



Aids in the Workplace

Let's do
something about it!

And How!

Québec 

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something about it!



And How!



Gouvernement du Québec
Ministère de la Santé
et des Services sociaux

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Let's do
something about it!

THE NEED FOR ACTION



If a member of your staff has AIDS, would you know what to do?

The reality of AIDS affects a large number of businesses because it strikes primarily among the economically active adult population (74% of people with AIDS are between the ages of 25 and 44). HIV, the virus which causes and allows this extremely serious and often fatal disease to develop, is affecting an increasing number of individuals.

Because of the ever-increasing probability that employees will find themselves working alongside someone with the virus, companies are taking the necessary steps to better inform their staff about AIDS and related issues. Since information is one of the chief defences we have against this epidemic, it helps companies prevent problems stemming from fear, ignorance and prejudice in the workplace, such as suspicion, anxiety, decreased productivity, lawsuits, and so forth.

The progress made in treating HIV/AIDS has a direct impact on the issue of AIDS in the workplace and it is not always a positive one.

Thanks to medical strides in terms of treatment, AIDS sufferers and people who are HIV-positive have been given new hope. Combinations, or cocktails, of medications have enabled many of them to live better lives and for longer. In fact, the latest Canadian and Québec statistics show a significant decrease over the past year in the number of deaths linked to AIDS. Paradoxically, however, this situation raises countless questions where AIDS in the workplace is concerned, for instance. According to a provincial survey⁽¹⁾ (Jalbert, 1997) of people with HIV and AIDS who currently benefit from the new treatments, 35% of the respondents wanted to return to the work force. The survey also revealed that about half of the respondents currently working had told their employer about their seropositive status and this information had given them problems with their employer in one case out of five.

(1) JALBERT, Yves. *La trithérapie et le retour au travail : quels sont les vrais obstacles?* Provincial survey of individuals with HIV and AIDS. La Coalition des organismes communautaires québécois de lutte contre le sida, and the AIDS in the Workplace program, 1997.

A simple, practical guide that is easy to consult and addresses the concerns of employers, employees and unions

This guide is designed to help employers and unions provide information about HIV and AIDS in their workplaces. To help launch education and information activities for personnel, we suggest adopting an internal HIV/AIDS policy in keeping with the guidelines given in this guide. Among other things, the policy should provide information about HIV and AIDS, how the virus is transmitted and how to prevent it. Several methods are also suggested for putting this information into practice.

After consulting this guide, employers and unions wishing to hold training workshops will have access to the provincial training program. This program is described and access information given in the Resources and Information section.

Since a large number of individuals gather there every day, the workplace represents an ideal venue for circulating information, and can therefore make it easier for people to learn safe behaviour as well as understanding and accepting attitudes towards people living with HIV and AIDS. Together, the ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux and the ministère du Travail are asking employers and unions to participate in this battle against HIV and AIDS and, with this guide, offer them their concrete support.

THE REALITY BEHIND *THE STATISTICS*

The Joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) reports that there are more than 1.6 million cases of AIDS worldwide so far. It is believed that if all the cases not reported were added, the number would really be more like 8.5 million. It has been determined that no part of the world's population is unaffected: AIDS does not recognize geographical or social boundaries.

In addition to all the officially reported cases of AIDS, it is estimated that another 30 million people have been infected by the HIV virus since the beginning of the epidemic. UNAIDS anticipates that 40 million people will have been infected by HIV worldwide by the year 2000 and that close to 10 million of them will have developed AIDS.

THE LATEST INTERNATIONAL FIGURES ADULTS AND CHILDREN LIVING WITH HIV AND AIDS JUNE 1998



- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 Western Europe
480 000 | 6 South and Southeast Asia
5,8 millions |
| 2 Eastern Europe and Central Asia
190 000 | 7 Australia and New Zealand
12 000 |
| 3 Northern Africa and the Middle East
210 000 | 8 North America
860 000 |
| 4 Sub-Saharan Africa
21 millions | 9 Caribbean
310 000 |
| 5 East Asia and the Pacific
420 000 | 10 South and Central America
1,3 million |

Worldwide : 30,6 million

Source : UNAIDS, June 1998

QUÉBEC'S STATUS WITH REGARD *TO THE AIDS EPIDEMIC*

As of June 30, 1998:

- 5,308 AIDS cases were declared in Québec (5,215 of these were adults) but an estimated 25% of undeclared cases and delays in reporting mean that the real number of AIDS cases in Québec at the end of 1998 would have been around 6,000.
- Three-quarters of declared AIDS cases in Québec were people between the ages of 25 and 44.
- Over three-quarters of those people with AIDS were living in Montréal at the beginning of their illness.
- Over 50% of Canadian women with AIDS lived in Québec. What is more, between 1979 and 1996 the rate of AIDS cases reported in women was over three times higher in Québec (12.0 out of every 100,000) than the average rate for women in the rest of Canada (3.5 out of every 100,000).
- Approximately 50% of Canadian children with AIDS lived in Québec.
- Québec had the highest number of AIDS cases for every 100,000 residents. Québec came second, after Ontario, for the highest actual number of AIDS cases.

