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BUSINESS COALITION ON AIDS in SINGAPORE

**WORKPLACE MANUAL ON
MANAGING HIV/AIDS IN SINGAPORE**

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Introduction: Why must business respond to HIV/AIDS in Singapore?

When HIV/AIDS first appeared more than 20 years ago, no one could have predicted the impact it would have on our world. Already over 20 million people have died, another 40 million live with the disease. More than 16,000 people continue to be infected around the world every day – this is the equivalent of the September 11 terrorist attacks more than five times every day. There is no cure or vaccination in sight so prevention is our only weapon.

With more than 6.6 million people currently living with HIV/AIDS in the Asia Pacific region, HIV infections on the rise in Singapore and serious increases recorded in several of its major trading partners – we must take action to protect our workforce and the community. HIV/AIDS today is not just a health issue, it has become a major business issue. It affects our employees, customers, suppliers and the wider community, as well as hitting our bottom line by impacting productivity and business costs.

It is increasingly apparent that the business and employment sectors play critical roles in the response to HIV/AIDS. This business response includes the exchange of lessons learned, implementing sound workplace policies and raising public awareness on HIV/AIDS and its impact. The challenge is for business to respond with coordinated and effective actions including respecting and upholding the rights of people living with HIV/AIDS. Only then can we protect our businesses and communities.

The success of the first ever business conference in Singapore on HIV/AIDS, held in November 2001 and attended by over 100 companies, has prompted the formation of the Business Coalition on AIDS in Singapore (BCAS) to lead the business response and to champion HIV/AIDS awareness in the workplace.

The BCAS started as a loose network of Singaporean and international companies, including Porcupine, Levi Strauss & Co. and The Body Shop. The organisation has now put together this workplace manual that will act as an action guide to how companies can develop their own HIV/AIDS policies as part of a professional management process. This has been made possible with the help of the Asian Business Coalition on AIDS, the International Labour Organisation, Action for AIDS, Tan Tock Seng Hospital and a committed group of volunteers.

HIV/AIDS affects people, and therefore HIV/AIDS impacts our businesses. We hope you will make full use of this manual and join us in the fight against HIV/AIDS. Together we can strengthen our businesses and the community.

Pow Lay Kuan
President, Business Coalition on AIDS in Singapore

CHAPTER ONE

Basic Facts About HIV and AIDS

- What is HIV and what is AIDS?
- How is HIV transmitted?
- How is HIV not transmitted?
- Living and working with HIV
- How is HIV prevented?

WHAT IS HIV AND WHAT IS AIDS?

The difference between HIV and AIDS is easily confused. HIV is a virus which produces a disease, the last stage of which is called AIDS.

HIV stands for the “Human Immunodeficiency Virus”. The virus attacks the body’s immune system which leaves the body unprotected from other infections. It is these other illnesses, called “opportunistic” infections, that will eventually lead to death. A person can look and feel healthy and unknowingly transmit the virus to another.

The final stage of the HIV disease is known as AIDS, short for the “Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome”. A person who “has AIDS” – or is “living with AIDS” – will have severely weakened immune defences and that will make him or her vulnerable to a life-threatening disease. The time it takes from infection with HIV to the development of the AIDS phase can vary anywhere from 2 up to 15 years. Many persons with HIV continue to be productive until the final stage of the disease.

An HIV infection will eventually lead to the individual’s death. At present, there is no vaccine against the virus and no cure. There are drugs (antiretroviral drugs) that can delay the progression of the infection in many patients, extending their life expectancy by a number of years. The scientific community is striving to improve these drugs, to make them less expensive and to develop a vaccine.

The harsh reality of HIV at this time is that it is ultimately a fatal disease and a cure or a vaccine is not on the horizon. For this reason, all sectors of civil society – government, public health authorities, scientists, educators, community workers and non-government organisations – throughout the world are putting great emphasis on the prevention of HIV infections.

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What are the facts?

It is common for people to speak about “preventing AIDS” or about a person “dying from AIDS.” This is, in fact, a shorthand way of talking about the overall course of an HIV infection. The fact is: AIDS is not the virus. Strictly speaking, a person will not die from AIDS. AIDS is more accurately the name for the last stage or syndrome of an HIV infection. The HIV infection will be the indirect cause of death, with the direct cause being other diseases or “opportunistic”

infections, such as pneumonia, that have taken advantage of the weakened immune system.

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HOW IS HIV TRANSMITTED?

Scientific research over the past 20 years has established how HIV is transmitted between people – and how it is not.

A person can become infected with HIV in the following ways:

1. Through “unprotected” sexual intercourse with someone who has HIV – by far the most common cause of the spread of HIV infection worldwide. An example of unprotected sex is sexual intercourse without using a condom.
2. From mother to child during pregnancy, childbirth or through breast feeding
3. Through blood or “blood products”, or tissues or cells which contain the virus. This transmission mode involves transfusions of contaminated blood or blood products, the use of HIV-contaminated needles or syringes, sharing contaminated cutting/piercing implements and transplants of infected tissues and organs.

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Handling blood-soiled linen, cuts from objects, or blood spillage should follow Universal Precautions (see Appendix 4). Because the skin is a protective barrier, viruses – including HIV and hepatitis – are only able to enter through an open cut or wound, or possibly through mucous membrane. This mode of entry poses an insignificantly small risk. It is important to note that infection only occurs when HIV enters the blood stream.

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HOW IS HIV NOT TRANSMITTED?

HIV is not transmitted by:

1. Commonplace physical contact such as shaking hands with, hugging, or kissing someone who is infected with HIV.
2. Working together, eating in the same canteen or sharing air conditioning
3. Touching public objects such as telephones, toilet seats, doorknobs or using drinking fountains and swimming pools
4. Coughing and sneezing
5. Bites of mosquitoes or other insects

6. Using eating utensils or consuming food or beverages handled by someone who has HIV.

This last point is of significance to certain industries, such as hospitality. It is important for a workplace HIV-prevention program to make clear that even if HIV-infected blood were to be introduced to eating utensils or into food that is consumed by another employee or a guest, there would still be no danger of infection. HIV is a fragile virus which is killed by the digestive juices.

LIVING AND WORKING WITH HIV IN THE WORKPLACE

The basic facts about HIV and AIDS have two important implications for personnel policies:

1. Negligible possibilities of HIV infection

The possibility that employees who have HIV might infect a co-worker or a guest in the course of their work is negligible. The mere fact that an employee or job applicant has an HIV infection, even if it has progressed to the AIDS stage, is not in itself valid grounds for taking a reactionary management position regarding the type of work that can be reasonably and appropriately performed by this person.

2. Fitness to work

A person who is living with HIV, even if the infection has reached the stage of AIDS, may still be “fit for work.” Simply knowing that a particular individual “has HIV” or “has AIDS” is insufficient information by itself for making a decision about that person. What is required is an individualised decision, one which takes into consideration the actual medical status of the person, and then relates the medical status to the specific duties of the job.

Appendix 1 lists some commonly asked questions and answers on HIV/AIDS.

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Basketball star, Magic Johnson, is a well-known example of a person with HIV who can still be active. Even after discovering his HIV status, he continued to play the sport. It was his own evaluation of whether or not his physical health could meet the demands of his sport that determined his decision.

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HOW IS HIV PREVENTED?

HIV transmission is the result of specific behaviours, avoiding these behaviours will prevent it. To reduce the risk of transmission:

- always practice safe sex, using latex condoms
- maintain one faithful sexual partner who is HIV negative
- avoid sharing needles
- abstain from sexual activity

- get tested for HIV with your partner

Design to include latest UNAIDS global and Asia regional maps

CHAPTER TWO

Protecting Your Workforce Will Protect Your Business

- HIV/AIDS can affect a business in three direct ways – productivity, employee benefits and morale
- Regardless of the HIV infection rate in Singapore today, there is need to take action to protect your workforce

THREE DIRECT IMPACTS OF HIV/AIDS ON A BUSINESS – EMPLOYEE BENEFITS, MORALE & PRODUCTIVITY.

1. EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

HIV/AIDS increases the costs of employee benefits due to:

- Growing demand for medical care from workplace health services
- Early retirement
- Premature payments from pension funds due to early deaths
- Increased costs of insurance premiums

Other indirect costs include higher recruitment and training costs (training new staff). An important conclusion that has been drawn from research is that replacing an employee and training a new employee until s/he is able to reach equal productivity levels takes between 6 and 8 months.

Early management action to ensure its package of employee benefits remains economically viable is needed. Preparing your company to manage employee welfare before it is affected by HIV/AIDS will ultimately result in cost-effective operations.

2. MORALE

While virtually everyone has heard of AIDS, much misunderstanding and many false beliefs persist about HIV infection. If employees lack knowledge about HIV and AIDS, the smooth conduct of business can be affected by:

- Unfounded fears of becoming infected, which may lead to refusals to work with an employee who is known, or is rumoured to have, HIV or AIDS
- False beliefs and stigmatisation, which can be devastating to the employee being mistreated
- Discrimination in the making of personnel decisions, which could result in an unjustified discharge of an employee who has an HIV infection.

3. PRODUCTIVITY

The productivity of your company can be affected by:

- Increased absenteeism due to sick leave or caring for a family member with HIV/AIDS
- Increased staff turnover due to premature loss of services of experienced staff
- Lower productivity of new employees who will need to be trained

Several cost-impact analyses have been done for companies in various parts of the world. A study in Kenya reported HIV/AIDS costs a company US\$25 per employee annually and will increase to US\$56 in several years if the HIV infection rate is left unchecked. There is clear evidence that prevention education will gain you significant long-term savings.

Covering treatment for opportunistic infections and providing anti-retroviral drugs for HIV-infected workers can be considered as effective ways to secure the long-term productivity of an HIV-infected employee.

The quality of labour supply can be significantly threatened as HIV/AIDS especially hits younger people in Singapore and other countries in our region, often those highly skilled and during their most productive working years. In Thailand for example, at least 670,000 people are living with HIV/AIDS, of whom more than 85% are in their productive working age. It is estimated that more than 50% of these persons are employed in the private sector.

The Tata Tea Company in India offers an Internet based calculator to assess the costs of HIV/AIDS. The calculator, using Indian units, is simple to use: <http://education.vsnl.com/sexualhealth/Economic>

TAKING ACTION TO PROTECT YOUR WORKFORCE

Regardless of the HIV infection rate in Singapore, there is a need to take action to protect your workforce.

There are major differences in HIV infection rates from country to country. However, as you assess how your business is meeting the HIV challenge, the overall rate of HIV infections in Singapore is only one consideration and it should be placed in context. A number of other factors should be taken into consideration:

1. A “low” level of HIV prevalence in Singapore or in your company’s other country(ies) of operation should not be misunderstood to mean that your workforce is safe from the virus.

For instance, in the United States, which has a relatively low level of cases, HIV infections were the leading cause of death in 1994 for men between the ages of 25 and 44. HIV was the third leading cause of death for women in the same age group. Thus, a low or lower rate of infection by no means eliminates the threat of HIV as a major public health problem and a cause of potentially severe economic loss to employers.

A person in a *low* HIV-level country who engages in risky behaviour – for example, having multiple sex partners without using a condom – is at greater risk of contacting the virus than a person in a *high* HIV-level country who has only one partner.

2. As the epidemic is constantly spreading, it is important to consider the trends that are defining its growth and distribution in your country(ies) of operations.

Between 1995 and 1996, for example, 27 countries worldwide saw their infection rates more than double with several countries experiencing a deadly six-fold jump.

Singapore, according to UNAIDS, has an estimated prevalence rate of 0.2% or 3,400 HIV-positive people alive at the end of 2001. The Singapore Ministry of Health reports that 1,599 cases have been diagnosed since 1985. The actual number of infections in Singapore is estimated to be much higher.

Singapore has a higher overall infection rate than countries such as the Philippines, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Indonesia and Bangladesh. Its position and role in a region which includes countries with high absolute numbers of infections is an important consideration for businesses in Singapore.

The numbers and movement of foreigners in and out of Singapore is also a factor in the development of HIV infection rates. In 2001 there were 612,000 foreign workers in Singapore, which comprise 29.2% of the total 2.2 million labour force. The figure includes 120,000 Filipino and 62,000 Thai workers. Also, the increase in tourism has meant that more people are travelling more often to and from Singapore.

Singapore's role as a regional hub means that many of the businesses with headquarters here have sales, marketing or manufacturing activities in other countries in the region. Many companies, large and small, rely on goods produced in the region. Therefore it makes sense to consider our immediate surroundings as well as the challenges faced by those around us, especially with regard to HIV/AIDS.

3. There are occupational risks distinct to some industries, such as hospitality, that have caused some fears or misconception about HIV/AIDS.

Your staff must be properly educated on safety measures, such as handling blood-soiled linen and garments, disposing of syringes and razors, handling knife cuts, even if these accidents are known to pose no transmission risk of HIV/AIDS.

4. Consider the benefits of each of these three suggested areas of action – a written policy covering HIV-related issues, HIV-prevention education and fair personnel policies.

Taking action sends two very positive messages to your workforce: first, you are determined to save your company costs that HIV/AIDS will cause; second, you want to protect your employees. The experience of companies that have done so shows that such action is repaid in greater personnel productivity and loyalty. It also creates a positive company image in the community that ultimately leads to greater customer patronage.

CHAPTER THREE

Creating a Responsive Workplace

Now that you are familiar with some of the most important facts about HIV and AIDS, you can develop an effective HIV program that will help to protect your employees and your business.

In this chapter, you will be introduced to the three essential components of an HIV/AIDS program in the workplace:

- Creating an HIV/AIDS policy for your business
- Providing HIV prevention education in the workplace
- Having fair employment practices

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Chapter Three of the manual is divided into two sections. Section A briefly describes *what* these components are and the concepts they contain. Section B suggests *how* to develop each of these components in your place of business.

Reading Section A first before attempting the steps in Section B is important as concepts are explained in Section A which will help you to develop your policy.

The International Labour Organisation's Code of Practice on HIV/AIDS and the World of Work, outlined in Appendix 3 of this manual, should also be referred to in relation to developing a workplace policy.

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SECTION A: WHAT IS?

1. WHAT IS AN HIV/AIDS POLICY?

The purpose of an HIV/AIDS policy is to:

- Establish consistency within your company and compliance with local and national laws
- Set standards of expected behaviour for all employees
- Guide all employees on how to address HIV/AIDS and where to go for assistance

An HIV/AIDS policy is not just a document. It is a set of guidelines that states a company's position and practices for preventing the transmission of HIV and for handling cases of HIV infection among employees. Your policy must be designed to be sensitive to the nature of your business (such as its service, location and size) while providing clear and appropriate guidance on what is already known about HIV and how this relates to workers (*An example of a workplace policy is in Appendix 2*).

Your HIV/AIDS policy can be many pages long or as short as a few paragraphs, depending on whether it provides detailed instructions and procedures on how the policy is to be enacted or simply outlines broad policy guidelines. Most employers find that developing an HIV/AIDS policy takes less time than expected, is a valuable experience and that employee response is surprisingly favourable. Remember: top management must be involved in the drafting of the policy.

2. WHAT IS HIV-PREVENTION EDUCATION?

A workplace HIV-prevention education program will:

- Help prevent employees becoming infected with HIV
- Make staff more likely to accept an HIV-infected co-worker
- Give managers and employees opportunities to talk and learn about HIV and AIDS
- Translate into increased loyalty and morale among workers protecting your business from disruption.

Whatever the format or source, the best prevention education program is one that accurately answers your employee's questions. The content of all HIV/AIDS education programs in the workplace, whether formal or informal, should consider the cultural diversity of your employees and factors that might increase their vulnerability to HIV infection. Your workplace program should not cover only factual information about AIDS, HIV transmission and safe sex practices but also topics such as alcohol and drug abuse (including drug injecting) and sexuality, which are all important issues related to HIV/AIDS.

No business is too large or too small to have an HIV-prevention education program. The program does not have to take valuable time away from other pressing business concerns, nor does it have to be costly. You may have already dedicated company time and resources to training your employees for particular skills vital to their job performance. Including HIV-prevention education will help them remain healthy and productive.

Your HIV-prevention education program should do the following:

A. Provide basic information about HIV and AIDS

Your program should give accurate, up-to-date information on HIV/AIDS, fair treatment of people living with HIV or AIDS and your company's HIV/AIDS policy. Many useful materials have already been developed for educational purposes and may be available from your national or local HIV/AIDS or public health program. (See Chapter 5 for more details)

B. Discuss and promote prevention methods

Since regular and correct condom use is essential for the prevention of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs), your HIV/AIDS program should emphasise this and other prevention methods.

Unless you are certain that condoms are readily available, reliable and affordable in the surrounding community, your company could also consider providing employees (free or at low cost) with condoms. This can be done through dispensing machines, company stores and clinics.

C. Promote safety consciousness

Your education program should be designed to provide clear answers to your staff's concerns about working with people with HIV/AIDS. A sound education program will prepare them for performing their jobs with accurate judgement about the minimal risks involved in their work (see the "Common Questions and Answers" section in Appendix 1).

Your educational program should also discuss specific occupational risks with groups of workers who might experience them in your workplace. For example, for restaurant workers education about safety relating to cuts from knives and kitchen accidents will be important. If workers are regularly exposed to human blood or blood products – such as the on-site medical staff or the housekeeping staff – ongoing education, training, and the necessary equipment for "basic first aid" should be provided (see Appendix 4).

Education programs should be participatory and interactive and should help people examine their attitudes and behaviour as well as assess their personal risk, as an essential first step towards behaviour change.

3. WHAT ARE FAIR EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES?

There are several principles to "fair employment" practices with respect to HIV/AIDS (see Appendix 5). Adhering to these principles will ensure that your workplace will provide an environment that is non-discriminatory and reasonable for all employees, as well as supportive of those with HIV/AIDS.

Some of these principles are discussed below.

Comply with existing laws

A number of countries have laws that regulate business practices in relation to persons who are living with HIV/AIDS. These laws might be specifically about HIV/AIDS, or they may be more general laws which are also applicable to HIV/AIDS, such as employment laws that pertain to disabled persons. It is essential for employers to know what the applicable regulations are and to comply with them. For example, many countries now do not allow HIV/AIDS testing for recruitment or for continuity in employment.
(Detailed legal information is provided in Chapter 4).

Consider fitness-to-work on an individual basis

Decisions must be on a case-by-case basis. Questions that should be addressed include:

- What medical problems does the patient/employee have?
- How are the problems responding to treatment?
- What is the prognosis?
- How are the medical problems affecting the person's life – including the ability to work?

These are, of course, the same questions that must be asked about any illness or injury and not just about HIV/AIDS. They can only be answered by means of a medical evaluation of the individual. When conducting a medical examination to assess if an employee is fit or not for a particular job, the employer should only be informed of the conclusions relevant to the particular employment decision. What should be kept secret is the information of medical nature. The medical conclusions might indicate fitness for the proposed assignment or specify the kind of jobs and the condition of work which are medically contra-indicated, either temporarily or permanently.

Make “reasonable accommodations” for employees with HIV/AIDS

The concept of “reasonable accommodation” is increasingly important in the business world, and it is applied to disabilities, HIV/AIDS and certain other personal difficulties.

Here are some examples of accommodations that a business can make for an employee who is living with HIV/AIDS:

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1. Modify the employee's job description
 2. Reassign the employee to a different job
 3. Allow more time off for health appointments (with or without pay)
 4. Allow more sick leave or absenteeism (with or without pay)
 5. Arrange a more flexible work schedule
 6. Provide for the employee to switch to part time work
 7. Let the employee work from home

In each of these examples, an employer is making modest “sacrifices” in terms of costs of labour or efficiency in order to enable the employee to remain working. What is reasonable for your business must be based on consideration of all the factors, including the needs of the employer, of the employee, the social and economic environment in which the business operates and existing laws and business standards.

In other words, “reasonable accommodation” is balanced against your goal to protect the bottom line, the economic and personal needs of the employee who has an HIV infection and society's need to protect the business environment as well as people who have become ill or who are disabled.

Treat an HIV infection in a manner similar to other disabilities or life-threatening diseases

In many areas in life, one of the ways that we decide questions of fairness is to look at how we treat people who are in similar situations. This same principle is applicable to HIV/AIDS issues.

For example, when your health benefit package provides a certain level of care for major illnesses, then an employee with HIV/AIDS should receive a similar level of benefits. There is no justifiable reason why HIV should be singled out for less favourable treatment. It should be ensured that employees benefiting from reasonable accommodation or other forms of support are not being stigmatised or isolated as a consequence of differential treatment.

Respect confidentiality of medical information

Employers must always keep an employee's medical information confidential. Unfortunately, confidential information is sometimes "leaked," with the resulting gossip and rumours causing serious harm. Employers should anticipate these problems and ensure that privacy is maintained.

Protecting the confidentiality of an employee's medical records is vital because there is still a great deal of stigma attached to HIV/AIDS and discrimination against people who are living with the virus. Furthermore, if employees cannot trust that their privacy will be respected, they may not seek the health care they may need.

For example, those employees who want to have their blood confidentially tested for HIV/AIDS may not do so out of fear that the results will not be kept confidential.

Do not make HIV/AIDS screening compulsory

One of the most important lessons learned during the past 20 years of fighting the HIV/AIDS epidemic is that it is a mistake for employers to demand that their employees, or job applicants, be tested for HIV/AIDS. This is not a practical solution to the problem of HIV/AIDS. Such a requirement or policy creates new problems, such as increased discrimination against people who have HIV/AIDS.

There is now a strong consensus against mandatory HIV/AIDS testing. The leading organisation in the worldwide efforts to contain the epidemic, the Joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), continues to support only voluntary and confidential HIV/AIDS testing.

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Employers should not require HIV screening as part of general workplace physical examinations or when recruiting new staff. HIV screening cannot guarantee a workplace free of HIV/AIDS. Because of the "window period" during which someone can be infected but not yet have developed antibodies

to HIV, a negative HIV test does not ensure that an organisation will be recruiting an HIV-negative employee. Testing also does not prevent later infection.

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A number of companies that previously tested for HIV have halted the practice because the cost of testing and of lowered morale outweighed the benefits.

The Business Coalition on AIDS in Singapore (BCAS) strongly supports this position. It is appropriate, however, for an HIV/AIDS prevention education program to inform employees of the advantages of taking a voluntary and confidential HIV test. Furthermore, employers may consider whether including coverage for voluntary, confidential HIV-testing within their health benefit plan is appropriate and beneficial.

SECTION B: HOW TO?

1. HOW TO CREATE AN HIV/AIDS POLICY FOR YOUR BUSINESS

Assign responsibility for developing an HIV/AIDS workplace policy

Developing a workplace policy on HIV/AIDS requires cooperation and support from everyone in an organisation, from line employees to senior management. Someone who is respected by both management and staff should lead this process. For smaller businesses, one person can direct this process. For larger business, establishment of a team composed of management, staff and an employee representative, such as from a labour union, if appropriate, is generally more effective.

Assess your company's situation and what others have done

Learn about thinking and trends within your company. For example, employees' and management views about HIV/AIDS; changing trends in absenteeism and use of medical services; your existing policies on recruitment and employment. These will be important considerations for your HIV/AIDS policy.

Gather information on actions outside your company

Know what others are doing, e.g. what HIV/AIDS programs are going on and the actions taken by other businesses in your industry. Be sure you also learn more about HIV/AIDS, if needed. Find out what the national and local regulations are with respect to HIV/AIDS. Information on local or national organisations and resources that could assist in conducting your future education activities should also be collected, as you may want to use them. See Chapter 5 for more details.

Draft a plan of action

With this background, draft a proposed plan for formulating your company policy. This plan will be your guide on the steps you need to take to come up with the policy. Include estimates on cost and time required. If you are a multinational, it would be good at this point to discuss your plan of action with someone from senior management. This step will ensure you have someone already supporting you when the time comes for senior management to approve the draft policy.

