



NACADA
FOR A NATION FREE FROM ALCOHOL AND DRUG ABUSE

NACADA QUARTERLY

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INVEST IN PREVENTION: NACADA CHAMPIONS THE FIGHT AGAINST ALCOHOL AND DRUG ABUSE IN EMBU AND BEYOND

DATA AS THE WEAPON: KENYA LAUNCHES NATIONAL DRUG OBSERVATORY TO FIGHT SUBSTANCE ABUSE

CONFESSION OF A COPYWRITER: WHEN THE MESSAGE BECOMES THE HABIT

CLICKS TO CHANGE: NACADA'S DIGITAL FIGHT AGAINST ADDICTION

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INVEST IN PREVENTION: NACADA CHAMPIONS THE FIGHT AGAINST ALCOHOL AND DRUG ABUSE IN EMBU AND BEYOND



NACADA Board Chair Dr. Stephen Mairori, EBS leading the National IDADA celebrations at Umu Stadium, Embu County

By Simon Mwangi

Embu, Kenya – June 26, 2025

The National Authority for the Campaign Against Alcohol and Drug Abuse (NACADA) marked this year's International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking (IDADA) with a powerful call to action: prevention is the first line of defence in the war against substance abuse.

The national celebrations, held in Embu County, brought together government officials, community leaders, youth, and anti-drug advocates under the theme The evidence is clear: invest in prevention. Break the cycle. #StopOrganizedCrime. NACADA Board Chairman, Dr. Rev. Stephen Mairori, emphasized that curbing alcohol and drug abuse begins with proactive measures rather than reactive solutions.

"Prevention is not only cost-effective but also one of the most sustainable strategies in this fight," declared Rev. Mairori. "By educating our youth, empowering families, and creating supportive environments, we can stop addiction before it starts. Every shilling spent on prevention saves countless lives and resources that would otherwise go into treatment and rehabilitation."

The event, graced by Eastern Regional Commissioner Paul Rotich, highlighted NACADA's multi-sectoral approach in tackling substance abuse. Rotich lauded the authority's efforts, noting that community engagement and awareness campaigns have significantly reduced drug-related harm in the region.

"NACADA's work aligns with the government's Bottom-Up Economic Transformation Agenda by fostering healthy, productive communities," said Rotich. "When we prevent drug abuse, we secure our future workforce, reduce crime, and promote national development."

Similar celebrations were replicated across all 47 counties, with NACADA's county coordinators leading marches, school sensitisation programs, and stakeholder forums. From Mombasa to Turkana, the message was clear: investing in prevention today safeguards tomorrow.

As Kenya continues to grapple with the devastating effects of alcohol and drug abuse, NACADA's IDADA 2025 celebrations serve as a timely reminder—the best cure is stopping the problem before it begins.

CELEBRATING THE POWER OF STORYTELLING IN KENYA'S FIGHT AGAINST SUBSTANCE ABUSE



The Authority's Director of Corporate Services, CPA Patrick Obura (center), presents an award to NTV's Brygettes Ngana and Sam Munia, some of the winners in the Health and Substance Abuse category at the Annual Journalism Excellence Awards (AJEA).

By Simon Mwangi

The glow of camera flashes illuminated the room as Kenya's most dedicated journalists gathered for a moment of well-deserved recognition. The Authority had the honor of awarding exceptional reporters in the Health and Substance Abuse category at the Media Council of Kenya's Annual Journalism Excellence Awards (AJEA).

This wasn't just another awards ceremony - it was a celebration of courageous storytelling that's actively reshaping Kenya's battle against drug and alcohol abuse, as evidenced by NTV's winners Rose Wangui, Brygettes Ngana, and Sam Munia.

As CPA Patrick Obura, NACADA's Director of Corporate Services, presented awards to this year's winners, including celebrated for their groundbreaking series on prescription drug abuse among students, and others for their investigative pieces on county-level drug trafficking networks, he reflected on their impact. "These journalists are the unsung heroes of our national prevention efforts," Obura noted. "Through their fearless reporting and compassionate storytelling, they're not just documenting the crisis but actively changing narratives and saving lives."

The weight of their achievement was palpable as each winner accepted their award. These weren't just trophies being handed out, but symbols of recognition for work that has exposed drug cartels, shattered dangerous myths about addiction, and perhaps most importantly, given voice to recovery stories that offer hope to countless families. In a country where one in five youth grapple with substance abuse according to NACADA's 2024 data, these journalists have become unexpected frontline warriors.

In an era where misinformation spreads faster than facts, their balanced reporting does more than inform - it saves lives. Their investigative pieces have prompted policy reviews, their human-interest stories have reduced the stigma around seeking treatment, and their warnings about emerging threats like synthetic opioids have potentially prevented countless tragedies. "The awarded journalists have proven that the pen, when wielded with precision and compassion, can be mightier than even the most entrenched drug networks," Obura emphasized during the ceremony.

From deep dives into successful rehabilitation programs to exposés on new prevention strategies, these journalists have shown that substance abuse coverage can be both hard-hitting and hopeful. Their work embodies NACADA CEO Dr. Anthony Omerikwa's vision that "every ethical report about drug abuse plants seeds for a healthier nation."

As the applause faded and the award winners returned to their seats, the challenge became clear: we need more of this courageous reporting. More newsrooms investing in specialized health journalism. More collaborations between media and substance abuse experts. More stories that don't just document the crisis, but actively contribute to solving it.

For in the end, these awards recognize more than excellent journalism. They celebrate stories that change minds, stories that save lives, and stories that are helping write a new, healthier chapter for Kenya. That's not just news worth reporting, it's news worth celebrating. As Obura concluded in his remarks: "Tonight we honor not just individual achievements, but the transformative power of truth-telling in our collective fight for a drug-free nation."

UNMASKING THE SECRET LANGUAGE OF ONLINE DRUG SALES



By Debra Gwaro

A picture is worth a thousand words, but an emoji could be worth a thousand doses. “In the digital age, emojis have evolved beyond simple expressions of emotion to become secret tools in the illicit drug trade. Globally, dealers exploit these symbols on social media platforms to subtly advertise and sell narcotics, successfully evading authorities and parents' detection. Kenya is vulnerable to the possible entry of this trend, even though it is well-documented in countries like the US and the UK.

The National Authority for the Campaign Against Alcohol and Drug Abuse (NACADA) has raised alarms over the escalating drug abuse crisis among Kenyan university students. A recent study revealed that 45.6% of these students have engaged in drug use at least once, with substances ranging from alcohol and tobacco to cannabis and emerging drugs like methamphetamine and codeine syrup. This statistic underscores the urgency of tackling drug abuse among the youth, as it highlights a significant portion of the student population at risk, necessitating immediate and comprehensive intervention strategies.

The combination of drug trafficking and digital communication poses a serious challenge. Emojis such as the maple leaf (🍁) for marijuana, snowflake (❄️) for cocaine, and pill (💊) for prescription drugs are used to subtly indicate that these substances are available. This coded language complicates efforts to monitor and curb the spread of narcotics among young people.