AIDS:

WHAT IS IT?

HIV: THE CAUSE OF AIDS

AIDS, or *Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome*, is caused by a virus known as HIV, or *human immunodeficiency virus*. This virus attacks the body's immune system, which is responsible for fighting off germs.

A person can carry the virus without showing any symptoms or outward signs of illness, since HIV can incubate in the body for several years before AIDS develops. These people are *asymptomatic* HIV carriers who can infect others with the virus.

By destroying the body's immune system, HIV lowers its resistance to infectious diseases and opens the door to certain types of cancer. These opportunistic diseases and cancers are the main causes of death in AIDS patients.

KNOWING HOW HIV IS TRANSMITTED

HIV is transmitted in three ways:

- Through unprotected sex (i.e. without a condom) involving anal or vaginal penetration. It can also be transmitted during unprotected oral-genital sex, though the risk is very slight.
- Via the bloodstream during accidental contact with infected blood or contaminated or unsterilized objects (syringes, needles, cutting instruments) used to inject drugs or steroids or for tattooing or body-piercing. The risk of HIV being transmitted during a blood transfusion or when using blood products is minimal because all donor blood has been screened and infected blood eliminated since November 1985.
- By an infected mother to her baby during pregnancy, childbirth or breast-feeding.

HOW TO PREVENT HIV TRANSMISSION

It is possible to prevent sexual transmission of HIV. Abstaining from sex that involves penetration, or limiting sexual relations to a single partner who is faithful and not infected are the surest methods. Otherwise, to reduce the risk

of transmission, the number of sexual partners should be limited as much as possible and a latex condom used from the beginning to the end of all sexual activities involving penetration.

Puncturing instruments (tattoo needles, body-piercing instruments, acupuncture needles, medical or dental instruments, etc.) present no danger if they are sterilized before each use.

Individuals who inject intravenous steroids or drugs should use new, disposable or disinfected needles which should never be shared. New syringes can be obtained at locations where the following logo appears:



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For women who are pregnant or planning on becoming pregnant and who are HIV-infected, special treatment administered to the mother during the pregnancy and to the infant during the first few weeks of its life can significantly reduce the risk of the child contracting HIV. Women who are pregnant or planning on getting pregnant can discuss HIV, the screening test and treatment available with their doctor.

HIV IS NOT TRANSMITTED EASILY

HIV cannot be transmitted during normal contact (shaking hands, touching, hugging, etc.), nor can it be passed via food, water, dishes, sneezing, coughing, insects, swimming pools or toilets. In other words, HIV cannot be transmitted during everyday social contact or through objects at school, work, home or elsewhere. However, direct contact with blood should be avoided, especially if you have open sores or wounds.

There is no risk associated with donating blood, since all the equipment used is sterile.

Precautions and steps to take if you are accidentally exposed

With some kinds of work, there is a risk of becoming accidentally exposed to blood and other body fluids such as semen and vaginal secretions that are liable to be contaminated by HIV. To keep these risks to a minimum a number of precautions should be taken. In order to be able to do this, you need to know what fluids can transmit the infection and the kinds of exposure that are considered to represent a risk. First-aid must be offered immediately to a person who has been exposed; the risk should then be evaluated, transmission assessed, medical and serologic (blood tests) follow-up instigated, and psychological assistance provided.

HIV TESTING

Anyone who has a reason to feel that they have been in a situation that placed them at risk of contracting HIV or that they may be HIV carriers can be tested for the virus. This is a very personal decision.

The test is free and can be arranged by any physician. There are also anonymous HIV testing services in all Québec regions which allow you to get tested without even giving your name or producing your health insurance card. Your Info-santé CLSC can give you information about the anonymous testing service closest to you.

The test is no substitute for prevention, however, since it cannot arm an individual against the risks of infection. What is more, the virus cannot be detected until about three months after it is contracted. Anyone who thinks they might have been infected should therefore wait three months before going for the test or the test results will not be reliable. During this period, as at all times, it is important to take preventive measures to avoid the risk of transmitting the virus, in case you have it, or of contracting it.

