

EMPOWER, DON'T PUNISH

A Campus Substance Use Policy Campaign for Ghana

Aligning Tertiary Institutions with the Narcotics Control Commission Act, 2020 (Act 1019)

EviHealth Nkabom

For: NGOs · Healthcare Agencies · Government · Foundations · Charities

THE PROBLEM

Cannabis-infused products are spreading across Ghanaian university campuses.

Snacks

Ice cream, pastries & street food sold at student events — often unlabelled

Students

Consumers are being arrested & suspended instead of traffickers being targeted

Law Ignored

Act 1019 mandates health-first alternatives — universities are not applying it

Ghana already has the law — it just needs to be applied on campus.

Act 1019

Narcotics Control
Commission Act, 2020

Ghana's landmark drug policy reform — shifting the legal focus from incarceration to rehabilitation and community-led intervention.

Section 37

Non-custodial alternatives

Allows for treatment, counselling & community service instead of incarceration for personal use. Universities must activate this.

SUDR Fund

Substance Use Disorder Rehabilitation Fund

Established by Act 1019 to fund dependency treatment as a medical issue — the budget mechanism already exists.

OUR VISION

Treat substance use as a public health issue — not a crime.

The Empower, Don't Punish campaign operationalises Act 1019 inside tertiary institutions — replacing punitive discipline with rehabilitation, peer-led education, and targeted enforcement against major traffickers.

'Filling cells with student consumers while supply networks thrive is not a policy — it is a failure.'

— EviHealth Nkabom Policy Position

THREE CAMPAIGN PILLARS

A coordinated, evidence-based response across three domains.

01



Peer-Led Education

Train student influencers, SRC leaders & campus clubs to lead open, non-judgmental conversations on coping with academic stress and substance use awareness.

02



Campus Support Systems

Safe-harbor counseling centres where students who seek help are guaranteed immunity from academic or legal sanctions — and have access to qualified mental health professionals.

03



Balanced Enforcement

Redirect NACOC resources to supply networks and commercial distributors. Tighten FDA oversight on infused product sales. Maintain strict separation between legal and illegal cannabis use.



PILLAR 1

Peer-Led Education & Choice Architecture

*"Top-down lectures alienate youth.
Peer networks change behaviour."*

Act 1019 • Community-Based
Intervention Framework

How it works



Student influencer training

Equip SRC leaders, club presidents & campus champions to lead substance-use conversations in a non-judgmental, peer-to-peer format.



Campus environment design

Work with university authorities to require clear food ingredient labelling at all campus events, markets & student activity spaces.



Healthy choice availability

Boost access to affordable healthy food, recreation, and stress-relief alternatives — reducing demand by improving the environment, not policing behaviour.

Strengthened Campus Support Systems

Align university policy with Section 37 of Act 1019 — health intervention before discipline.

Safe-Harbor Counseling

University counselling centres become confidential safe spaces. Students who voluntarily seek help for substance use disorders must be guaranteed immunity from academic sanctions or legal referral.

Section 37 — Act 1019

Mental Health Integration

Qualified counselors and healthcare providers integrated into campus clinics to offer evidence-based psychosocial interventions, early identification of dependency, and substance use management.

SUDR Rehabilitation Fund

Balanced Enforcement

Target supply networks — not student consumers.



Focus on major traffickers

Direct NACOC investigative resources at commercial supply networks and distributors — the actors bringing infused products onto campuses — not students found in possession.



FDA regulatory oversight

Tighten enforcement of pharmacy and food regulations around campus perimeters. Require ingredient disclosure and crack down on unlabelled product sales at student events.



Legal cannabis distinction

Maintain a strict, clearly communicated line between Ghana's regulated industrial/medicinal cannabis framework and the unauthorized recreational distribution on campus.

IMPLEMENTATION ROLES

Who does what — and why it works.

University Management & SRC

Establish safe-harbor policies, expand counseling infrastructure, enforce food labelling at events

Students use health services without fear of discipline

NACOC

Redirect enforcement to commercial supply chains; partner with universities on evidence-based response

Major traffickers targeted; campus perimeter secured

Food & Drugs Authority (FDA)

Tighten oversight on unlabelled products; inspect campus markets and event vendors

Infused products identified and removed from student spaces

NGOs, CBOs & Campus Media

Lead community sensitization, reduce stigma, amplify health messaging through trusted channels

Substance use treated as public health — not moral failure

Foundations & Funders

Activate the SUDR Rehabilitation Fund and co-fund peer education, mental health, and capacity building

Sustainable, evidence-backed campus health infrastructure

HANDLING OBJECTIONS

Every concern has a clear, law-backed answer.

"Won't this signal that drug use is acceptable?"

✓ No. The campaign teaches consequences and coping — not approval. Treating addiction as a health issue is the global medical standard and reflects Act 1019 directly.

"We don't have budget for counseling infrastructure."

✓ Act 1019 established the SUDR Rehabilitation Fund for exactly this. The funding mechanism exists — it simply isn't being activated on campuses yet.

"NACOC handles enforcement — not universities."

✓ Correct — and this campaign supports that division. Universities handle demand-side prevention. NACOC focuses on supply networks. Neither replaces the other.

"Students who use drugs should face consequences."

✓ Agreed. Section 37 defines those consequences as treatment — not incarceration for personal use. The law already made this decision; we are applying it.

WHY THIS, WHY NOW

Five reasons decision-makers must act.

01 The law is on your side

Act 1019 and Section 37 already mandate this approach. Inaction means ignoring existing national law.

02 Punishment isn't working

NACOC's own data shows infused products spreading despite arrests. The evidence is in.

03 Students ≠ traffickers

Arresting consumers diverts resources from dismantling the supply networks causing the problem.

04 Universities have a duty of care

Academic stress drives substance use. No mental health safety net = institutional complicity.

05 This is a reputation opportunity

Institutions that lead on student wellness — before a crisis — are seen as modern and responsible.

JOIN THE CAMPAIGN

Take the next step.

1

Adopt the framework

Commit to a campus trial of the safe-harbor counseling and peer education model at one institution

2

Co-fund the campaign

Activate the SUDR Rehabilitation Fund and support peer education and mental health capacity

3

Partner with us

EviHealth Nkabom is ready to co-design, deliver and document — from diagnosis to impact

EviHealth Nkabom · nkabomforall.org · millie@evihealthconsulting.com