Consider a hypothetical scenario: a Kenyan university student, feeling overwhelmed by academic pressures, turns to social media for comfort. They encounter posts featuring a series of emojis—a plug (🔌), a cookie (🍪), and a flame (🔥)—which, unbeknownst to them, signify a dealer advertising high-quality drug. Intrigued, the student initiates contact, inadvertently entering the dangerous world of substance abuse.

To combat this emerging threat, a collective effort is essential. Parents, educators, and guardians must familiarise themselves with these hidden symbols and maintain open dialogues with the youth about their online activities. Educational institutions should incorporate digital literacy programmes that highlight the risks connected with online interactions. Furthermore, policymakers need to collaborate with tech companies to improve monitoring and quickly remove content that promotes drug trafficking.

In conclusion, as technology continues to progress, so do the methods used by those involved in illicit activities. Proactive measures, rooted in awareness and education, are vital to safeguarding Kenyan youth from the hidden dangers lurking behind seemingly harmless emojis.

DATA AS THE WEAPON: KENYA LAUNCHES NATIONAL DRUG OBSERVATORY TO FIGHT SUBSTANCE ABUSE



The Authority's CEO, Dr. Anthony Omerikwa speaks during the launch of the National Drug Observatory (NDO) Workshop at Radisson Blu Hotel in Nairobi

By Simon Mwangi

Imagine fighting an invisible enemy without a map, a strategy, or even a clear sense of its movements. For years, Kenya's fight against drug abuse and trafficking has faced this exact challenge, until now.

June marked a key moment in the war on drugs with the launch of the National Drug Observatory (NDO) Workshop, a data-driven initiative set to transform how Kenya detects, monitors, and combats the scourge of substance abuse.

Why Data? Because Numbers Tell Human Stories

"Trying to fight drugs without data is like driving at night with your headlights off," declared NACADA Chief Executive Officer Dr. Anthony Omerikwa at the workshop. "You might move, but sooner or later you'll crash."

Behind every percentage point in drug prevalence rates lies a real-life tragedy, a teenager lost to addiction, a family shattered by trafficking, a community crippled by illicit trade. The NDO turns raw numbers into actionable intelligence, ensuring policies aren't based on guesswork but on solid, hard facts.

A Regional Shield Against Traffickers

Drug cartels don't respect borders. They exploit weak links, slipping through undetected. Kenya's solution? A Regional Drug Observatory, designed to foster cross-border intelligence sharing with partners like the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC), EU-ACT, and the Eastern and Southern Africa Commission on Drugs (ESACD).

Early Warnings, Faster Action

New synthetic drugs emerge at an alarming speed. Fentanyl-laced pills, designer stimulants, and ever-evolving narcotics demand real-time surveillance. The NDO acts as Kenya's early-warning system, detecting trends before they escalate into full-blown crises.

"This isn't just about collecting data," emphasised Dr. Omerikwa. "It's about converting it into courageous action—saving lives before they're lost."

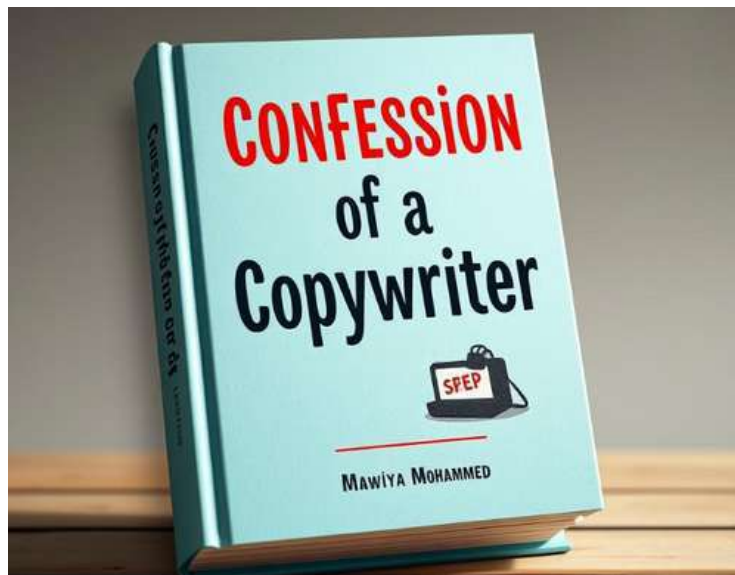
A Call to Action

The fight against drugs isn't NACADA's alone. Law enforcement, healthcare workers, educators, and citizens all have a part to play. With the NDO, every tip, report, and piece of intelligence feeds into a system designed to predict, prevent, and protect.



The Authority's CEO, Dr. Anthony Omerikwa together with the 3rd President of South Africa, Kgalema Petrus Motlanthe and Esther Passaris, OGW, Nairobi County Women Representative

CONFESSION OF A COPYWRITER: WHEN THE MESSAGE BECOMES THE HABIT



By Maawiya Mohammed

Copywriting is the quiet force behind much of modern advertising.

It's the choice of words on a billboard, the tone of a product caption, the call-to-action in a campaign. As a copywriter, my job is to help shape how people respond — emotionally and behaviour wise — to brands. But lately, I've noticed a trend that raises important questions.

While I don't work on alcohol brands myself, I've been observing how messaging in that space is evolving — and who it's targeting.

Alcohol is no longer just being marketed with bold logos or party scenes. Instead, it's being packaged with softness and elegance. Pastel colours. Minimalist labels. Captions that read like affirmations: "You deserve this," "Your weekend ritual," "Unwind your way." The tone is gentle. The visuals are curated. And the message is emotionally rewarding. This isn't random. It's strategy.

These campaigns are designed to make alcohol feel not only acceptable, but aspirational — particularly to audiences who are more susceptible to emotional and identity-based messaging. Women. Students. Young professionals. People still forming lifestyle habits and routines.

The goal is no longer just a sale. It's a ritual. A mood. A recurring association.

And that's where the concern begins.

From a communication standpoint, repetition is powerful. When messaging appears regularly — especially before weekends or during lifestyle-heavy content — it becomes familiar.

That familiarity then turns into normalcy. Eventually, the product stops looking like a decision, and starts feeling like a natural part of someone's life.

In these cases, alcohol is positioned less as a beverage and more as a symbol — of freedom, self-care, sophistication, or reward. And when the audience sees that message over and over, wrapped in beauty and softness, it becomes harder to question the intent behind it.

Advertisers have mastered the use of emotional storytelling, repetition, and aesthetics to build positive brand identity. Warmth, beauty, and mood are tools often used to create connection — but those same tools can just as easily normalize behaviours with long-term health consequences. That deserves reflection.

This isn't about banning ads or discrediting creative work. It's about accountability.

Because when messaging is dressed up in beauty, and behaviour is encouraged through repetition, it stops being just communication — and becomes a cue.

And if those cues become habits, the real question becomes: What are people being conditioned to stay loyal to — and at what cost?

THE HIDDEN STRUGGLE: WHERE MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE INTERSECT



By Debra Gwaro

Many cases of substance misuse have an underlying, often invisible, cause: mental health issues. Conditions such as anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and bipolar disorder are frequently linked with drug and alcohol use, especially among university students in Kenya. According to a 2024 NACADA report, 46% of university students in Kenya have tried at least one drug or substance, with 26.6% currently using. Alcohol remains the most accessible, with an availability rate of 87.3% among students. Beneath these figures lie untold stories of emotional suffering, untreated mental illnesses, and a lack of support systems, all factors that make combating addiction even more challenging.

