward probation agreements and conditions, motivation for treatment, perseverance, bonding to school/work and low levels of risk in peer relations and education/employment. On the other hand, for youth with limited family supervision, protective factors included developing their self-control, and focusing their vision on a positive future such as in school or employment.

These insights showed that a differentiated approach in prevention and intervention strategy based on family profiles would work better. For instance, interventions for youth with limited family supervision could be enhanced to include the protective factors mentioned above, such as keeping them engaged in school or employment.

Xu et al. (2018) also found that youth probationers from different subtypes of families had different levels of protective factors. Compared to youth from intact functioning families:

- a) Youth from families with a history of criminality and drug abuse were less likely to keep promises and commitments, or to have experienced warm parent-child relationships and family supervision.
- b) Youth from poorly-managed families reported lower levels of coping, perseverance, bonding to school/work and family supervision, greater disengagement from agreements and conditions, and weaker parent-child relationship.

The findings implied that different types of family disadvantages could affect youth offenders in different ways. With this understanding, practitioners could then tailor their interventions to target specific needs of youth offenders, thereby mitigating the negative influence of family disadvantages on youth offenders. In this regard, a strengths-based approach may be useful in designing such upstream interventions.

## CONCLUSION

There is already a range of upstream measures today, including school-based and community-based programmes, and drug-focused prevention efforts. Notwithstanding these initiatives, recent research has identified the family as a new key focus of upstream measures, particularly in strengthening families, preventing child maltreatment, and using the family profile to customise strategies for preventing and intervening in youth offending. As we look ahead to consider how to further reduce youth offending rates, we can consider what type of family-based prevention and intervention strategies may be needed, and how the knowledge we have on youth offenders' families may inform the process.

<sup>27</sup>Li, D., Chu, C. M., Xu, X., Zeng, G., & Ruby, K. (2019). Risk and protective factors for probation success among youth offenders in Singapore. *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1541204018778887>.





## CONCLUSION

Youth delinquency remains a concern for Singapore. Though the at-risk youth population remains small and the number of youth arrests is declining, we can do more collectively to further reduce the number of youth offenders. Our research has found that youth offending not only threatens community safety and security, but may also have enduring effects on youth's economic well-being, attitudes and behaviours. We believe that every youth matters. Every young person deserves the right to be able to achieve their potential.

The report has showcased the range of judiciary, diversionary and preventive measures available today. It also highlights the importance of upstream measures to prevent the onset of at-risk behaviours and break the cycles of offending and reoffending. Through designing and implementing evidence-informed, targeted interventions, we can achieve better outcomes for youth offenders and at-risk youth.





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