

PRESS RELEASE**2018 School Health Congress sets direction for convergence of learners' health, nutrition**

ANGELES CITY, PAMPANGA, December 22, 2018 – To present the comprehensive direction of school health and nutrition in the context of the overall education agenda, the Department of Education (DepEd), through its Bureau of Learner Support Services (BLSS), conducted the 2018 School Health Congress from December 4 to 7 at the Fontana Hotel and Leisure Parks in Angeles City, Pampanga.

During the keynote address, DepEd Undersecretary for Administration Alain Del Pascua stressed on the importance of the delivery of health services in schools: "DepEd's health programs are primarily directed towards providing and strengthening health and nutrition education, and the delivery of health services with priority given to vulnerable learners and those needing emergency care in schools."

Anchored on the theme, "Empowering Schools through the Convergence of Health and Nutrition Programs," the congress showcased promising practices on school-based convergence of health and nutrition programs; enhanced the capacity of school health and nutrition personnel through relevant updates and information in the fields of medicine, dentistry, nursing, and nutrition that are valuable in advancing DepEd's flagship programs; and fostered the spirit of camaraderie among school health and nutrition personnel.

The event gathered 773 DepEd officials and personnel composed of Regional Directors, Education Support Services Division (ESSD) chiefs, medical officers, dentists, nutritionist-dieticians, and nurses from the 17 regions in the country.

To feature the implementation of DepEd's flagship school health programs, the 2018 *Oplan Kalusugan* (OK sa DepEd) Photo Contest was also held simultaneously with the congress. Region IV-MIMAROPA won first place, while Regions X XI bagged second and third place, respectively.

Convergence of school health and nutrition programs

"The *Oplan Kalusugan* or OK sa DepEd encapsulates all the major health-related programs implemented in schools. It promotes and provides all learners and DepEd personnel with the sustainable, holistic school health and nutrition program geared towards healthier behaviors and better learning outcomes," Pascua added.

The OK sa DepEd Program, which was launched in December 2017, is a converging effort where health plans, policies, programs, and activities are implemented to ensure that all schoolchildren are provided with basic primary health and dental care to allow them to attain their full educational potential. It was fully implemented in July of school year 2018-2019, in close collaboration with the Department of Health (DOH), local government units (LGUs), and various stakeholders at the local and national levels.

Pascua further highlighted the benefits of DepEd's flagship health program for the personnel: "OK sa DepEd also ensures wellness of DepEd personnel through the provision of basic medical care for better productivity. It promotes a wellness

program to help teachers attain a healthy work and life balance, given the challenges of their profession.”

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