This issue is compounded by factors such as pressure to excel academically, being away from family, and living independently. Understanding the relationship between substance addiction and mental health is essential for developing effective prevention and intervention strategies.

People facing mental health struggles might turn to substances as a means of coping, escaping, or regaining a sense of control, even if only temporarily. Self-medication can quickly develop into addiction, exacerbating both psychological and physical health issues. Regular substance abuse can also trigger underlying mental health conditions, alter brain chemistry, or worsen symptoms that could otherwise be managed.

This connection between mental health and substance abuse, often called a co-occurring disorder, is more prevalent than many realize. Nonetheless, it frequently remains undiagnosed or untreated, partly due to the stigma attached to both topics. Those affected may fear judgment or may not recognise the link between their emotional well-being and their substance use.

Addressing this dual challenge requires more than short-term solutions. It demands a compassionate, informed, and sustained approach that recognises the importance of mental well-being in the journey towards recovery. Additionally, society must shift its perspective: from viewing substance misuse as a standalone issue to understanding it as part of broader mental health concerns.

Increased dialogue, awareness campaigns, and education are vital to highlighting this issue. Only then can we begin to foster supportive environments where individuals feel safe to seek help, not just for their addiction, but also for the underlying emotional factors.

Mental health and substance abuse are not separate struggles; they often represent two aspects of the same challenge. Recognising this is the initial step towards meaningful and lasting change.

FENTANYL: THE HIDDEN DANGER WE CAN'T IGNORE



By Debra Gwaro

"It's just one pill—what's the worst that could happen?" You've probably heard someone say this before—maybe even a young person curious about experimenting with drugs. But here's the scary truth: when it comes to fentanyl, that one pill could be deadly.

Fentanyl is a powerful synthetic opioid, originally created in 1959 for medical use. Doctors prescribe it to treat severe pain—think post-surgery recovery or cancer treatment. But outside the hospital, illegally made fentanyl has become a silent killer, responsible for a growing number of overdoses worldwide—including here in Kenya.

What makes fentanyl so dangerous? For starters, it's extremely potent—up to 50 times stronger than heroin and 100 times stronger than morphine. Even more alarming is how it's often hidden in other drugs like heroin, cocaine, or even fake prescription pills, leaving users unaware they're consuming it. Just 2 milligrams—about the size of a few grains of salt—can be fatal.

You might find fentanyl in different forms: swallowed as counterfeit pills, smoked or snorted as powder, injected, or absorbed through patches (when prescribed legally). On the streets, it goes by names like China Girl, Murder 8, He-Man, and Dance Fever—but no matter what it's called, the risks remain the same.

At first, fentanyl might bring a short-lived sense of euphoria, relaxation, and pain relief. But those fleeting effects quickly give way to confusion, slowed or stopped breathing, unconsciousness, and—in the worst cases—death from respiratory failure.

While fentanyl often makes headlines in the U.S. and Europe, Kenya is not immune. Illicit pills and powders containing fentanyl have been found in local markets, sometimes disguised as common medications.

So what can we do? The best defense is awareness. Open, honest conversations about the dangers of drug use—especially with young people—are crucial. Recognizing the signs of overdose (like slow breathing, unresponsiveness, or blue lips) can save lives. And spreading the word is essential, because many people still don't realize just how deadly fentanyl can be.

At NACADA, we're committed to fighting this threat through education and prevention. Let's work together to keep our communities safe—because when it comes to fentanyl, ignorance can be deadly.

Stay alert. Stay informed. Let's protect each other.

EMPOWERING YOUTH THROUGH TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP: A SHIELD AGAINST DRUG ABUSE



By Debra Gwaro

The Kenya Institute of Special Education (KISE) buzzed with energy on June 9th as NACADA CEO Dr. Anthony Omerikwa officially opened a groundbreaking five-day Transformational Leadership Program. Under the powerful theme "Fresh Perspectives, Stronger Bonds, Lasting Transformation," this initiative by The Young People's Network International (TYPNI) brought together 70 dynamic young leaders equipped to spark real change in their communities.

In his stirring keynote address, Dr. Omerikwa shared his personal leadership journey, revealing how programs like these shaped his path. "Leadership isn't about titles - it's about tangible impact," he told the attentive young audience. "Time is the one resource given equally to us all. How you invest it determines whether you'll become part of society's solution." The CEO particularly emphasized how such leadership development serves as a critical deterrent against substance abuse. "When we empower youth with purpose, resilience and decision-making skills, we're not just creating leaders - we're building natural resistance against the lure of drugs and alcohol," he noted.

The collaboration between TYPNI and NACADA represents a strategic approach to youth development. By partnering with organizations like the Association of County Students Association Presidents (ACSAP-Kenya), they're creating a ripple effect of positive influence across institutions. "We're not just training leaders," Dr. Omerikwa explained, "We're cultivating game-changers who'll transform their communities through integrity and purpose-driven action."

At the heart of this initiative lies a profound African wisdom that both organizations embrace: "If we train the youth well, we won't have to fix broken adults."

This philosophy drives their shared mission to nurture accountable, visionary leaders while promoting drug-free lifestyles.

As Dr. Omerikwa concluded his address, he left the young participants with a compelling challenge: "The leadership skills you gain here are more than tools for success - they're armor against destructive choices. Each of you carries the potential to influence peers away from substance abuse and toward meaningful achievement."

Through such transformative programs, NACADA and TYPNI are planting seeds today for a healthier, stronger Kenya tomorrow - proving that leadership development might be one of our most powerful weapons in the fight against drug abuse.

For more information about youth leadership programs and substance abuse prevention, visit NACADA's website or contact TYPNI directly.

Did You Know?

Research shows that youth engaged in leadership programs are:

- 60% less likely to experiment with drugs
- 45% more likely to intervene when peers consider substance use
- 3x more likely to become community change-makers

(Source: National Youth Leadership Council, 2024)

DITCH THE HIGH, FIND YOUR THRILL: BETTER WAYS TO LIVE LOUD

We get it. That urge to escape, to fit in, to feel something more. Maybe you've told yourself: "It's just for fun" or "This helps me forget" or "Everyone's doing it." But here's the real talk - there are way better highs out there that won't wreck your future.

Let's break it down. Youth turn to substances for all sorts of reasons - chasing thrills, numbing pain, or just trying to belong. You're not ignorant; you know exactly which pill keeps you up, which one knocks you out, and which one gives that temporary escape. But temporary is the key word here. That fake happiness always comes with a crushing comedown.

Here's the good news: Your body and mind crave that adrenaline, that euphoria, that sense of belonging - and we can get you there without the drugs. Imagine this instead:

- Nature highs where your lungs burn from hiking trails, not from smoke
- Competition adrenaline from showcasing your real talents (yes, with actual cash prizes)
- Mental freedom from mentors who've been where you are and fought their way out
- That exhausted, accomplished feeling after a day so packed with action you couldn't even think about substances

NACADA's stepping up with outdoor adventures, talent battles, and real talk from people who survived addiction. But here's the secret sauce - you have to choose a different path. The kind of high that comes from leveling up your skills, pushing your limits, and building authentic connections? That rush lasts way longer than any drug-induced fantasy.