If the test detects the virus, you are considered to be *HIV-positive* or an *HIV carrier*.

PRESERVING DIGNITY

Considering the ways HIV is transmitted and how to prevent it, there is absolutely no reason to worry about being around people who are HIV-positive or who have full-blown AIDS. It is everyone's duty to help these people maintain their dignity. Under no circumstances should they be discriminated against. They need our support in the face of the physical and psychological stress they are undergoing.

Let's do
something about it!

AIDS IN THE WORKPLACE AND THE LAW



Are job applicants or employees who are HIV-positive required to inform their employers?

If the risk of HIV transmission is merely theoretical due to the fact that the workplace in question or the actual work itself do not involve any contact with body fluids (such as blood), it has not been proven to date that the employer needs to know if an applicant or employee is HIV-positive.

Therefore, in any workplace where there is no serious risk of accidental transmission of the virus, an applicant or employee who is HIV-positive is not required to inform their employer.

In these workplaces, the employer is not authorized to request this information since only information essential for creating the applicant or employee records may be asked for (section 5 of the *Act respecting the protection of personal information in the private sector*). This Act also states that an employer cannot reject a job application because the applicant refuses to divulge non-essential information (section 9).

Asking for non-essential information for an employee record or rejection of a job application because of the applicant's refusal to provide information on their HIV status can be grounds for a complaint to the *Commission d'accès à l'information*. This board is authorized to investigate these matters and issue decrees (section 81).

According to the *Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse*, refusal to hire a person who is HIV-positive is equivalent to discrimination based on a disability (sections 10 and 16 of the *Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms*).

This principle also applies to promotion denial, forced transfer, demotion, lay-off or any other unfair treatment based on the same motive. All these situations can result in a complaint to the *Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse*, which can subsequently conduct an inves-

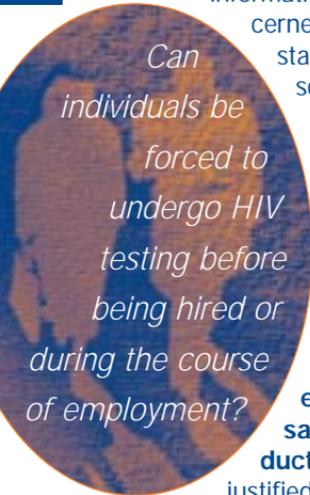
tigation. According to section 20 of the *Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms*, the only exceptions arise when individuals do not have, or no longer have, the skills required for the job because of their illness, or when they represent a direct threat to the health and safety of others.

The right to know is upheld, however, in the case of individuals who work in a country that denies entry to people who are HIV-positive or of individuals whose presence and condition could endanger the health or safety of third parties (eg. aircraft pilot).

Any discrimination based on the belief that a person is HIV-positive is also prohibited by the *Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms*.

A blood sample is required for an HIV test to be conducted. Asking a person to be tested before or after hiring them would violate the physical integrity of the applicant or employee. Also, the results of the test indirectly provide information on the personal life of the applicant or employee concerned. Both of these situations are subject to human rights statutes. Moreover, collecting and divulging private and personal information falls under the *Act respecting personal information*.

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Can individuals be forced to undergo HIV testing before being hired or during the course of employment?

An employer's justification for testing is the most important criterion for determining its legality. Using an individual's blood sample to test for HIV without their knowledge constitutes a violation of physical integrity under section 1 of the *Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms*. **In all cases where the employer asks for a blood sample to be taken during a medical examination, the individual can ask why the blood sample is required and what kinds of tests will be conducted on it. In those rare cases** where the HIV test is justified by the nature of the job, the explicit consent of the individual must be obtained before administering the test. If not, testing would constitute an act of discrimination prohibited by the *Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms* if applied only to members of groups felt to be at the most risk.

According to the *Act respecting the protection of personal information*, asking for information regarding the presence of HIV must be absolutely essential to the employer and related to the nature of the job. Otherwise it is considered illegal.

An HIV test may not be carried out during a medical examination prior to hiring or during the course of employment unless there is a serious risk of transmission associated with the job concerned.

Because HIV can only be transmitted under specific conditions (during unprotected intercourse, for example), there is no justification for dismissing or transferring an employee who is HIV-positive. It is the duty of the managers concerned to deal with and resolve any problems while respecting the rights of each individual and without illegal discrimination.



*How
to react
if employees
refuse to
work with
someone
infected
with HIV*

In a workplace where the transmission of HIV is merely theoretical, employees who are HIV-positive are entitled to keep their jobs. It is suggested in these cases that steps be taken to maintain a suitable working environment. These measures include the adoption of an AIDS policy for the workplace and employee training to alleviate fear and prejudice and protect the rights of individuals concerned.



