

Public healthcare staff caught with vapes or vaping could be sacked

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Staff at the three public healthcare clusters in Singapore who are caught vaping or possessing vapes could face dismissal.

SingHealth, NHG Health and the National University Health System (NUHS) said they are taking a strong stance against staff vaping, and are implementing disciplinary measures.

These range from a formal written warning for staff caught for the first time for possessing or using a vaping device to dismissal for repeat offenders and those caught with drug-laced vapes.

The Government had earlier announced that it would toughen its stance on vaping, with stricter measures going into effect on Sept 1. They included higher fines for abusers and harsher penalties for suppliers.

In response to queries from The Straits Times, the three healthcare clusters, which run public hospitals, polyclinics and national speciality centres, said they are aligning their human resource policies with the Government's stance.

NUHS said it has reviewed its policy and guidelines, and is communicating these to its staff through e-mail, physical and digital posters, and in-person reminders at meetings.

The group's employees who are found with vapes or caught vaping will be counselled and given a written warning. Repeat offenders, as well as those caught with drug-laced vapes, trafficking, distributing and supplying vapes, face dismissal. All cases will also be reported to the authorities for investigation.

An NUHS spokeswoman said: "Given the significant health risks associated with vaping, our employees are expected to uphold the highest standards of health and well-being. Our disciplinary approach reflects the higher professional standards expected of healthcare workers, whilst providing supportive measures for rehabilitation."

Over at SingHealth, those caught vaping or possessing vapes face similar disciplinary actions, and will also be reported to the authorities. Ms Esther Tan, group chief human resource officer for SingHealth, said that staff are also encouraged to report vaping activities in the workplace.

An NHG Health spokeswoman said that its HR policies are currently being updated to reflect the disciplinary action the group will take against staff members caught vaping or with vapes.

Employees have been reminded that the offences carry serious penalties, she said, adding that posters and videos discouraging staff from vaping are displayed across its institutions.

In addition, NHG Health provides support to staff who wish to quit vaping. They could receive counselling, smoking cessation help or nicotine replacement therapy at its hospitals.