Your generation doesn't need escapes - you need challenges worthy of your potential. So here's our challenge to you: Find your better high. The kind that leaves you proud when you wake up tomorrow.

Ready to trade fake highs for real thrills? Follow NACADA for upcoming events that'll actually amp up your life.

Hot Take: The most rebellious thing you can do today? Stay sober in a world that keeps telling you to check out. Be present. Be powerful. Be you.

Tamera Psenjen

BEHIND THE TOAST: IS CORPORATE CULTURE NORMALISING SUBSTANCE USE?



By Maawiya Mohammed

In many formal workspaces today, productivity, innovation, and collaboration are highly valued. But alongside these ideals, there exists another, often overlooked element: the role of workplace social culture — and how it can quietly normalise the use of alcohol and other substances.

For many professionals, especially young employees entering corporate spaces, substance use is rarely introduced through rebellion. It often comes dressed in formality: an open bar at a client event, a toast at the company dinner, or drinks offered “on the house” after a successful quarter.

These rituals aren’t problematic on their own. Celebration is a natural part of any workplace. But when alcohol becomes the default mode of bonding, networking, or reward — that’s when culture begins to reinforce behaviour more than we realise.

Across Kenya’s urban corporate landscape, events like team buildings, retreats, end-of-year parties, and even leadership workshops often include alcohol as a built-in feature. Whether it’s cocktails during a sunset cruise or branded drinks at a conference, the message isn’t overt — but it is consistent.

Participation is optional, of course. But when everyone is involved, choosing not to engage can feel isolating. For new employees or younger staff, especially, this can create social pressure to “blend in,” even when it goes against personal values or health boundaries.

With the rise of creative industries, tech startups, and agency culture, the lines between professional and social spaces have become even more relaxed. Work dinners, offsite brainstorming, and weekend retreats often feel casual — and substance use, in turn, feels less like a vice and more like a vibe.

This culture isn’t exclusive to alcohol. In some cases, there’s growing anecdotal evidence of casual cannabis use or stimulant pills in high-pressure industries, especially where long hours and performance anxiety are common.

Normalisation doesn’t always happen loudly. Sometimes, it occurs quietly — through repetition and subtle reinforcement. When certain behaviours are consistently rewarded, unchallenged, or wrapped in celebration, they can become embedded in professional identity.

This is particularly important when considering younger employees who may still be forming their habits, limits, and sense of belonging. Exposure in such environments can set patterns that persist far beyond the office.

This isn’t a call to cancel celebration or remove social fun from workspaces. Rather, it’s a call for balance. Companies can remain vibrant and people-centred without centering every major milestone around alcohol or substances. Offering alternative activities, sober-friendly options, and open conversations about inclusion can go a long way. After all, true team culture is built not just on shared drinks — but on shared values, respect, and the freedom for everyone to fully show up.

JUKWAA LA USALAMA PROVIDES PLATFORM FOR CLOSER NGAO INTERACTION



The Authority's CEO, Dr. Anthony Omerikwa speaks during final leg of the jukwaa la Usalama - Upper Eastern Edition held in Embu County

By Simon Mwangi

NACADA took its fight against alcohol and drug abuse to the grassroots, participating in the Jukwaa la Usalama county forums spearheaded by the Cabinet Secretary for Interior and National Administration, Hon. Kipchumba Murkomen. These high-impact forums provided a critical platform for NACADA to engage with National Government Administration Officers (NGAO); key frontline stakeholders in the war against substance abuse.

NACADA CEO Dr. Anthony Omerikwa emphasized the importance of the forums, stating, "Jukwaa la Usalama offered us a direct line to NGAO officers, the eyes, ears, and voices of our communities. By equipping them with knowledge and resources, we amplify our reach beyond Nairobi into every village and neighborhood."

The forums, held across multiple counties, brought together security teams, county commissioners, and local leaders to address pressing safety concerns—with drug abuse ranking high on the agenda. NACADA seized the opportunity to:

- Sensitize NGAO officers on identifying and reporting drug hotspots,
- Distribute educational materials to support community sensitization,
- Strengthen collaborations for enforcement and rehabilitation referrals.

With NGAO officers embedded in every sub-location, their role in NACADA's strategy is irreplaceable. They bridge the gap between policy and action, ensuring anti-drug efforts don't stall at the national level but trickle down to those most affected.

Dr. Omerikwa confirmed plans to institutionalize these engagements, with NGAO officers becoming certified NACADA ambassadors. "When chiefs, assistant chiefs, and Nyumba Kumi leaders speak, communities listen. We're leveraging that trust to save lives."

The Authority's participation underscores its commitment to decentralized, collaborative solutions in the fight against substance abuse.



YOUR SILENT GUARDIAN IN THE FIGHT AGAINST ADDICTION



By Tamera Tamnai Psenjen

Let's be real - when you hear "government agency," your first instinct might be to tune out. But NACADA isn't about bureaucracy or red tape. We're the helping hand you never knew you needed in your darkest moments - no judgment, no politics, just real solutions.

Picture this: It's 3 AM. The weight of addiction - yours or a loved one's - feels crushing. You need to talk to someone who gets it. That's where we come in. Our 24/7 helpline (yes, completely free) connects you to understanding voices ready to help. Need more than a call? Walk right into our offices. You'll find open doors and open hearts, whether you're taking the first scary step toward recovery or fighting to keep someone you love alive.

We've seen it all - the trembling hands of first-time visitors carrying worlds of pain, and the steady strides of those walking out transformed. Because here's what many don't realize: addiction never travels alone. It brings along anxiety, depression, and shattered self-worth. That's why we treat your mind and body as one - healing the whole you, not just the addiction.

But we're not waiting for you to find us. We're in schools showing teens the truth before they make life-altering choices. On your radio during morning commutes. In communities through roadshows that feel more like family interventions than lectures. And when rehab becomes necessary? We're with you every step - from that terrifying first decision through the rollercoaster of recovery and beyond.

Addiction thrives in isolation. We break that cycle. Whether you need information, intervention, or just someone who won't flinch at your truth - we've got you. Today, tomorrow, and all the tomorrows after that.

Your move. Call, walk in, or reach out. The help that changes everything is closer than you think.

NACADA Helpline: 1192

Because sometimes the bravest thing you can do is let someone help.

Did You Know?

- 8/10 people in recovery say having non-judgmental support made all the difference
- Early intervention increases recovery success rates by 65%
- You're 3x more likely to quit successfully with professional guidance

(Source: World Health Organization, 2024)

VAPING: THE SWEET TRAP THAT'S STEALING YOUR FUTURE



By Tamera Tamnai Psenjen

That sweet-smelling cloud isn't as innocent as it looks. Let's cut through the haze - vaping might dress itself up as the "cool" alternative to smoking, but it's just addiction in a flashy package.