Do we
have the right
to consult
the company's
medical records
for an employee
we think is
HIV-positive?

The fact that a person is seropositive, or an HIV carrier, is confidential medical information which is part of the individual's privacy. Only the individual in question can decide to reveal personal information unless the law requires otherwise.

Section 9 of the *Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms*, which addresses the right to respect for professional privilege, states that a physician or other health professional may not reveal to anyone the fact that an individual is HIV-positive without the individual's authorization, or unless the law expressly permits it. Despite the existence of a contract between company and physician, the latter must always uphold professional confidentiality. Only information relating to the ability to work can be divulged to the employer.

In cases where there is a justified job requirement that an employee not be HIV-positive, only individuals who have a right to know should be informed of test results, namely the employee, the physician who conducted the test and the employer's representative.

If information relating to an individual's medical records is divulged without consent, the employee can sue the physician or employer responsible for damages for violation of their privacy or breach of professional privilege.

Care should be taken regarding access to company personnel medical records. These files should be kept separate from administrative records so that only those party to professional privilege have access to them.

Some people find it reassuring to send a registered letter either to the person in charge of their case at the insurance company or the person in charge of human resources, or to both of them, to remind them of their obligations with respect to the confidential nature of the personal information in their file.



Can an
HIV-positive
employee
be excluded
from a
group
insurance
plan?

An employer cannot dismiss or refuse to hire an individual who is HIV-positive using the pretext that an insurer would refuse to cover them under a group insurance plan, nor can they charge higher premiums for that individual.

It should be pointed out that an employer cannot give a group insurance policy as a reason to force employees to be tested for HIV.

Basic group insurance coverage (life, health and disability insurance) in effect in many businesses generally apply to individuals with AIDS in the same way as individuals with any other life-threatening condition.

On November 10, 1987, the Canadian Health and Life Insurance Association adopted guidelines for AIDS. These stipulate that written consent must be provided for blood samples taken for the purposes of conducting an HIV test. In addition, these guidelines specify the conditions that could justify an insurer's refusal to cover an individual. Finally, they emphasize that no one can be refused based on their sexual orientation or on the fact that they have previously undergone testing for HIV.

If an individual wants additional life insurance coverage, however, the insurer can ask them to have an HIV test first. This is justified by the fact that the insurer is providing insurance on the basis of risk determined by various factors.

Considering the prescription drug insurance programme in Québec, is an employer now entitled to know if an individual or a member of the individual's family has HIV?

In June 1996, the Québec government adopted the *Act respecting prescription drug insurance*. This Act enabled the introduction of a general prescription drug insurance plan offering basic coverage to everyone in Québec.

With the new Act, the Régie de l'assurance-maladie du Québec (RAMQ) provides coverage for all individuals who do not have access to a group insurance plan. The insured has to pay an annual premium which varies between 0 and \$175 per year, in keeping with income. A \$100 deductible and 25% coinsurance are paid when prescription drugs are purchased, up to a maximum of from \$16.67 to \$62.50 per month, depending on the socio-economic group the insured belongs to.

Private insurance companies insure all individuals who are required to belong to a group insurance plan at work or in their profession or usual occupation, as well as their spouses and dependents. The Act obliges insurance companies to meet certain conditions, such as access to the plan regardless of risks related to health, a maximum coinsurance share of 25%, and a maximum annual contribution of \$750.

In some cases, confidentiality and the right to privacy may be threatened if the employer participates in the management of the group insurance plan or fringe benefits plan for example. Administrative tasks such as collecting claims relating to the purchase of prescription drugs, sending them to the insurance company or distribution of refund cheques to employees can put the employer or other employees in a position to find out about the medical condition of a given employee or a member of the employee's family. In cases such as these, if an individual is being pestered or harassed by the employer, we suggest that the employee send a registered letter either to the person in charge of the claim at the insurance company or the person in charge of human resources, or to both of them, to remind them of their obligations with respect to the confidential nature of the personal information in their file.

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CADIEUX Dominique and Claude DAOUST, Le sida en milieu de travail, in *Revue du Barreau*, 49, 1989, p. 769.

COMMISSION DES DROITS DE LA PERSONNE DU QUÉBEC, *Le sida et le respect des droits et libertés de la personne*, 1988, 10 p.

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GRÉGOIRE, Sylvie, *La problématique du sida en milieu de travail. Pour l'employé, l'employeur et les tiers*. Éditions Wilson & Lafleur Itée, Montréal, 1994, 196 p.