Draft the policy

The policy states your company's position on HIV/AIDS. It can be a freestanding policy or an addendum to an existing policy. It should include a general statement of your business' policy and position in relation to HIV/AIDS plus specific guidelines and procedures regarding how issues are to be addressed. **It is best to involve representatives of both management and staff in drafting the policy.** The draft should be carefully reviewed and approved by senior executives.

Your workplace policy on HIV/AIDS should address essential issues, including:

- Compliance with the laws and culture of the country
- Prevention of discrimination against people with HIV or AIDS
- Expected behaviour of staff towards an HIV positive co-worker
- Services, such as education or medical, that you will make available
- Ensuring confidentiality and privacy
- Benefits that can be expected by an employee (health benefits, sick leave, etc.)
- Accommodation of employees with HIV/AIDS and acceptable work performance standards
- First aid practices and “universal precautions”
- Conformity with other current policies and practices within the organisation
- Balancing the needs of the business, management, co-workers and the individual
- List of resources, both within and outside the company, for information and services and HIV-prevention in the workplace.

A policy drafted in consultation with employees' representatives has several advantages. An agreed policy demonstrates that both employees' representatives and management are committed to dealing with the problem of HIV/AIDS at the workplace. An agreed policy is likely to be more effectively implemented than a unilateral policy.

The process of consultation that takes place before the policy is agreed will allow both management and employees' representatives to identify areas of possible disagreement and resolve these areas of difficulty. Hence, an agreed

policy will limit the amount of disputes that arise when dealing with many of the difficult and sensitive issues surrounding HIV/AIDS in the workplace.

Some local and international businesses have already developed HIV workplace policies that can serve as models (see sample policy at Appendix 2).

Obtain senior level endorsement

In some cases, the appropriate level for approval may be the CEO and/or the Board of Directors. Having an HIV/AIDS expert from a government or non-profit organisation speak during the meeting in which the plan is presented can lend authority and credibility to an HIV/AIDS policy and prevention education initiative. If Board members or senior management are not already familiar with the challenges of HIV/AIDS in the workplace, such a combined presentation could build strong backing for the business plan.

Disseminate the policy

Disseminate information about the policy to your employees both through your regular staff communications and as you implement your HIV/AIDS prevention education program. To be successfully implemented, management, employees, and labour leaders must fully understand your policy as well as the importance and content of the education program. If all employees understand the issues, you will maximise the ability to administer your policy with confidence and effectiveness.

Participation of management and staff in policy formulation is a key factor for success in its implementation.

2. HOW TO PROVIDE HIV-PREVENTION EDUCATION IN THE WORKPLACE

Assign responsibility

Your education program can be conducted in many different ways ranging from formal presentations by outside experts to distributing brochures. It should be led by a person who is willing to champion the program and make it work. Someone inside the company may have the required skills or could be trained to facilitate discussions and answer questions about HIV/AIDS.

Alternatively, an opinion leader in the community could be invited to conduct small group meetings. An advantage to choosing a facilitator from outside your business is that your employees may be more comfortable discussing sensitive HIV/AIDS related issues with a neutral party. In either situation, the person should be respected, persuasive and open.

Your workers will learn best from peer educators – people belonging to similar cultural groups, acceptable to and preferably selected by their co-workers, and properly trained. Allow for open discussion and cover a wide range of issues. Whenever possible, include the suggestions of your employees in program content.

Use existing resources

Gather information and materials that most closely match your company's needs. Provide only informational materials to employees that guarantee accurate, up-to-date information on HIV/AIDS, on combating stigmatisation and rejection of people living with HIV/AIDS and on promoting safe sex practices. Most public health facilities and community non-governmental organisations are excellent resources for such information, as are national HIV/AIDS programs. (see Chapter 5)

Set the agenda

The program content should include:

- Basic facts about HIV/AIDS: the difference between HIV and AIDS; the ways HIV is and is not transmitted; the relation of STIs to HIV/AIDS
 - Company policy: compliance with laws and culture of the country; benefits and services for employees, especially those with HIV/AIDS; confidentiality of medical condition; where to go for confidential information.
 - Prevention methods: condom use; other safe sex practices.
 - Relating to people with HIV/AIDS: at work, at home, in the community
 - Other important issues: the risks of drug and alcohol use; human sexuality.
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Include ways to obtain feedback on the program

Since the program deals with sensitive issues, it is helpful to know how your staff is reacting. You could build an evaluation form into the activities that will tell you how things are working and if adjustments need to be made.

Suggestions for training process

For a program to succeed, it is strongly recommended that it:

- Be implemented in company time
- Be offered in small group meetings
- Include the participation of top-level management
- Be mandatory for all staff
- Allow time for discussion and questions
- Be reinforced periodically by regular follow-up meetings
- Monitor employee knowledge through pre- and post- test surveys

Suggestions for training methods

Consider the following ways in delivering your educational messages:

- Use members of your staff as peer educators or training facilitators
- Explain your company's guidelines to all your employees
- Distribute a brochure or pamphlet about HIV and AIDS to all employees
- Show a videotape and discuss through questions and answers
- Invite a person with HIV or AIDS, or an expert from your local health department or HIV organisation, to give a presentation to your employees
- Encourage employees to learn more about HIV and AIDS on their own
- Invite other companies to share their experiences
- Provide opportunities for employees to ask questions

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Openness to the concerns of and suggestions from your staff will make your education program more relevant

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3. HOW TO HAVE FAIR EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES

Assign responsibilities

Depending on the size and resources of your business, fair employment practice issues relating to HIV/AIDS can be addressed by your current staff person in charge of personnel issues with the assistance of outside "experts". As with any personnel policy issues, that person will need to work with top management.

Review your existing policies

HIV/AIDS policies need to be integrated into existing company practices and services. Do you have other workplace policies or guidelines in place? Look at these policies and see how you can include concerns on HIV/AIDS. These would cover guidelines on discrimination, disability, absenteeism, sick leave and other benefit schemes. Building your policy around established practices leads to consistency, understanding and acceptance.

Gather additional information

You may already have completed this step when you were drafting your overall company policy. If possible, ask other businesses in your industry that have adjusted their personnel policies what their own experiences have been. Ask your local HIV/AIDS organisation whether they have any materials specific to personnel concerns. (see *Chapter Five*)

Identify issues, compare policies, determine gaps

Examine existing company policies as they compare to other policies you have gathered. Identify whether and where there may be gaps in your company's policies. Are there strengths in other companies' policies that can be incorporated into yours? If your company has a labour union, you may consider involving them in this process. You are now ready to draft your proposed revisions.

Obtain endorsement of senior management

When your policy recommendations on HIV/AIDS are ready, discuss these with your superiors as you would any similar policy guidelines. Should your top management request more information about any of your recommendations, you might share helpful resources you have used throughout this process.

Communicate personnel policies to all employees

When company policies have been completed or programs initiated, your employees should be informed about these changes as part of your HIV-prevention education program. This can be achieved through the usual methods you use to communicate internal information to your employees.

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A work environment that provides for fair personnel policies creates mutual trust between management and employees.

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The following page, provided by the Asian Business Coalition on AIDS, is an easy questionnaire for you to answer to help you work out how you will develop a policy and what that policy might look like.