We get why you'd think it's safer. No tobacco, no smoke, just flavored vapor, right? Wrong. That sleek device you're puffing is delivering a dangerous cocktail of nicotine, chemicals, and artificial flavors straight to your lungs. And here's the scary part - because it tastes like candy and doesn't burn your throat like cigarettes, you end up vaping way more than you'd ever smoke. More puffs = more damage.

Remember lockdown? When the world shut down, vaping blew up. Clever marketers saw bored teens as easy targets - flooding social media with trendy devices, offering doorstep delivery, and creating flavors that might as well be called "Addiction Starter Pack." Those cool smoke rings? They're not just harmless tricks - they're the billboards of a growing addiction.

Here's what they don't tell you when you take that first puff:

- Your brain gets hooked on nicotine faster than you realize
- That "stress relief" is actually anxiety waiting to happen when you can't get your fix
- Your lungs weren't designed to process candy-flavored chemicals
- That "cool kid" image? It disappears fast when you can't focus in class without a hit

It's time to clear the air:

- Vaping isn't safe - it's addiction with better marketing
- Those flavors are designed to hook you young
- Your future self will thank you for quitting now

NACADA's sounding the alarm because we've seen where this path leads. Before you take that next puff, ask yourself - is being "cool" for five minutes worth risking your health, your money, and your freedom?

Breathe easy. Stay vape-free.

Need help quitting or know someone who does? Reach out to NACADA's confidential support helpline today 1192 available 24/7 and is free of charge.

Vape Truths That'll Shock You:

- 1 vape pod = 20 cigarettes worth of nicotine
- 63% of teen vapers didn't realize they were consuming nicotine
- Vaping increases COVID-19 susceptibility by 500%

(Source: CDC 2023 Research Data)

NACADA STEPS UP THE FIGHT AGAINST YOUTH DRUG ABUSE



The Nakuru County Coordination team hold a sensitization session on positive parenting for NYS Officers and Non-uniformed Staff at the NYS Naivasha Technical Training Institute

By Patricia Bett

The war on drugs in Kenya is entering a new phase—and NACADA is leading from the front. With rising cases of alcohol, marijuana, and tobacco use among schoolchildren and university students, the National Authority for the Campaign Against Alcohol and Drug Abuse is intensifying its fight through community outreach, stricter enforcement, and stronger partnerships.

During this year's International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking (IDADA) celebrations in Embu, NACADA made it clear: drug prevention is not a one-agency job. It's a shared responsibility. "We cannot win this fight alone," said NACADA Board Chair Rev. Dr. Stephen Mairori. "We call upon parents, religious leaders, educators, and community members to take an active role in prevention and report drug peddlers in their neighborhoods."

NACADA's strategy hinges on community empowerment. Through school outreach programs, mentorship drives, and youth skills training, the Authority is giving young people alternatives to drug use. By engaging youth directly and equipping them with knowledge and opportunities, NACADA aims to cut demand before it starts.

The Embu event itself was a powerful show of commitment. A vibrant roadshow swept through the town's streets, with NACADA staff and stakeholders distributing information materials and engaging the public in candid conversations about the dangers of substance abuse. County officials and grassroots organizations stood side by side with NACADA, reinforcing the united front needed to protect Kenya's future.

Beyond events, NACADA is building sustainable systems. Anonymous reporting platforms and toll-free helplines are active, ensuring communities have safe channels to expose drug activity.

With a clear mandate, national reach, and growing public support, NACADA is staying the course—fighting not just the supply of drugs, but the root causes. Because protecting Kenya's youth isn't just a priority—it's a national duty.

FROM HIGHS TO HEALING: REFRAMING KENYA'S WAR ON DRUGS



The Authority's Enforcement team carries out a high-stakes operation in Mutuini, Dagoretti Sub County

By Evelyn Bonareri

Let's talk—not in slogans or lectures, but in truth. Drug and alcohol abuse in Kenya isn't some distant crisis hidden in alleyways. It's in our homes, classrooms, offices, and even places of worship. Addiction doesn't knock. It storms in, wrecking futures and crossing every boundary of age, class, or faith. At NACADA, we don't just see numbers—we see sons, daughters, and dreams slipping away. Kenya cannot afford to lose another generation.

In the 2022 National Survey, NACADA uncovered a stark reality: over 3.2 million Kenyans are currently using at least one substance, with alcohol leading the pack. Over 10% drink dangerously, and shockingly, one in every 50 secondary school students has experimented with heroin. At universities, the situation is worsening—young people chasing fleeting highs through vapes, weed, and hard drugs, often ending up in despair.

But addiction isn't a crime—it's a public health emergency. Locking someone up won't cure their craving. Fines don't heal trauma. That's why NACADA is shifting its approach—from punishing to empowering, from judging to journeying with people. We've taken the fight to the heart of communities: schools, markets, churches. We've built drug-free zones, trained peer educators, and brought rehabilitation to counties that once had none.

Still, the challenge remains. Many regions lack functional rehab centres, while prisons are fully staffed and funded. We must prioritize healing over punishment. Recovery doesn't end with rehab; reintegration is key. Without jobs, support, and community acceptance, relapse is almost guaranteed.

We're also transforming how law enforcement responds to addiction—offering training and fostering compassion. Addiction should meet understanding, not violence.

Words alone won't win this battle. We need funding, policies, and national resolve. Every youth lost to drugs is a loss to our nation. Together, we must educate, support, and heal—because every life is worth the fight.

CHAMPIONING INNOVATION IN PUBLIC SERVICE AT AFRICA PUBLIC SERVICE DAY 2025



Guests interact with the Authority's staff and learn how NACADA is leading the charge in public service innovations during the Africa Public Service Day (APSD) celebrations at KICC.

By Simon Mwangi

As Kenya took centre stage, hosting this year's Africa Public Service Day (APSD) from 10 to 12 June at Nairobi's Kenyatta International Convention Centre (KICC), the National Authority for the Campaign Against Alcohol and Drug Abuse (NACADA) distinguished itself as a pioneer in redefining public service delivery. The Authority's vibrant participation in this continental gathering of changemakers was perfectly timed, as this year's innovation-driven theme aligns seamlessly with NACADA's pioneering approaches to tackling substance abuse.

Walking through NACADA's exhibition space at KICC, visitors encountered a living laboratory of progress in the fight against drugs. The Authority unveiled its digital transformation journey, where artificial intelligence-powered awareness campaigns met blockchain-secured treatment records, demonstrating how technology can revolutionise prevention efforts. Interactive displays showcased NACADA's community-driven rehabilitation models that have successfully reintegrated thousands of recovering addicts into society through skills development and economic empowerment programs. These aren't just concepts on paper; they're real-world solutions changing lives across Kenya's counties.

