

HIV / AIDS POLICY



BACKGROUND

The HIV / Aids epidemic poses one of the greatest challenges to business development in South Africa. HIV-related absenteeism, loss of productivity and the cost of replacing workers lost to AIDS threaten the survival of businesses and other sectors of the economy.

HIV / Aids is NOT transmitted by casual contact between employees in the workplace or in society in general.

Global health organization supported by the South African Department of Health, have confirmed that the HIV / Aids epidemic is no longer a distant threat, but an immediate reality. Today's invisible HIV will become tomorrow's AIDS epidemic. As yet, there is no vaccination against HIV or a cure for AIDS and there is a direct link between HIV infection and sexually transmitted diseases.

THROUGH CHANGES IN BEHAVIOUR

Opportunities are available for reducing the sufferings and prolong the lives of people infected with HIV / Aids. There is no reason to consider HIV / Aids different from other serious diseases with regard to employment.

POLICY

ORGANIZATIONAL RISK REDUCTION

Prevention programs are very important to changing the extent and the shape of the HIV / Aids epidemic. _____ will ensure that prevention programs are implemented to minimize the risk associated with the epidemic. These prevention programs amongst others will include: awareness and education, condom distribution, universal precautions and STD management.

The effectiveness of these programs lies in the integration of the individual aspects into one prevention program.

FIRST AID AND UNIVERSAL PRECAUTIONS

- ◆ Employees should consider any accident or blood spillage as a possible source of infection.
- ◆ All medical personnel, First Aiders and anyone assisting with an accident should observe universal precautions when exposed to such eventualities.
- ◆ The company will ensure that occupational health facilities including protective equipment are protected against accidental HIV contamination. These provisions include amongst others, rubber gloves, resuscitation aids, masks, and protective eye gear.

EDUCATION AND AWARENESS PROGRAM

Education and awareness programs on HIV / Aids will be made available to all employees. The major objective being to ensure that all employees are aware of and understand the risks associated with HIV infection.

WELLNESS MANAGEMENT

The company will consider all options available to ensure that employees with HIV / Aids and STD's are kept as healthy as possible.

The need for internal confidential counselling will be met by key employees trained to act as counsellors with the appropriate skills and information to cope effectively with the Aids epidemic.

The company will enter into partnerships with other organizations aimed at seeking to minimize the spread of the HIV / Aids epidemic within the employee's base, their families and other members of the community.

PERSONNEL ISSUES

Job access

The company will not allow any person to unfairly discriminate against any employees, or an applicant for employment, on the basis of his or her HIV status. These imply that no person with HIV or Aids shall be treated unfairly within the employment relationship or within any employment policy or practice.

Job security (performance / incapacity)

Employees who may become infected with HIV or who may suffer from Aids will be permitted to continue in their usual duties for as long as they are capable of normal performance requirements, with reasonable accommodation, where possible. Employees will enjoy the same employment conditions irrespective of their HIV status.

TESTING- both current and future

_____ acknowledges the sensitivity of requiring associates to have HIV tests. Testing for both current and prospective associates will be conducted:

- ◆ Upon the individual's request
- ◆ With the informed consent of the individual
- ◆ Subject to both pre-test and post-test counselling



Prospective employees will only be assessed in terms of suitability and capability of the job.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND DISCLOSURE

All people with HIV or AIDS have the legal right to privacy. Employees are therefore not obliged to disclose their HIV status to the company, nor may a healthcare worker reveal their HIV status to management without their consent.

Particulars of employees confirmed to have AIDS or to be HIV positive will be dealt with in strict confidentiality. Medical reports will not be shared with anyone without the associates written consent.

Mechanisms will be created to encourage openness, acceptance and support for those employees who voluntarily disclose their HIV status to the company, including a guarantee that unfair discrimination or stigmatization would be met with a zero tolerance approach.

EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

It is anticipated that benefit schemes will be affected in terms of the contributions required and benefits offered and worst so, in the future as the full impact of HIV / Aids becomes apparent.

BENEFIT SCHEME

The company commits itself to negotiating equitable and sustainable changes to the employee benefit schemes with employee representatives, trustees and insurers.

These negotiations will take place transparently so that associates understand the implications associated with such changes.

Employees with AIDS will be entitled to all normal employee benefits which are in effect at any given point in time and which are applicable to employees in the same job classification. Benefits in this regard includes:

- ◆ Medical aid
- ◆ Disability
- ◆ Group life

SICK LEAVE

HIV infected employees should continue to work under normal conditions in their employment for as long as they are medically fit to do so. The company will work to maximize the performance of employees. When an associate becomes too ill to work, the company will follow accepted guidelines regarding incapacity. These include attempts to adapt the employee's duties, to accommodate the employee's disability and to find alternative employment when practically possible.

LEAVE

Conditions governing leave provisions will not discriminate against an employee's HIV Status.

TRAINING AND PROMOTIONS BENEFITS

In cognizance of the company's needs for skilled manpower, associates are encouraged to improve their qualifications despite their HIV status for current requirements and promotional opportunities.

GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

The company's grievance procedure will be utilized to resolve matters relating to the discrimination / victimization, of associates with HIV / AIDS. Associates' security, privacy and dignity regarding their HIV /AIDS status will be dealt with in strict confidentiality.

MONITORING AND REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed on a regular basis to take account of the progression of the epidemic, development in medical care, experience in managing it in the workplace, changes in legislation, and its impact on associates benefit schemes.

NO 85 OF 1993: OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH & SAFETY ACT
NO 75 OF 1997: BASIC CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT ACT
NO 55 OF 1998: EMPLOYMENT EQUITY ACT
NO 97 OF 1998: SKILLS DEVELOPMENT ACT

