

TO: ALL MEDIA
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Media Advisory: KZN Health MEC to call on young people to be 'beyond influence' - anti-drug abuse campaign

The MEC for Health in KwaZulu-Natal Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo will visit the Ukukhanya Rehabilitation Programme in Inanda to provide support and make a call to all young people to be 'beyond influence' with regards to alcohol and drug use.

The MEC will be in Inanda on Sunday 18 December 2011 from 11h30 at uMzinyathi Sports Field (near uMqhawwe High School). The MEC will start with a visit to Ukukhanya Rehabilitation Centre at Esikebheni in Inanda. For directions please call Khayelihle at 074 548 0872.

The purpose of the MEC's visit is to; see the facility with a view of soliciting help for the bold steps by Kayelihle, congratulate Khayelihle for great service to his peers and make a call to all young people to be beyond influence with regards to alcohol and drug abuse.

The MEC says; "The trouble with our young people is that wherever they are, you can be sure influence will show up too. 'Try one,' 'This is so cool!' 'C'mon, it's no big deal...' In a matter of seconds, they could make a decision that will affect the rest of their lives.

"We must encourage them to make responsible decisions about their health and future. What we must be saying is: It's your call. Your life.

Your chance to define yourself. To stand up for who you are, instead of letting others define you. Every single day, you need to think about how you're going to live. Beyond the influence? Or, under the influence? We need many of them to say: I am Beyond the Influence. How about you?"

MEC Dhlomo met Khayelihle Gumbi, a winner of Community Development category of the Mayoral awards 2011, a founder of the Ukukhanya Rehabilitation programme in Inanda. As Khayelihle relived his experience as a one-time alcoholic who lost his home, job and promising career; he broke down and cried. He had spent 4 years on the streets and sleeping in the Albert park area before he began his recovery in 2007.

He founded the Ukukanya Residential programme around 2009, arising from the desperate need for drug addicts living on the streets in the centre of Durban. Mr Gumbi, together with a few family friends, decided to use the home of another hardened drug addict and criminal to remove those they saw affected from the streets away from the streets to a rural Esikebheni area in Inanda - near the Kwa-Gence Primary School.

The facility houses approximately 30 people (5-6 females housed in one room and 15-25 males housed in another room). Most of the inhabitants sleep on sponges on the floor.

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