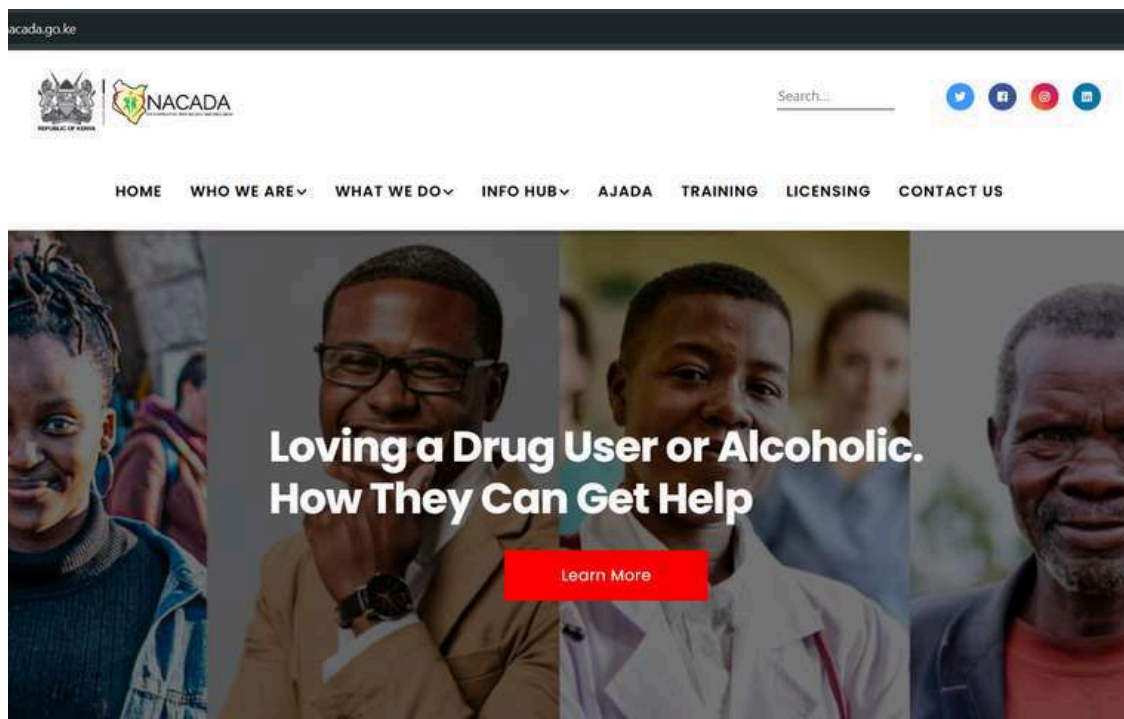
What made NACADA's presence particularly significant is how it repositions substance abuse prevention as a cornerstone of Africa's development agenda.

By participating in APSD 2025, the Authority underscored that innovative public service isn't just about efficiency; it is about creatively addressing the root causes that hinder societal progress.

The three-day event offered public servants from across Africa an unparalleled opportunity to experience NACADA's work firsthand. Attendees engaged with the team behind Kenya's first national addiction helpline, learnt about data-driven policy formulation, and discovered grassroots partnerships that have made prevention programs more accessible than ever. These interactions created vital networks for knowledge exchange, potentially inspiring similar innovations across the continent.

As APSD 2025 celebrated Africa's public service heroes, NACADA stood out by demonstrating that the fight against drugs is being conducted with the same creativity and dedication as any other vital government service. Their presence at KICC this June did not just showcase achievements; it delivered a powerful call for all Africans to join in building healthier communities through innovative public service. After all, in the journey towards Agenda 2063's goals, a drug-free population is not just an ideal but an achievable reality being built one innovation at a time.

CLICKS TO CHANGE: NACADA'S DIGITAL FIGHT AGAINST ADDICTION



By Evelyn Bonareri

Few would picture a website as a frontline weapon in the battle against drugs and alcohol, yet the NACADA website is exactly that—a lifeline for thousands of Kenyans each day. In a digital world where drug-related misinformation spreads like wildfire, www.nacada.go.ke stands tall as a beacon of truth, offering life-saving facts, support, and direction to individuals, families, and entire communities.

While dark corners of the internet glamorise substance use, NACADA's platform is a trusted, up-to-date resource grounded in real data. It pulls back the curtain on the state of substance abuse in Kenya: over 3.2 million Kenyans use at least one substance—alcohol, bhang, vapes, and heroin being the most abused, especially among the youth. These are more than just statistics—they're urgent wake-up calls for action.

Through this digital gateway, NACADA delivers on its mission: to lead and coordinate the national response to drug and alcohol abuse. Anchored in law and driven by the vision of a drug-free Kenya, the site outlines strategic interventions under the 2022–2027 Strategic Plan—expanding rehabilitation access, educating the public, tracking emerging trends like teenage vaping, and working with law enforcement to disrupt illicit supply chains.

More than just a data hub, the website is rich with tools for real change. Parents can download conversation guides, teachers can access lesson materials, and youth can find recovery stories that remind them: addiction is not a life sentence. Communities can engage in national awareness campaigns such as the International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking, under the call: "The evidence is clear: invest in prevention. Break the cycle. #StopOrganizedCrime."

With directories to rehab centres, anonymous reporting options, and a 24-hour helpline (1192), the NACADA website empowers action. Because when knowledge meets action, hope is just a click away.

IDADA IN PICTURES



IDADA IN PICTURES



IDADA IN PICTURES



Kilifi



Narok



Nyeri



Kisumu



Garissa

Parents' Misconceptions on Children and Youth Drug Use

01

MYTH: It is normal for children to experiment with alcohol or drugs.

FACT: Experimenting with alcohol or drugs is not normal. Majority of the children are not using alcohol or drugs. USE can lead to ABUSE which can lead to ADDICTION therefore any use is not acceptable.

02

MYTH: My children do not care what I think.

FACT: Your children do listen to you even if they it does not seem so. They do care what you say but you have to tell them what you think and what you expect.

03

MYTH: My adolescent child does not listen to me.

FACT: You are the number one role model of your children. As a parent you have the power to shape their attitudes about alcohol and drugs. Children who learn risks about alcohol and drugs from their parents are less likely to use than those who do not.

04

MYTH: It is okay for me to use alcohol and drugs because I am an adult.

FACT: When you drink or smoke, your children think it is okay for them to do it too, no matter what you say. Show your beliefs about alcohol or drugs through your actions and your child is likely to believe you.

05

MYTH: I can teach my teenager 'responsible drinking' by providing alcohol and a place to consume it.

FACT: Allowing teenagers to drink may instill a sense of comfort in alcohol use which could increase their tendency to drink, with or without their parents present.

What Should I do as a Parent/ Caregiver?

1. Start Early:

It is never too early to promote healthy attitudes, emotions and behavior. Starting at teenage is too late

2. Know the Facts:

Who are their friends? Teachers? What do they aspire to be? What are their challenges?

