



SAfAIDS
Steps in developing a
WORKPLACE POLICY
THAT ADDRESSES
HIV and AIDS

SAfAIDS

How does a workplace policy address Stigma and Discrimination

The main thrust of a workplace policy that addresses HIV and AIDS is :

1. To encourage prevention of HIV among the workforce and their families.
2. To promote and preserve human rights of people living with HIV or AIDS.

The rights include the rights to accurate information, employment benefits, freedom of association, equality and human dignity. The workplace policy can be used as a tool for addressing the stigma and discrimination associated with HIV or AIDS.

The policy could include a section on how stigma can be reduced and guidelines on disciplinary measures for co-workers who discriminate against people living with HIV.

About this Brochure

SAfAIDS have been approached by several organisations who want to develop a workplace policy on HIV/AIDS. This brochure sets out the key principles and issues that need to be thought through in this process.

What is a policy that addresses HIV and AIDS?

It is a written statement that defines an organisation's position and practices for preventing the transmission of HIV and for handling cases of HIV infection among employees. It provides guidelines on managing employees who are infected and affected by HIV and AIDS.

What is the difference between policy and law?

- Laws are rules that must be followed by everyone in the country, unless otherwise specified for certain people or bodies, and enforced through courts of law.
- Policies are guidelines that should be followed but are not as enforceable as laws. All policies should be based on national and international laws. In developing the workplace policy make reference to national, SADC and ILO codes of practice on HIV/AIDS.

Policy Objectives

The objectives of the HIV and AIDS workplace Policy are:

- To reduce stigma and discrimination associated with HIV and AIDS.
- To create a supportive environment of compassion and understanding for employees with HIV or related illnesses.
- To ensure that all employees are treated equally whether they are infected or not by HIV.
- To provide all staff with the information necessary to increase their awareness of the issues related to HIV infection and AIDS.

- To ensure that organisations provide prevention, care and support services to staff.
- To reduce personal, family and organisational impact of HIV and AIDS.
- To promote shared confidentiality among staff, including contract workers.

Why a policy on HIV and AIDS ?

A workplace policy is developed and implemented so as to;

- mitigate the impact of HIV in the workplace
- prevent unfair discrimination at work on the basis of employees' HIV status
- encourage people living with HIV to be open about their HIV status without fear
- find ways of managing HIV in the workplace and enable workforce planning for staff absences
- create a balance between the rights and responsibilities of everyone at work
- offers a framework for consistency of practice within organisations
- express the standards of behaviour expected of all employees
- enable employees to know what assistance is available and where to go for it
- assure consistency with any relevant local and national statutes
- address both the employer and employee concerns and fears.

Persons in the workplace who are HIV infected (or perceived to be) must be protected from stigmatisation and discrimination by co-workers, unions, employers and clients.

Key Steps in developing an HIV and AIDS Policy

Any organisation may follow the following steps in developing their transparent, non-discriminatory and non-stigmatising HIV and AIDS workplace policy. These steps are guidelines for assistance but can be adapted to fit different situations.

1. Set up a committee to steer the policy formulation process. The committee should come up with its terms of reference but the major issue is to review national laws and policies as well as carrying out HIV/AIDS impact assessments.
2. Make contact with organisations who have experience in developing HIV policies. Get materials and resources that will guide staff.
3. Carry out a situational analysis to determine the risk factors and behaviours amongst employees including management. At this stage also find out the impact of HIV and AIDS in your workplace and the community at large. The results shall be used as a basis for policy development. The committee should get expert advice from consultants or organisations with the relevant skills in HIV planning.
4. Consultations between employers and employees could take the form of a workshop facilitated by experts.
5. From the consultations draft a policy. Get comments and feedback and draw the final policy

What should be included in the programme?

Develop workplace programmes based on the workplace policy

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The programme may include the following:

- education and training programmes to raise awareness and knowledge of HIV
- promoting the use of condoms
- respect for sexual rights
- improving access to voluntary counselling, HIV testing and treatment
- the importance of STI diagnosis management and treatment
- linkages with care and support services

The committee should facilitate implementation monitoring and evaluation of the programmes.

What should be included in the policy?

The policy should cover issues of:

- non-discrimination
- HIV testing, confidentiality and disclosure
- a safe working environment, including first aid and managing blood contact.
- HIV and AIDS prevention programmes
- compensation in case of occupational hazard
- employment benefits
- grievance procedures
- appropriate support for grief and bereavement for staff and families, eg writing memory books
- support for carers such as compassionate leave.

Successful workplace programmes will need:

- Top management support
- To be developed, implemented and monitored by a committee that has both management and workers representatives. There is need to create the spirit of ownership and commitment amongst all employees.
- To be backed by access to health services within or outside the organisation
- A platform to share and exchange information, and ideas and experiences about HIV and AIDS particularly on how people have been affected by HIV/AIDS
- Useful information such as addresses for VCT, STI management, HIV related treatment, supplies of male and female condoms, support groups and AIDS Services Organisations.

Useful reference materials for developing HIV/AIDS Policies

- International Labour Organisation Code of Practice on HIV/AIDS and the world of work (2001).
- The Codes highlight a checklist for planning and implementing a workplace on HIV/AIDS policy Southern Africa Development Community Code of Conduct on HIV/AIDS and Employment (1997). It gives guidelines on policy development and implementation
- AIDS Law Project, Booklet on HIV/AIDS current Law and policy. Your Rights in the workplace, (2002) and also the HIV/AIDS and the Law in South Africa is good reference material on understanding HIV/AIDS and employment particularly rights of employees in the workplace.

SAfAIDS Vision

Our vision is to use information as a change agent to support ethical and effective development responses for HIV prevention, care and long term mitigation of AIDS and its consequences. Central to this an understanding of the HIV epidemic as a crucial issue for development rather than primarily action.

Underlying our vision is an emphasis on the core development concerns for the Southern Africa region, notably poverty alleviation, gender and human rights.



What does SAfAIDS do?

Our purpose is to disseminate quality information on HIV/AIDS to a wide range of organisations using methods that enable information to be used to promote individual and organisational behaviour change. This is to be achieved through analysis, advisory and information services, promoting strategic linkages to share experience, knowledge and expertise.

If you require any assistance in developing your workplace policy contact us on:

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