Policy Development Guidelines

1. Continuation of employment of an HIV/AIDS infected employee until when?
 - Until s/he cannot work anymore
 - Until s/he decides to resign
 - Let a doctor decide when s/he cannot work anymore
 - Until s/he cannot meet company requirements
2. Must an infected employee inform the company's management?
 - The employee must inform the company, or would be in violation of the rules (which would then allow you to take care of the person as well)
 - S/he is not obliged at all to inform the company
3. What is your company's position towards maintaining confidentiality?
 - The company will maintain complete confidentiality
 - The company will inform only the immediate supervisor of the employee
4. What must an employee do if s/he knows of a co-worker with HIV/AIDS?
 - The employee must inform the company, or would be in violation of the rules (which would then allow you to take care of the person as well)
 - S/he is not obliged at all to inform the company
5. Flexible working arrangements for employees with HIV...
 - Are not necessary
 - Are necessary
 - Will be discussed with the employee and his/her doctor
6. What are the benefits and rights of HIV-infected employees?
 - The infected employee will have increased rights and benefits to others
 - The infected employee will have rights and benefits similar to others
7. What section in your company will be responsible for HIV/AIDS issues?
 - The personnel office.
 - The immediate supervisor of the HIV-infected employee
 - The company doctor/nurse
 - Other arrangements will be made
8. How will your company inform your employees about the HIV/AIDS policy?
 - Distribution of a copy of the written policy to all employees
 - Distribution of a copy of the written policy to supervisors only
 - Inform employees through verbal communication only

Chapter Four: Legal issues in Singapore

1. Applicable laws

- 1.1 In Singapore, there is no specific legislation governing issues relating to HIV infection or AIDS in the workplace. Therefore, the general law in Singapore relating to employment issues would apply.
- 1.2 Generally, the relationship between an employer and employee is governed by the terms and conditions of the employment contract (or any collective employment agreement, as the case may be, if any) between the employer and employee and the common law.

In addition, for employees who come under the **Employment Act** (Chapter 91, Singapore Statutes) and the **Industrial Relations Act** (Chapter 136, Singapore Statutes), the terms of their employment would also be subject to these Acts.

- 1.3 The Employment Act applies to, among others, any person who has entered into or works under a contract of service with an employer and includes a workman but excludes any seaman, domestic worker, or any person employed in a managerial, executive or confidential positions.
- 1.4 In addition, certain provisions of the **Infectious Diseases Act** (Chapter 137, Singapore Statutes) and the **Immigration Act** (Chapter 133, Singapore Statutes) would also be applicable in relation to confidentiality requirements and foreign employees.
- 1.5 We have set out below some of the more common legal issues which an employer may face in relation to employees with HIV infection or AIDS.

2. Screening for HIV

2.1 Pre-employment

An employer generally has absolute discretion to employ whoever it wishes and to impose any requirements for prospective employees as it may decide. As such, it is possible for an employer to require a prospective employee to undergo HIV testing and to consent to the disclosure of the results to the prospective employer. (NB: A medical practitioner cannot disclose the results of a HIV test to the prospective employer without the consent of the person in question.)

If a prospective employee is unwilling to undergo such a test, s/he is free to refuse and look for another employer instead.

2.2 Existing employees

With respect to existing employees, the employer may still require the existing employee to agree to undergo HIV testing and to consent to disclose the results to the employer.

However, the employee cannot be compelled to do so unless it is part of the terms of his employment.

Note: The reasons why mandatory HIV testing in the workplace makes no practical and business sense are detailed in Chapter 3, Section A, part 3.

3. Confidentiality / Disclosure of HIV status

3.1 Disclosure by medical practitioners

The law provides for certain restrictions on disclosure of HIV status by medical practitioners who conduct HIV testing.

Section 25(1) of the Infectious Diseases Act provide a list of parties to whom medical practitioners are allowed to disclose any information which may identify a person as suffering from a sexually transmitted disease. For example, with the consent of the person in question, if ordered to do so by a court, to any medical practitioner or staff treating the person in question, to the Controller of Immigration etc.

3.2 Any person who contravenes the abovementioned provision will be guilty of an offence which is punishable by up to 3 months' imprisonment or a \$2000 fine.

3.3 Disclosure by employers

There are no statutory obligations imposed on employers to inform anyone in the company that a certain employee is HIV positive or has AIDS. In fact, confidentiality should be maintained unless required in the course of employment.

3.4 Disclosure by employees

Confidentiality of medical information also applies to employee-employer relationships. There are no obligations to require an employee to reveal his/her HIV status to an employer/supervisor.

Note: The reasons why absolute confidentiality must be maintained are detailed in Chapter 3, Section A, part 3.

4. Termination of HIV infected employees

4.1 Generally, an employer can terminate a contract of service with an employee (and vice versa) for any reason whatsoever, by giving the requisite notice under the contract of service (or the collective

employment agreement, if any) or by paying salary in lieu of notice as provided in the contract of service.

- 4.2 If there are no express provisions on termination in the contract of service, section 10 of the Employment Act would apply for employees governed by the Employment Act.

Section 10 provides a minimum notice period for termination depending on the duration of employment of the employee in question. For example, if a person has been employed for 26 weeks or more but less than 2 years, the notice period shall not be less than one week. Furthermore, the notice of termination must be in writing.

Section 11 of the Employment Act further provides that either an employer or employee can terminate the employment contract without notice by paying an amount equivalent to the salary which the employee is entitled to for the requisite notice period.

In addition, the employer would also have to pay the employee his/her salary for the number of days of annual leave which the employee has not taken.

- 4.3 For those employees not governed by the Employment Act and whose employment contracts do not have any express provisions on termination, a reasonable notice period is required. What is "reasonable" would depend on the circumstances of each case, for example, whether the employee is highly qualified, the duration of employment etc.
- 4.4 In addition, an employer can also terminate an employee without notice if such employee is unable to carry out his/her duties as this would be a breach of his/her contract of service.
- 4.5 As HIV infected employees may take years before developing full blown AIDS, they can still be economically active and an employer should think twice before terminating their employment upon discovering their HIV positive status (See Chapter 2 for more information).
- 4.6 Even if an employee is unable to undertake the same duties as before, an employer could also consider deploying the employee to other areas of work, providing similar terms or such terms commensurate with the new area of work.

Note: The reasons why continuation of employment of HIV-positive staff makes good business sense are detailed in Chapter 2 on Productivity.

5. Dealing with other employees

- 5.1 As there should be no risk of infection through casual contact between colleagues in the usual workplace environment, an employee generally cannot legally refuse to work with a colleague who is HIV infected or has AIDS.

The situation of course would be different in the case of healthcare workers or employees working in an environment where there is a real possibility of infection through the known transmission modes for HIV.

- 5.2 Section 15 of the Employment Act provides that an employee may terminate his/her contract of service without notice where s/he is "immediately threatened by danger to the person by violence or disease such as the employee did not by his contract of service undertake to run".

However, an employee should not be able to rely on Section 15 as s/he would not be "immediately threatened" by working with an HIV-infected person.

6. Special precautions to be taken by employers?

- 6.1 Generally, an employer is not required to take any special precautions for his/her employees other than providing a reasonably safe and healthy working environment. What is "reasonable" would depend on the type of workplace. In the usual workplace, employers need not take any special measures as HIV is not transmitted through the normal casual contact in an office environment. However, for hospitals, clinics etc, employers would have to take such reasonable additional precautions to ensure the safety of their employees.
- 6.2 Again, different considerations would apply for employers in the healthcare industry or such other environments where there is a real possibility of infection through the known transmission modes for HIV.

7. Entitlement to medical benefits and medical insurance

- 7.1 Employees who are HIV infected or have AIDS, and who come under the Employment Act, are entitled to the period of sick and hospitalisation leave provided for under Section 44 of the Employment Act. Generally, this would be 14 days in each year if no hospitalisation is necessary, or 60 days in each year if hospitalisation is necessary, as may be certified by the medical practitioner or medical officer.

For those not covered under the Employment Act, the amount of sick leave will depend on the terms of the contract of service.

In any event, notwithstanding the provisions of the Employment Act, an employer is free to consider on a case by case basis extending the approved leave on a long term basis on compassionate grounds.

- 7.2 Other than as mandated by the Employment Act, many companies have their own set of medical benefits for their employees which form part of the terms of the contract of service. The type of medical benefits would vary depending on the company.

Some companies exclude medical expenses arising from self inflicted, injury or illness or disease caused by misconduct.

8. Foreign Employees

- 8.1 Section 8(3) of the Immigration Act specifically provides that any person suffering from AIDS or infected with HIV shall be a prohibited immigrant.

Section 8(2) provides that no prohibited immigrant shall enter Singapore.