3. Be a Good Model:

Model safe, healthy attitudes and behavior. It is more about what you do than what you say

4. Communicate Openly and Honestly:

Your child should feel safe to come to you with any questions or problems

5. Share Your Expectations:

Set clear boundaries and limits

6. Monitor their Behavior:

Know where your children are, what they are doing and who they are doing it with

7. Health not a Punitive Approach:

Focus on support for healthy rather than punishing unhealthy or unsafe behavior

8. Encourage Healthy Risk Taking and Emotion Regulation:

Help your children face challenges and go beyond their comfort zone. Help them manage setbacks, failures, stress, anger and fear

9. Use Positive Reinforcement:

Give positive feedback when your child show effort; focus on desired attitudes and behavior

10. Know your Children's Risk Level and Respond Accordingly:

Be vigilant for and responsive to signs of risk and know when and how to seek help for them and your self





COMPLAINT HANDLING PROCEDURE

HOW TO COMPLAIN

Where our services do not meet the standards that we have set, you may forward your complaint to us through the following channels:

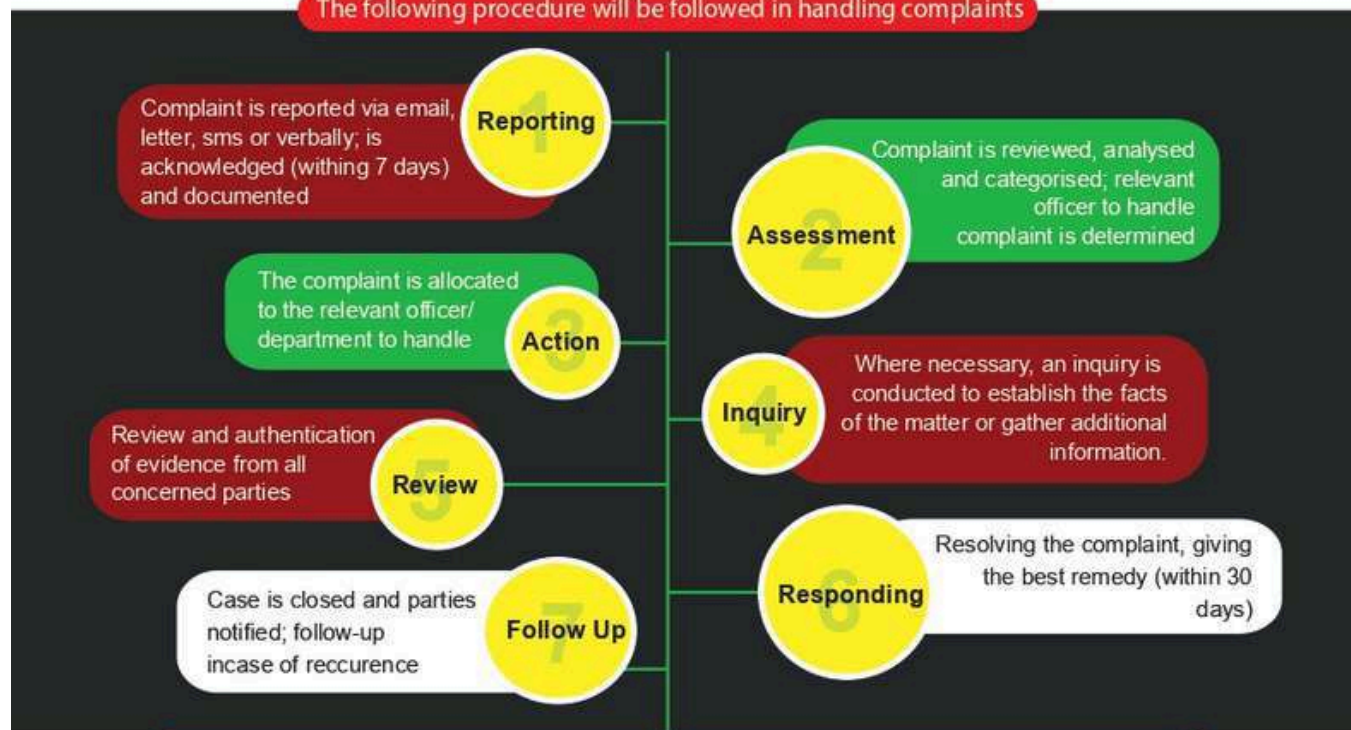
- Verbally; you may ask to speak to the line manager for the service you are seeking.
- You may forward your complaint by email to ceo@nacada.go.ke or info@nacada.go.ke
- You may write a letter directly to the Chief Executive Officer.

COMPLAINT HANDLING PROCESS

1. We will acknowledge complaints and enquiries within seven (7) days of receipt.
2. We will acknowledge receipt of other disputes and complaints received through email, letters and related communication within seven (7) days.
3. We will make our decision known on any matter brought before the Board within 30 working days following the conclusion of investigations.

Every effort will be made to treat your complaint with utmost confidentiality.

The following procedure will be followed in handling complaints



COMPLAINT CHANNELS

All complaints should be forwarded to us through the following channels:

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

National Authority for the Campaign Against Alcohol and Drug Abuse
 NSSF Building, Block A, 18th Floor
 P.O. Box 10774-00100 GPO NAIROBI
 Tel.: +254 020 272 1997, 2721993
 Email: complaints@nacada.go.ke /info@nacada.go.ke
 Website: www.nacada.go.ke

THE COMMISSION SECRETARY/CEO

Commission on Administrative Justice
 2nd Floor, West End Towers, Waiyaki Way, Nairobi
 P.O. Box 20414-00200 NAIROBI
 Tel.: +254 020 2270000/ 2303000
 Email: complain@ombudsman.go.ke
 Website: www.ombudsman.go.ke



CUSTOMER SERVICE DELIVERY CHARTER

At the **National Authority for the Campaign Against Alcohol and Drug Abuse**, we are committed to serving you promptly with courtesy and efficiency. This is our promise to you.

SERVICE	REQUIREMENTS TO OBTAIN SERVICE	SERVICE FEE (KSHS*)	TIMELINE
Serving Customers	Courtesy and respect	Free	Within 7 minutes
Access to Information			
Face to Face Enquiries	None	Free	Immediate
Telephone Enquiries	None	Free	Up to 3 rings
Correspondences	None	Free	Acknowledgement within 7 days upon receipt
Suggestion box	None	Free	
Website	None	Free	Immediate. Visit www.nacada.go.ke
Official email info@nacada.go.ke	None	Free	Acknowledgement within 48 hours upon receipt
Social media platforms	None	Free	
Publications/IEC materials	None	Free	Immediate. Visit www.nacada.go.ke
Resource Centre	None	Free	Weekdays during working hours (Mon-Fri 8.00am to 5.00pm) excluding public holidays
Technical Services			
Research on alcohol and drug abuse- Baseline/ follow-up surveys	Letter of Request or proposal	Subject to contract guidelines	Acknowledgement and response with 7 working days. Services offered weekdays during working hours (Mon-Fri 8.00am to 5.00pm) excluding public holidays
Advise on development and implementation of ADA Workplace policies (Public & private sector organizations)	Letter of Request or proposal	Subject to contract guidelines	
Trainings/Capacity-building on ADA prevention, counseling, treatment, rehabilitation and aftercare (Public & Private Sector)	Letter of Request or proposal	Depends on required resources & scope. Each case on its own merit	
Basic counselling and referrals on treatment, rehabilitation and aftercare	None	Free	45 Minutes to 1 Hour
24-hour free Helpline service 1192: Counseling and referral services on alcohol and drug abuse	None	Free	Immediate*
Accreditation, advise, and licensing of treatment and rehabilitation facilities	None	Free	Acknowledgement and response with 7 working days
Licensing Alcoholic Drinks Importers and Exporters	Application	Depends on scope of operations	
Certification Training Program for Addiction Professionals (Three Phases)	Application	Kshs25,000/- per phase	
Enforcement on compliance to the ADCA, 2010 on alcohol and drug abuse	None	N/A	
Job or Attachment Application	None	N/A	
Payments for goods and services rendered	Relevant documents to support payments	N/A	
Procurement of goods and services	Relevant documents	As per PPRA	

