

PART 1 OF 3

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A PROMISE TO SINGAPORE'S CHILDREN

Sometimes, when our days are packed with school and co-curricular activities, we may feel that we do not have enough time for family, friends, or even ourselves. Growing up in a developed society like Singapore, we tend to take for granted the things that keep us safe, like access to quality healthcare.

In 1989, the United Nations adopted an international human rights agreement known as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). It recognises your right to grow up in a healthy and safe environment, while setting out global standards on the provision of healthcare, education, legal and social services for children.

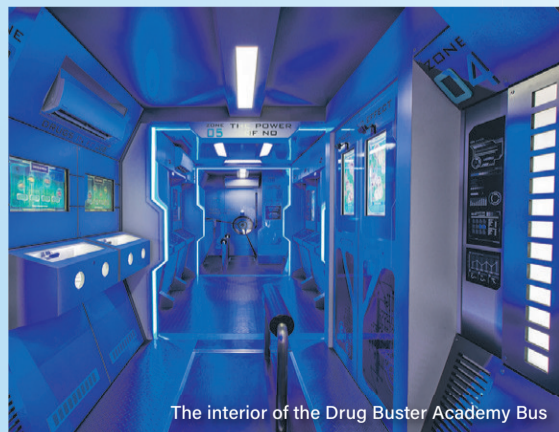
Singapore protects these rights in various ways. Here are some examples that show why these efforts matter to you.

TO KEEP YOUR FUTURE DRUG-FREE

Throughout your schooling years, you probably have come across skits, engagement programmes and even augmented reality exhibitions organised by the Central Narcotics Bureau as part of its Preventive Drug Education (PDE) programme. These outreach efforts also include the high-tech and interactive Drug Buster Academy – a mobile exhibit to educate you on the dangers of drugs and inhalant abuse.

Such anti-drug abuse education efforts highlight Singapore's commitment towards Article 33 of the UNCRC, which says that children should be protected from the illegal use, production and distribution of drugs. Drugs have serious and dangerous effects that can affect your health and your future.

These efforts help to keep you safe as you grow up.



The interior of the Drug Buster Academy Bus

PHOTO: CENTRAL NARCOTICS BUREAU



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TO NURTURE HEALTHY HABITS FROM YOUNG

Under Article 24 of the UNCRC, children and young people have a right to access healthcare services, clean water and nutritious foods. Keeping you healthy goes beyond having a robust healthcare system; it also involves helping you adopt good habits that keep you fit and healthy for life.

For example, cooks and canteen vendors at all schools are trained to provide healthier school meals that have more fruits and vegetables, and use healthier cooking methods like baking and grilling. This Healthy Meals in Schools Programmes (HMSP), launched in 2011 and rolled out to all schools in 2017, is part of Singapore's vision to ensure "Healthy Meals for Every Child".



PHOTO: HEALTH PROMOTION BOARD

Regular exercise is also key to maintaining good health. You are exposed to a variety of sports and physical activity programmes in school. On weekends, you and your family can jog in the park, take a walk in Singapore Botanic Gardens or join a dance class at your nearest community centre.

Having healthy habits can greatly reduce your likelihood of developing chronic diseases (such as heart disease, cancer and diabetes) in the future, so that you can lead a long and healthy life.

TO PROTECT YOUR MENTAL WELL-BEING

Apart from physical health, your mental and emotional health are just as important. The character and citizenship curriculum for primary and secondary schools will be renewed from this year, with a new focus on cyber wellness and mental wellness. As technology becomes more prevalent in our lives, teaching you how to safely navigate the Internet, especially on social media, helps to create a healthy environment for you to grow and learn.

Schools will also implement new emotional and mental support structures by 2022. Some of you may be selected to be peer support leaders, to look out for your fellow schoolmates' well-being. This way, we can learn to help our peers in need, develop empathy for one another and build a more inclusive society.

These are just some of the initiatives in place to ensure that you can learn, play and thrive during your formative years, and benefit from them even into adulthood.

About UNCRC

The treaty came into force in 1990; and Singapore acceded to it in 1995.

The UNCRC's 54 articles set out the rights that children are entitled to. They are generally based on the following four core principles:

1. Non-discrimination;
2. Best interest of the child;
3. Right to life, survival and development;
4. Respect for the views of the child

As of today, 196 countries are party to the UNCRC – this makes it the most widely-ratified human rights treaty in the world.

MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUIZ

Q1. How many articles are there in the UNCRC?
a) 43 b) 51 c) 54 d) 59

Q2. When was the Healthy Meals in Schools Programme launched?
a) 2012 b) 2011 c) 2018 d) 2014

Q3. Which agency manages the Drug Buster Academy?
a) Central Narcotics Bureau
b) Ministry of Health
c) Government Technology Agency
d) Ministry of Education