

FDA CAUTIONS THE PUBLIC AGAINST THE SALE OF TOBACCO PRODUCTS TO CHILDREN

The Food and Drugs Authority (FDA), as part of its renewed efforts to fight the menace of drug abuse in Ghana, has served notice to prosecute adults; including parents and vendors, who either sell tobacco and tobacco products or send individuals below 18 to purchase tobacco and tobacco products, effective October 1, 2018.

Mrs. Juliana Amankwah-Marfo, an officer with the Tobacco and Substance of Abuse Department of the FDA, made this statement in Accra during this year's International Book Fair, on Friday, 31st August, 2018. The 2018 International Book Fair which was held under the theme: "End Tramadol Abuse: Secure Your Future," it brought together several children from selected schools in Accra to engage in an interactive session on drug abuse.

The Public Health Act, Act 851, 2012, Sections 59, 60, 61 and 65 prohibits the sponsorship and advertisements of all tobacco and tobacco products and sale to children. The Public Health Act also prevents anyone from carrying out any tobacco related business around schools, hospitals, homes, near children and their playgrounds.

Section 77 (1) (g) of the Public Health Act, Act 851, 2012, states that a person who "sells or offers the sale of tobacco (or a tobacco product) or expose a child to a tobacco products commits an offence and is liable on summary conviction to a fine of not more than 750 penalty units (¢ 9,000.00) or a term of imprisonment of not more than three years or to both.

Additionally, effective October 1, 2018, the FDA is enforcing the requirement for the tobacco industry in Ghana to show pictorial health warnings on their products. She added that any company within the industry that fails to comply with this labeling requirement would have their product(s) disapproved by the FDA.

She further advised children to "they should stay away from all harmful drugs and products" such as Tramadol and Codeine in order to realize their full potential which would propel them to become responsible citizens in the future. She added that children get exposed to these harmful products mostly through the influence of adults.

Mrs. Amankwah-Marfo also highlighted on some of the dangers of abusing medicines such as Tramadol and Codeine to include seizures (convulsions), infertility, missed menstrual periods, impotence constipation, slow heart rate, dizziness and headache.

Expressing worry over the recent trend of abuse of tramadol and codeine among the youth, Mrs. Amankwah-Marfo called for a collective effort of all key stakeholders along the value chain to step up their respective enforcement roles to nip this canker in the bud.

The FDA has however intensified swoops, monitoring and sensitization among stakeholders across the country with the hope of curbing the increase in substance abuse particularly among children and the youth.

The FDA further educated participants of the exhibition on how to identify counterfeit products, importance of storage conditions for products, the dangers of using expired

products and the need to be more vigilant to detect when date markings are tampered with. They were also advised not to abuse any product and also not or patronize tobacco and tobacco products.