**Depends on when a counselor concludes serving clients before an incoming call.*

Any service that does not conform to the above standards or any officer who does not live up to the above commitment to courtesy and excellence in service delivery should be reported to:

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
National Authority for the Campaign Against Alcohol and Drug Abuse
 NSSF Building, Bishops Road; Annex 9th Floor
 P.O. Box 10774-00100 GPO NAIROBI
 Tel.: +254 020 272 1997, 2721993
 Email: complaints@nacada.go.ke / info@nacada.go.ke
 Website: www.nacada.go.ke

THE COMMISSION SECRETARY/CEO
Commission on Administrative Justice
 2nd Floor, West End Towers, Waiyaki Way, Nairobi
 P.O. Box 20414-00200 NAIROBI
 Tel.: +254 020 2270000/ 2303000
 Email: complain@ombudsman.go.ke
 Website: www.ombudsman.go.ke

NACADA endeavors to uphold our national values and principles of governance on human dignity; human rights; equality and equity; social justice and inclusiveness; non-discrimination and protection of the marginalized.

www.nacada.go.ke | @NACADAKenya | NACADA

NSSF Building Block A, 18th floor (Eastern Wing)
 P.O Box 10774-00100
 Nairobi Kenya

Telephone: +254 020 2721997
E-mail: info@nacada.go.ke

Need someone to talk to on drugs and alcohol?

TOLL FREE 1192
HELPLINE



MKATABA WA HUDUMA KWA WATEJA

Katika Halmashauri ya Kitaifa ya Kupambana na Matumizi Mabaya ya Pombe na Dawa za Kulevya, tumejitolea kukuhudumia kwa heshima, uaminifu na uadilifu. Hili ndilo ahadi letu.

HUDUMA/BIDHAA	MAHITAJI YA KUPATA HUDUMA/BIDHAA	GHARAMA ZA HUDUMA AU BIDHAA	RATIBA YA WAKATI MUDA
Kuhudumia wateja	Uadilifu na heshima	Bure	Ndani ya dakika saba
Kuuliza swali	Tumia vituo vinavostahili- Ziara ya kibinafsi	Bure	Ndani ya dakika saba
	Piga simu nambari 020-2721997	Bure	Kufikia mlio wa tatu
	Barua pepe info@nacada.go.ke	Bure	Kwa siku saba baada ya ombi
	Masanduku ya maoni	Bure	Kwa siku saba baada ya ombi
	Barua kupitia Afisa Mkuu Mtendaji	Bure	Kwa siku saba baada ya ombi
Vitabu na vifaa vya kuelimisha	Barua ya maombi	Bure	Kwa siku saba baada ya ombi
HUDUMA ZA TAARIFA			
Tovuti www.nacada.go.ke	Muunganisho wa mtandao	Bure	Papo hapo
Mitandao ya Kijamii	Muunganisho wa mtandao	Bure	Jibu kwa masaa 48 baada ya kupokea ombi
Kituo cha Rasimili za Kielimu	Hakuna	Bure	Jumatatu hadi juma kwa masaa za kazi
HUDUMA ZA KITAALAMU			
Utafiti kuhusu utumiaji mbaya wa pombe na dawa za kulevya	Barua ya maombi au pendekezo	Inategemea mahitaji na nafasi iliyoko. Kila jambo litashughulikiwa inavyostahili	Jumatatu hadi juma kwa masaa za kazi
Mafunzo maalum ya kudhibiti uraibu wa pombe na dawa za kulevya			
Ushauri na utungaji wa sera kazini kuhusu pombe na dawa za kulevya			
Ushauri kuhusu leseni ya vituo vya kurekebisha uraibu			
Kuhakikisha Utekelezaji wa Sheria za Uzuiaji wa Vileo, wa 2010 (ADCA, 2010)			
Kuhakiki na kutoa leseni kwa vituo vya kurekebisha uraibu			
Ushauri wa kimsingi unaohusu uraibu na maelezo kuhusu matibabu	Hakuna	Bure	Dakika 45 hadi saa 1
Mafunzo ya Kitaalamu kwa Wasomi wa Uraibu (Certification Training)	Barua ya maombi au pendekezo	Shilingi 25,000/- kila awamu	Majibu siku saba baada ya kupata ombi
Simu ya Msaada, 1192 (Hupatikana masaa 24)	Hakuna	Bure	Wakati huo huo*
Maombi ya Kazi	Hakuna	Bure	Kwa siku saba baada ya kupata ombi
Kutoa huduma na uuzaji bidhaa		Kulingana na Public Procurement & Disposal Act, 2005, and Regulations 2006	Kwa siku saba baada ya kupata ombi
Malipo ya bidhaa na huduma zilizotolewa	Kabithi hati ya malipo iliyotiwa sahihi	Kulingana na Public Procurement & Disposal Act, 2005, and Regulations 2006	Kwa siku saba baada ya kupata ombi

*Itategemea kupatikana kwa mshauri kukamilisha huduma kwa wateja waliotangula.

Masaa za kazi: Jumatatu hadi juma, saa mbili asubuhi hadi saa kumi na moja jioni.

Iwapo bado hujaridhika, uliza uhudumiwe na msimamizi wake. Kwa maoni, malalamiko au mapendekezo, wasiliana nasi kupitia anwani zifwatazo.

Afisa Mkuu Mtendaji

NACADA
Jengo la NSSF, Block "A", 18th Floor
S.L.P. 10774 - 0100 Nairobi
Simu: 020-2721997, 2721993
Barua Pepe: info@nacada.go.ke
Tovuti: www.nacada.go.ke

Katibu Wa Tume/Afisa Mkuu Mtendaji

Tume Ya Utawala Wa Haki
Jengo la West End Towers Gorofa ya 2, Barabara ya Waiyaki
S.L.P. 20414 - 00200 Nairobi
Simu: +254 020 272 1997
Barua pepe: complain@ombudsman.go.ke
Tovuti: www.ombudsman.go.ke

NACADA inajitahidi kutekeleza maadili yetu ya Taifa na kanuni za utawala katika hadhi ya binadamu, haki za binadamu, usawa, haki za kijamii na kushirikisha mashirika yasiyo ya ubaguzi na ulinzi wa wanyonge.

NSSF Building Block A, 18th floor (Eastern Wing)
P.O Box 10774-00100
Nairobi Kenya

Telephone: +254 020 2730889 | 2721994
E-mail: ceo@nacada.go.ke
Website: www.nacada.go.ke

Need someone to talk to on drugs and alcohol?





NACADA
FOR A NATION FREE FROM ALCOHOL AND DRUG ABUSE

Need someone to talk to on drugs and alcohol?

Call NACADA's



**TOLL FREE
HELPLINE**

1192