- 8.2 A foreigner seeking to obtain an employment pass or a work permit in Singapore will be required by the Ministry of Manpower to undergo medical tests, including HIV testing. If a foreigner is found to be HIV positive, s/he will not be allowed entry into Singapore and will not be able to obtain an employment pass or work permit.

- 8.4 Furthermore, under the Immigration Act, if the Controller of Immigration is satisfied that a foreigner in Singapore holding a valid employment pass or work permit is HIV positive and is therefore a prohibited immigrant, the Controller can cancel such pass or permit immediately. Upon such cancellation, the foreigner will not be allowed to remain in Singapore.

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Protection of the Rights of HIV-positive Staff

In line with the International Labour Organisation's (ILO) Code of Practice on HIV/AIDS and the World of Work, the protection of rights of HIV-positive staff are best guaranteed when complying with:

- Non-discrimination principles of HIV-positive staff and their families.
- Confidentiality of medical information.
- Continuation of employment of HIV-positive staff.
- Prohibition of compulsory HIV testing (before and during employment).
- Provision of workplace accommodations and other support to HIV-positive staff.

See Appendix 3 for more information on the ILO's Code of Practice.

***box ends

NOTE: This chapter only sets out the general legal position with regards to some of the more pertinent issues relating to HIV infection and AIDS in the context of the workplace. Employers and employees are advised to consult

their lawyers for specific advice based on the actual fact scenario should any particular issues arise.

Chapter Five

HIV/AIDS RESOURCES IN SINGAPORE

ACTION FOR AIDS, SINGAPORE (AfA)

AfA is a caring NGO committed to AIDS prevention, advocacy and support. Their mission is to prevent transmission of HIV/AIDS through continuous education targeting high-risk groups; to advocate for access to affordable care and against HIV/AIDS discrimination; and to provide support for people living with HIV/AIDS, caregivers and volunteers.

AfA provides HIV/AIDS education free of charge in the workplace through talks and exhibitions. Any enquiries should be directed to:

Mailing Address -
c/o DSC Clinic
31, Kelantan Lane
#02-16
Singapore 200031

Contacts:
Office: 6254 0212
Fax: 6256 5903
Mobile: 9003 7566
E-mail: afa@pacific.net.sg
Website: www.afa.org.sg

Telephone Counselling and Information on HIV/AIDS and other STIs

Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays
6.30pm to 9.30pm
Tel: 6254 0212

Anonymous HIV Counselling and Testing

Wednesdays - 6.30pm - 8.00pm
Saturdays - 1.00pm - 4.00pm

DSC Clinic
31, Kelantan Lane
Second Floor

Tests cost \$20.00 each. Results will be provided in 20 minutes.

**PATIENT CARE CENTRE
COMMUNICABLE DISEASE CENTRE
TAN TOCK SENG HOSPITAL**

The PCC is a hospital based community project set up by the Communicable Disease Centre of Tan Tock Seng Hospital. It was established in 1997.

The Centre organises numerous activities and programs for HIV Patients and their support groups. The Centre coordinates a range of ongoing support services including educational talks and lectures, physiotherapy, diversional therapy, peer and volunteer befriending and food supplies to needy patients.

For a comprehensive booklet on the activities and services provided please contact –

Mailing Address:
The Coordinator
Patient Care Centre
CDC, TTSH
Moulmein Road
Singapore 308433

Contacts:
Office: 6357 7949
Fax: 6252 4056
E-mail: stevens_mary@ttsh.com.sg
Website: www.ttsh.com.sg

**DSC CLINIC
DEPARTMENT OF STD CONTROL
MINISTRY OF HEALTH**

The DSC Clinic is a public clinic operated by the Department of STD (Sexually Transmitted Disease) Control for the diagnosis, treatment and control of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) in Singapore. The DSC clinic is funded by the Ministry of Health.

This enables them to provide services at a fee that is affordable to their patients. DSC Clinic is committed to the practice of medicine compatible with the highest professional and ethical standards. This is their primary goal. They are also committed to provide cost-effective and expert management of STIs in a setting of intensive medical research and quality education.

Their services are provided by a team of professionals dedicated to the management of STIs. They have consultant STI specialists on staff as well as physicians-in-training.

Mailing Address:
Manager
DSC Clinic
31, Kelantan Lane
#02-16
Singapore 200031

Contacts:
Office: 6293 9648
Fax: 6299 4335
Website:
www.dsc-sexualhealth.com.sg

In addition, you can find further information on HIV/AIDS through the following websites:

www.abcon aids.org: Asian Business Coalition on AIDS (ABC on AIDS)

www.businessfightsaids.org: Global Business Coalition on HIV & AIDS (GBC)

www.unaids.org: Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS)

www.ilo.org/aids: International Labour Organisation (ILO)

www.positivelives.org: Positive Lives: Positive Responses to HIV

www.gnpplus.net: Global Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS (GNP+)

Chapter Six

Above and Beyond the Workplace: Community Involvement & HIV/AIDS

This part of the manual suggests actions your business can take on HIV/AIDS that go above and beyond the call of your immediate workplace, such as:

- Providing services and/or information to your clients, customers and business partners
- Educating employee families about HIV and AIDS
- Community action to slow the spread of HIV
- Providing resources to support efforts in your community

Up to this point, the manual has focused primarily on suggestions that will help you to take immediate steps to protect your employees and your business. Your business should also consider the long-term effect HIV/AIDS is likely to have on your community. This issue becomes especially critical as the community is your market, your source of employees, clients, customers and business partners.

In this light, your business might also consider how it could contribute to slowing the spread of HIV by supporting community level efforts. Participation in the local community beyond your immediate workplace can improve your business image by being seen as a company that is cooperative, cares about the community and is willing to make a social investment in its future.

Businesses that take visible leads in HIV and AIDS education and other activities in the community can contribute to the effort to prevent the spread of HIV by setting an example for other businesses and community institutions (including religious groups, schools and government institutions). Increasing numbers of businesses in Singapore have taken the lead not only in creating internal HIV-prevention education programs but also in contributing to external community HIV-prevention education efforts. They have received praise for community leadership in doing so.

WAYS TO BE ACTIVE IN YOUR LOCAL COMMUNITY:

Providing services and/or information to your clients, customers and business partners.

Once your own employees have learned about HIV and AIDS, they can better serve your clients, customers and business partners who may have been adversely affected by this epidemic. In the same way that you provide HIV and AIDS information to your own employees, you may wish to provide similar information to your business customers. If you decide to provide services, such as HIV/AIDS information materials, coordinate this effort among senior management, your own medical staff and HIV/AIDS professionals outside your company.

One example is Levi Strauss & Co. In 2001-2, the company has organised compulsory HIV/AIDS education and training sessions for employees across the Asia Pacific region, including Singapore. In several offices, Levi Strauss & Co. has invited business affiliates (e.g., contractors and advertising agencies) to attend. The workshops will be conducted by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) experienced in this field and will primarily focus on workplace issues. The workshops are also being positioned to take into account the different needs of each business.

In the Philippines and Malaysia, Levi Strauss & Co. are taking the employee training a step further. Levi Strauss & Co. partner NGOs will train select staff to become peer counsellors. These staff members will be permitted time off to fulfil commitments in a peer-counselling program run by the NGOs. The training program lasts three days and the staff will be expected to commit a certain amount of time to work as peer counsellors in their communities.

EDUCATING YOUR EMPLOYEES' FAMILIES ABOUT HIV AND AIDS

When you educate your workers about HIV/AIDS, you are also contributing to their family's knowledge about this important issue. If possible, your company education program can include specific information that can be taken home to family members. Businesses can also help employees and their family members learn about HIV/AIDS prevention by supporting and encouraging participation in programs of an outside organisation. Obviously, the particular qualities of your business and its resources must be taken into account in designing and undertaking such an activity.

