

# More QC barangays declared drug-free

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Two more barangays in Quezon City were declared drug-free by the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency, according to Vice Mayor Joy Belmonte.

In a recent meeting with the city's anti-drug abuse and advisory council, Belmonte said there are now 23 drug-cleared barangays in the city, up from 21 last year.

The two new barangays in the list were St. Ignatius and White Plains, she told

The STAR yesterday. "We are happy with this because it's not easy to declare that a barangay is drug-free," she said.

"It's a very long process with lots of requirements, so we are happy that our barangays have the motivation and initiative to continue and maintain our campaign against illegal drugs," added the vice mayor.

To be declared drugfree by PDEA, a committee must validate the nonavailability of the supply of illegal drugs in the barangay; the absence of drug transit, storage, and production operations; and the loss of users and pushers.

Belmonte vowed to further improve the city's anti-illegal drug program to have more barangays declared drug-free.

"We're going to improve the anti-drug program. It's still at the top of our agenda and we're still working very hard to make sure all the issues are addressed and the data is accurate," she added.

She said among the programs that they are doing include efforts to fix discrepancies between the data from the council and the police, as well as reaching out to children who may be under the influence of rugby and other solvents.

Belmonte said the council is also in talks with the Dangerous Drugs Board and the Department of Education to jumpstart the mandatory drug testing for teachers in the city's schools.

The vice mayor said they are also working with barangay officials to strengthen the local barangay antidrug abuse councils.

As chair of city's antidrug abuse and advisory council, Belmonte oversees the city government's antidrug campaign in partnership with the local police, barangays, church and the private sector.

The council also manages a community-based rehabilitation and treatment program for surrendering drug users, which consists of rehabilitation and counseling at the expense of the local government.

Graduates of the program are then enrolled in livelihood training or recommended for jobs in partnership with the Quezon City Skills and Livelihood Foundation Inc. and the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority.