

ENDUMENI MUNICIPALITY

PROPOSED POLICY : HIV/AIDS IN THE WORKPLACE

"Local Government in the Partnership against Aids"

Background

The HIV/AIDS epidemic is well established throughout South Africa. Reliable predictions indicate that national adult infection levels could be over 20% by 2005. With the dramatic rise in AIDS deaths, this will result in severe economic burdens for families and communities, and increasing poverty. This in turn will pose a serious threat to the ability of any Local Government Authority (LGA) to manage the rapidly increasing numbers of infected employees, and to administer and deliver the services to its communities for which it is constitutionally responsible.

Principles

The Endumeni Municipality affirms the principles of equality and equity and further states that :

- The policy will be developed and implemented in consultation with employees and their representatives.
- Employees living with HIV/AIDS have the same rights and responsibilities as all employees and are therefore
 - Protected against discrimination
 - Ensured of confidentiality regarding their HIV status.
- Testing for HIV infection will not be imposed on employees. Where HIV testing is done at the instance of the employee, this will be with his/her informed consent, accompanied by counseling.

WORKPLACE HIV/AIDS PROGRAMME

Context of our Workplace HIV/AIDS Programme

Whilst the main focus of the Endumeni Municipality's workplace HIV/AIDS Policy is "internal", i.e. concerning its employees, workplaces are influenced by and in turn influence the community within its area of jurisdiction. This Workplace HIV/AIDS Policy must be seen to complement the **HIV/AIDS Strategy** which describes the commitment to use all opportunities in which this local authority

interacts with other local authorities, other levels of Government and with the community and civil society to contribute to **Partnership Against Aids**.

Elements of the Endumeni Municipality's Workplace HIV/AIDS Programme

The Workplace HIV/AIDS Programme is to consist of three elements, namely Coordination and Management, Prevention, and Care and Support.

1. CO-ORDINATION AND MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

- 1.1 An HIV/AIDS Focal Point person will be nominated and supported by an HIV/AIDS Task Group with representation from all Departments within the LGA. (see Terms of Reference for Nominated Official).
- 1.2 Regular reports on progress with the Programme will be made to the LGA Executive/Management Committee.
- 1.3 **Leadership**
The political and public leadership of the LGA will utilize all appropriate opportunities to demonstrate support for the Workplace HIV/AIDS Programme.
- 1.4 **Recruitment**
In Accordance with the Employment Equity legislation, provided that a prospective employee is deemed fit to perform the job applied for, he/she will not be denied employment if he/she is HIV infected.
- 1.5 **HR issues**
The LGA will regularly review employee benefits in the context of the impact of the epidemic. In addition, a skills succession plan will be developed.
- 1.6 **Needs assessment**
The LGA will conduct an annual, internal needs assessment to inform the Workplace HIV/AIDS Programme. This will take account of the risk profile of the workforce.
- 1.7 **Impact assessment**
The LGA will commission regular impact assessments to inform strategic planning, including an assessment of the costs of the epidemic.

2. PREVENTION

- 2.1 **Information and education**
Education is central to any comprehensive HIV/AIDS Programme – employees will have access to comprehensive, on-going education programmes including awareness activities and distribution of small media materials.

2.2 Peer education

The source of information must be legitimate – peer educators will be trained and supported to disseminate information on HIV/AIDS.

2.3 Barrier methods

The use of barrier methods, particularly male condoms, provides protection against STD and HIV infection – employees will have access to free male condoms.

2.4 HIV testing and counseling

Confidential HIV testing accompanied by pre- and post-test counseling provides an opportunity to review lifestyle options – employees will be encouraged to seek HIV testing and counseling.

2.5 STD Management

The presence of untreated STDs greatly increases the risk of acquiring HIV- employees will be encouraged to seek early treatment for STDs.

2.6 Occupational exposure

There is a very small risk of HIV transmission from blood in an accident situation – employees who render First Aids will be supplied with personal protective equipment in accordance with Health and Safety legislation and will be trained in its use.

3. DISCLOSURE

3.1 Managed Health care

Although there is no cure for HIV infection, there are medical interventions and lifestyle adjustments that can prolong the life of employees with HIV. Where feasible and practicable, the LGA will offer such interventions to infected employees as part of the package of health services offered to all employees.

3.2 Counseling

Counseling is a valuable intervention to assist both persons infected with HIV, and those who are affected, to deal with issues and episodes related to HIV disease. The LGA will endeavor to provide access to counseling for infected and affected employees either at work or in conjunction with community services.

3.3 Disclosure

When an employee is no longer able to perform his/her duties as a result of HIV disease, he/she is encouraged to inform his/her supervisor.

3.4 Protecting the rights of employees with HIV

Non-discrimination and the protection of the rights of employees with HIV/AIDS are necessary to create an environment for an effective Workplace HIV/AIDS Programme. The LGA will act decisively to prevent discrimination and to promote equal rights regardless of HIV status.

3.5 Benefits

HIV infected employees are entitled to the same benefits as uninfected employees.

RESOURCES

The LGA will identify the necessary human and financial resources to develop, implement and sustain the Workplace HIV/AIDS Programme.

PROGRAMME MONITORING AND REVIEW

The Programme will be subject to regular monitoring and review. Data will be collected and analyzed to monitor trends. Any amendments to the policy will be communicated to all employees.