COMMUNITY ACTION TO STOP THE SPREAD OF HIV/AIDS

A business can get involved in its community in a variety of ways:

1. Sharing resources: many businesses donate cash, equipment and other resources to organisations active in the fight to stop the spread of HIV/AIDS. Some give in-kind assistance, such as free use of their facilities or equipment.
2. Working with public or private health services: linking workplace programs with public or private health services and other organisations in the community has resulted in effective programs as well as benefits for the businesses concerned. Such links are also useful when businesses do not possess adequate resources. In these cases, joining with a local community group, non-governmental organisation or public health service can contribute to the development of an effective program.
3. Building a collective response through partnerships with the wider community: some of the most successful HIV/AIDS prevention programs have been those where businesses develop joint activities with community organisations. These partnerships keep the activities interesting and relevant as well as generate enormous goodwill within the wider community. Partnerships with suppliers, distributors and other organisations will give you higher visibility in the community and project a more positive business image.

In a growing number of countries, companies have formed business coalitions to pool resources and help each other better respond to crises in the workplace and communities. The Business Coalition on AIDS in Singapore (BCAS) is a new organisation and there are many opportunities for you to play a small or large but important role.

4. Alliances with your business partners: A business can use all of its relationships to benefit the local community. One company with facilities worldwide established a partnership with two of its suppliers in Nepal and India to provide HIV-prevention education in their workplaces and surrounding communities. Further alliances have been established with the public sector to reach police, bus drivers, school children and others. Through these relationships it has been possible to create a diverse and energetic prevention campaign.

Providing resources to efforts in your community

As a business leader, your company also can provide resources to help your community respond to the challenges of HIV/AIDS. You can establish volunteer outreach services and encourage senior management to participate as an example to your line staff. Possibilities include:

- Helping to plan your community's response to HIV/AIDS, working with local coalitions, planning committees, community meetings or civic and social clubs
- Providing local organisations with services; for example, you may provide temporary assistance or offer stationary, printing services, clerical services, office equipment, access to copying machines and use of your facilities for meetings
- Participating in or supporting education programs offered by local schools and other community organisations
- Volunteering for local HIV and AIDS-related programs and activities; you or your employees may donate time to help implement programs to provide direct assistance to people with HIV or AIDS
- Allocating some of your business' charitable funds to HIV and AIDS-related community programs
- Sponsoring or participating in AIDS-related community activities

Levi Strauss & Co. supports activities which challenge the established practices that limit access to information and cause stigma and discrimination. The origins of such practices may be financial, social, political, religious or any combination of these. In Singapore Levi Strauss & Co. supports Action for AIDS and the Patient Care Centre of Tan Tock Seng Hospital.

Providing resources to organisations such as these will significantly boost the fight against HIV/AIDS in Singapore and beyond.

APPENDIX ONE

COMMON QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT HIV/AIDS

Introduction

Sometimes employees may wish to know more, but do not feel comfortable approaching their employer with private issues. Even if such questions are not asked explicitly by your employees, the following questions and answers may help to address issues of concern. Remember, if you cannot answer a question, the best advice is to say “I don’t know, but I will help you to find the answer”. Don’t make up an answer – faking it does more harm than good. Treat a tough question as a chance to show the questioner how to get information about HIV infection and AIDS independently. Since HIV/AIDS is a relatively new infection, things are still being learned about it.

Q. What is AIDS?

A. AIDS stands for Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome, a condition in which the body’s immune system breaks down. When the system fails, a person with AIDS can develop a variety of life-threatening illnesses and infections.

Q. What is HIV?

A. HIV stands for Human Immunodeficiency Virus, the virus which causes AIDS.

Q. Will you get AIDS if you are infected with HIV?

A. The time between infection with HIV and the onset of AIDS can vary greatly. About half of the people with HIV develop AIDS within 10 years. The other half continue to live and work for an indefinite period of time. When AIDS does develop, the severity of the HIV-related illness(es) will differ from person to person.

Q. How can you become infected with HIV?

A. You can become infected with HIV in the following ways:

- By unprotected penetrative sexual intercourse, whether heterosexual or homosexual
- From an HIV-infected mother or woman to her foetus or infant before, during, or shortly after birth through breastfeeding
- Through HIV-infected blood, blood products, or transplanted organs or tissues, for example by direct blood transfusion
- Though the use of improperly sterilised needles and syringes that have been in contact with infected blood.

Specific blood tests can show evidence of HIV infection. You can be infected with HIV and have no symptoms at all but you can pass the virus to anyone with whom you have unprotected sex or share needles or syringes.

Q. What is the risk of getting HIV from sexual intercourse?

A. HIV is transmitted through unprotected penetrative sexual intercourse. The more sexual partners you have, the greater your chances of

becoming infected. Many infected people have no symptoms and have not been tested – they can pass the virus on to anyone with whom they have sex. Condoms have been shown to help prevent HIV infection and other sexually transmitted diseases. They should be used every time you have sex – vaginal, anal or oral.

Q. What is the risk of a baby getting infected with HIV?

A. A woman infected with HIV can pass the virus on to her baby during pregnancy, while giving birth or, rarely, when breast-feeding. If a woman is infected before or during pregnancy, her child has about one chance in four of being born with HIV. If you plan to have a baby and are concerned about HIV, you should first seek counselling and testing to determine your HIV status before you decide to go ahead.

Q. What is the risk of getting HIV from sharing needles?

A. Shared needles, including those used to inject steroids, for tattooing or ear-piercing, may transmit HIV and other germs. Go to a qualified person who uses brand new or sterile equipment. Don't be shy about asking questions – responsible technicians will explain their safety measures.

Q. Can you get HIV from blood transfusions?

A. Yes, you can. Since 1985 all donated blood in Singapore has been tested for evidence of HIV but in the past some people became infected with HIV from blood transfusions. In many countries this risk has practically been eliminated through careful screening of blood units and blood products. Unfortunately, not all countries have established effective national blood screening programs. You should seek the advice of local health authorities to determine the level of blood safety and if necessary, discuss ways to help ensure a safer blood supply. You cannot be infected by giving blood at a blood bank.

Q. Is HIV difficult to get?

A. You can't "catch" it like a cold or flu. You cannot get it from:

- Everyday contact with infected people at school, work and home
- Clothes, phones, toilet seats, office equipment
- Cutlery and crockery that someone who is infected with the virus has used
- Mosquito bites, bedbugs, lice, flies or other insects
- Coughs or sneezes, sweat or tears
- Eating in restaurants (even if a restaurant worker has AIDS or carries the HIV virus).

Q. What do I do if I think I am infected with HIV?

A. You need to talk to someone about getting an HIV test. That person might be a parent, doctor or other health care provider or someone who works at an HIV or STD testing centre. Find out where you can go in your area to get counselling about an HIV test.

Q. What is an HIV test?

A. The only way to tell if you have been infected with HIV is by taking an HIV-antibody blood test. The test determines antibodies – substances on cells produced by the body’s immune system in response to infection. It is effective about 6-12 weeks after a person is exposed to HIV. It should be done through a testing site, doctor’s office, or relevant clinic. It is important that you discuss what the test may mean with a qualified health professional both before and after it is done.

Q. Is the test foolproof?

A. Not totally. Sometimes “false” negatives occur during the 6-12 week window after exposure during which a person infected with HIV has levels of antibodies which are not detectable. The test determines the antibody status of the individual on the day and the time of the test. A negative result does not mean a person is immune to HIV, especially if they expose themselves to infection at a later date.

Q. Can HIV be cured?

A. Not yet. Today there are promising new medical treatments that can postpone many of the illnesses associated with AIDS. Scientists are becoming optimistic that HIV infection will someday be controllable. In the meantime, people who get medical care to monitor and treat their HIV infection can carry on with their lives, including their jobs, for longer than ever before.

Q. Can I catch AIDS from a fellow worker?

A. AIDS is caused by a virus that does not survive well outside the body. You won’t get AIDS by working closely with a co-worker who has the disease. Nor will you get it by having coffee, lunch or sharing toilet facilities with that person. People put themselves at risk in what they do in their personal life, not what they do at work.

Q. Can I get HIV through casual contact – a handshake, coughing, sneezing?

A. You cannot get HIV from casual contact such as shaking hands, coughing and sneezing. Casual social contact should not be confused with casual sexual contact, which is a major cause of the spread of the HIV virus.

