

Cebu exec wants to replicate QC's drug rehab program

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Officials from the city government of Cebu intend to replicate Quezon City's community-based rehabilitation and treatment program for drug users.



Cebu City Office for Substance Abuse Prevention executive director Gerry Lao praised Quezon City's program in rehabilitating drug offenders for being comprehensive.

"We are very impressed. It is not a band-aid solution but a one-step-at-a-time program," Lao said in an interview.

The program is a brainchild of Vice Mayor Joy Belmonte, chair of Quezon City's anti-drug abuse and advisory council.

The program has been credited for the rehabilitation of thousands of drug users since it started in July 2016. At least 1,800 drug surrenderers have been reformed in Quezon City.

Lao and his group were briefed by Quezon City officials on the government's anti-drug program yesterday.

Asked what impressed him, Lao said the program is very extensive, which ensures that former drug addicts do not return to their previous ways.

He cited as an example the integrated data profiling in Quezon City where the local government and police have an integrated data profile of all drug surrenderers.

The situation is different in his hometown, where there is no centralized database system which makes tracking the progress of drug users' rehabilitation more difficult, according to Lao.

"It's a synchronized system but the confidentiality is always there," he said.

Lao also lauded Quezon City for having 23 barangays declared as drug-free by the national government, unlike in Cebu where none of the 80 barangays have been cleared of the drug menace.

"The problem of illegal drugs in Cebu City remains. At least nine are highly affected," he said. Another aspect of Quezon City's program is the coordination with the business sector which provided jobs for reformed drug users.

“It gives these former drug offenders a steady livelihood,” he said.
Lao’s group will visit a drug rehabilitation facility in Barangay Payatas today.