

QC HIV campaign to target the youth

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The Quezon City local government yesterday launched “Zero HIV in 2030,” a campaign to cut down the number of recorded HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) infections in the city.

Mayor Joy Belmonte, who graced the launch, said the program uses a “whole of community approach” to focus on the youth who have become sexually active.

“I think we should no longer be that careful about sensitivities, because it is now time to focus on the deadly disease, which could be avoided with the proper information. We give them the proper treatment and tools to combat the disease,” Belmonte said.

“Children are aware that this is one of the major issues facing the youth, including mental health and depression. The youth are ready and aware. It is up to the city to make it easy for them to be tested, to access services and take away the discrimination usually attached to the campaign,” she added.

The mayor stated the need to raise the issue with the division school superintendent, who is very open on this matter.

In schools that offer courses on sexuality, she said HIV education should be incorporated into these courses, as well as lessons on the use of condoms for protection — and not as a form of contraception.

While she has yet to discuss this matter with public school officials, she said some colleges have already committed to making education on condom use available.

“As I mentioned to all health centers, we will make it accessible as well,” Belmonte said.

“The condom has had a stigma because it is associated with reproductive health issues, which is being resisted by some sectors. But in our case, and the Pope agrees, condom use is an important tool to prevent the spread of HIV,” she added. Likewise, while condoms are readily available at health centers, the mayor said she is talking with mall owners and convenience stores to make its sale easy and accessible to help prevent the spread of the disease.