Q. Can cooks, caterers, servers, waiters, or bartenders transmit HIV through food and beverages?

A. Because the HIV virus is not transmitted in food, people who work with food should not be restricted from work because they have HIV or AIDS, unless they have open sores or skin lesions or illnesses (for which any other food handler would also be restricted). All food service workers, including those with AIDS, should observe good personal hygiene and sanitary food-handling procedures. They should take particular care to avoid injury to their hands while preparing food. Sanitation guidelines require that any food that becomes contaminated with blood from a cut be thrown away.

Q. Can HIV be spread by washing the dishes of someone with AIDS?

A. HIV cannot be contracted from sharing or washing dishes or any other eating utensils.

Q. Can any of my ordinary housekeeping duties put me at risk of getting AIDS?

A. The Centre for Disease Control in Atlanta, USA states that no changes in currently recommended sterilisation or housekeeping strategies are required. Ordinary methods of cleaning and disinfecting for urine, stool and vomit which are used for non-infected people are adequate for people who have AIDS or are carrying the AIDS virus. However, when cleaning blood or other body fluid spills, disposable gloves should be worn and hands washed after removing them.

Q. How should I handle blood or other body fluid spills?

A. Spills of blood or other body fluids should be cleaned with soap and water or a household detergent. Individuals cleaning up such spills should wear disposable gloves. A disinfectant or bleach solution (diluted one in ten with water) should be used to wipe the area after cleaning. NOTE: It is not necessary to use bleach for everything, only when there is a substantial visible spill of blood or body fluid.

Q. Can AIDS be transmitted through bed linen?

A. The risk of disease transmission through soiled linen is negligible. Individuals cleaning up any body fluid spills should wear disposable gloves and wash their hands after removing them. Laundry cycles commonly used in hotels are adequate to de-contaminate linens.

APPENDIX TWO

Draft HIV/AIDS policy

“To help maintain harmony at the workplace, as well as strengthen the existing bond between the [the company] and our employees, [the company] policy on HIV/AIDS will be as follows:

1. [The company] will provide a safe and healthy work environment for all our employees.
2. [The company] will educate our employees and their families in prevention, care and counselling on HIV/AIDS by providing information through posters, leaflets, articles in the company newsletter and conduct interactive sessions where appropriate. Particular attention will be given to dispel ill-conceived notions and myths.
3. HIV positive employees will be allowed to continue work in his/her job unless medical conditions interfere with that specific job. In this case, and only if it is absolutely necessary, will the employee be shifted to another position.
4. [The company] will educate all our employees in safe blood, blood donations and transfusion issues.
5. In case an employee is infected, information about the illness will be kept with absolute confidentiality. Access to this information will be strictly limited to medical personnel and may only be disclosed if legally required or with the consent of the person concerned.
6. No employee can refuse to work alongside with an HIV positive colleague. [The company] expects all employees to ensure that the HIV positive colleague will be comfortable and supported in his/her work.
7. [The company] will not discriminate against any employee infected with HIV with regard to promotion, training and other privileges as applicable to all employees of [the company].
8. While [the company] can ask a person who is being offered a job, to undergo general medical tests before the issue of the appointment letter, the test will not cover HIV/AIDS.
9. An HIV/AIDS test will not be a part of the annual health checkup, unless specifically requested by the employee.
10. [The company] will arrange for easy availability of condoms at the workplace.

It is hoped that with this policy, it will be possible to control the epidemic from spreading, help build positive attitudes towards those infected and promote health and safety amongst the employees. This in turn will assist in bringing about higher productivity and efficiency in the company's operations.”

[Place and date]

APPENDIX THREE

The ILO Code of Practice on HIV/AIDS and the World of Work

The International Labour Organisation has produced a *Code of Practice on HIV/AIDS and the World of Work*, which forms the cornerstone of ILO efforts against HIV/AIDS. The code was developed through tripartite consultations in 2001, with the active participation of twelve employer representatives and the International Organisation of Employers. It received the support of the UN Secretary General and UN system at the General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS, New York, 25-27 June 2001, as well as of corporations, labour organisations and NGOs.

The ILO code of practice was produced in response to many requests for guidance, especially from employers. It is intended to help reduce the spread of HIV and mitigate its impact on labour and enterprises. It contains fundamental principles for policy development and practical guidelines from which concrete responses can be developed at the enterprise, community and national levels in the following key areas:

- prevention through education and practical support for behaviour change;
- non-discrimination and protection of workers' rights, including employment security, entitlement to benefits and gender equality;
- care and support, including confidential voluntary counselling and testing, as well as treatment in settings where local health systems are inadequate.

As a voluntary instrument, the code is adaptable to a variety of situations and different levels of resources.

Key principles include:

- no discrimination in employment related to HIV status (real or perceived)
- continuation of employment regardless of HIV status
- confidentiality in a healthy and safe work environment
- gender equality as the basis of interventions for prevention and coping
- voluntary testing with counselling, but no screening for employment or recruitment
- the need for social dialogue, prevention programs, and care and support as the basis for addressing the epidemic in the workplace.

The ILO Code of Practice on HIV/AIDS and the World of Work is available at www.ilo.org/aids

APPENDIX FOUR

BASIC FIRST AID AND HIV/AIDS – UNIVERSAL PRECAUTIONS (Developed by the World Health Organisation)

1. Wherever there is a risk of contact with body fluids, rubber/PVC gloves should be used for treatment of patients.
2. If blood or body fluids get on to the skin, it should be thoroughly washed with soap and water. Bleach should not be used on the skin.
3. Where heavy contamination is likely to be encountered, additional protection can be provided by the use of a PVC apron. Eye protection should also be worn.
4. Where mouth-to-mouth resuscitation is required, plastic airways (Laedal) may be worn to reduce the risks of contamination from direct oral contact.
5. Cuts or grazes you may have should be covered with a waterproof dressing until scab forms.
6. Spilt blood should be cleaned up, preferably by the person it came from, with strong household bleach diluted 1 in 10 with water. For absolute safety, other body fluids should be treated in the same way.
7. Tissues, dressings and other contaminated materials should be tied up in heavy plastic bags/bin liners for disposal by incineration.
8. Soiled sheets and clothing should be washed separately at a high temperature setting. Rubber/PVC gloves should be worn when handling soiled articles.
9. Non-disposable instruments or receptacles used for treatment should be sterilised before re-use. Crockery and cutlery should be washed in hot water with detergent.
10. Disposable needles and other “sharps” should be placed in appropriate containers which should be safely disposed of. Razors should not be reused.

APPENDIX FIVE

TEN PRINCIPLES FOR MANAGING THE CHALLENGES OF HIV/AIDS IN THE WORKPLACE

1. People with HIV/AIDS are entitled to the same rights, benefits and opportunities as people with other serious or life-threatening illnesses.
2. Employment practices must, at a minimum, comply with existing national laws and policy regulations.
3. Employment practices should be based on the scientific and epidemiological evidence that people with HIV/AIDS do not pose a risk of transmitting the virus to co-workers through ordinary workplace contact.
4. The highest levels of management should unequivocally endorse non-discriminatory employment practices and information and education programs on HIV/AIDS, in consultation with employees' representatives.
5. All business owners and managers should communicate their HIV/AIDS policies and practices to workers in simple, clear and unambiguous terms.
6. All business owners and managers should provide employees with neutral, accurate and up-to-date information about risk-reduction in their personal lives.
7. All business owners, managers and co-workers must protect the confidentiality of employee medical and insurance information by ensuring that only medical personnel have access to this information.
8. To prevent work disruption and rejection by co-workers of an employee with HIV/AIDS, all business owners and managers should establish and publicise an HIV/AIDS policy and provide a long-term HIV-prevention education program for their employees, in consultation with employees' representatives.
9. Business owners and managers should not require HIV/AIDS screening as part of pre-employment recruitment or general workplace physical examinations.
10. In special occupational settings where there exists a potential risk of exposure to HIV (ie. in certain health care settings), all owners and managers should provide:
 - (a) specific, ongoing HIV-prevention education and training;
 - (b) the equipment required to conduct legally required infection control procedures
 - (c) an HIV/AIDS policy designed to ensure compliance with rules and regulations