MINISTÈRE DE LA SANTÉ ET DES SERVICES SOCIAUX, Unité de coordination de la politique du médicament, *Lignes directrices visant la prise en charge des personnes exposées accidentellement au sang et autres liquides biologiques (draft)*, Mars 1998.

AIDS

ACTION PLAN

Despite repeated efforts to inform the public about AIDS and how HIV is transmitted, fear continues to prevail and sometimes results in the rejection of people with HIV and AIDS. The workplace is not exempt from this. Like anywhere else, ignorance, rumours and deep-rooted prejudice can lead to discrimination and behaviour that can violate an individual's basic rights and freedoms. Because of the probability that these unfortunate situations are bound to come up at some point, companies must do everything in their power to prevent discrimination against the individuals concerned.

It is also in the best interests of companies to get involved and implement an action plan based on the constant circulation of information. Management personnel may be completely discouraged by certain negative reactions from employees who work with someone who is HIV-positive or even just assumed to be. These reactions can often lead to serious legal and administrative problems (relating to management of human resources, fringe benefits, group insurance, etc.) and can have a disastrous impact on productivity, as well as damaging management credibility and tarnishing the company or organization's reputation.

By the same token, unions are often faced with negative reactions from their members or called on to provide information regarding HIV and AIDS in the workplace. Unions can get involved and work with the employer to make sure all personnel are properly informed.

An action plan gives all those involved in running a business access to clear information on the ways HIV is transmitted, thereby reducing problems stemming from ignorance and fear.

BENEFITS OF AN ACTION PLAN

The implementation of an AIDS action plan enables businesses to react in an informed and well-prepared manner to the eventuality of one day being faced with HIV/AIDS.

Consequently, this type of plan provides many benefits for the business, such as the fact that it:

- puts an end to rumours;
- prevents crises from arising as a result of the presence of an individual with HIV or AIDS, therefore helping maintain productivity and quality of life in the workplace;
- allows the business to continue to benefit from the qualifications and experience of HIV-positive individuals or AIDS sufferers, thereby reducing the cost of training new employees;
- demonstrates a spirit of openmindedness and responsibility which will ultimately lead to respect from employees;
- protects HIV-positive employees or those with AIDS or any other illness;
- protects the company from lawsuits resulting from discrimination against or harassment of individuals with HIV or AIDS in the workplace;
- projects a positive image of a responsible and human organization.

HOW TO IMPLEMENT AN ACTION PLAN

We suggest the following procedure for implementing an AIDS action plan:

Form a select committee responsible for:

- determining the company's position by defining an internal policy on HIV/AIDS (see *Guidelines For an AIDS Policy*, page 23);
- determining the rules of conduct for dealing with HIV/AIDS in the work-place;
- identifying the specific needs of personnel in terms of education and information (see *Company Guide* section for a sample questionnaire, page 30);
- suggesting an action plan which conforms to the company's internal policy and responds to the needs expressed by the personnel (see *Company guide* section for a sample action plan, page 32);
- coordinating the implementation and follow-up of the action plan.

Assign an individual to update and circulate information about HIV/AIDS (press digest, articles, memos, etc.).

GUIDELINES

FOR AN AIDS POLICY

An AIDS policy defines the rules adopted by a company for dealing with AIDS and HIV and their many implications. It should reflect consultation with the union and employees in such a manner that it elicits the cooperation of workers.

An AIDS policy should be based on the following principles recognized by international organizations such as the International Labour Office, the World Health Organization and the European Union and applied by many governments and businesses in both the public and private sector:

1. HIV positive people have the same basic rights and freedoms as all other individuals, namely the right to inviolability as individuals, dignity, respect of privacy and professional privilege. They must not be subjected to harassment or discrimination.
2. Scientific and epidemiological research shows that there is absolutely no risk of individuals with AIDS or who are HIV-positive transmitting HIV to their colleagues during regular contact at the workplace.
3. Individuals with HIV and AIDS have the right to work. If they are unable to perform job tasks as a result of their condition, they have the right to the same sick leave and fringe benefits as an employee with another illness. They are also entitled to return to their job once their condition allows them to.
4. The employer must not exhibit nor tolerate any form of discrimination or harassment in the workplace towards an individual who is HIV-positive, either during hiring, in the course of employment or in terms of relations between personnel and customers.
5. Company and union leaders should develop, circulate and implement a non-discriminatory policy and AIDS education program which should be presented in terms which are simple, clear and unambiguous.

6. Company and union leaders should, with the help of public health organizations, commit to informing personnel about HIV and the ways it is transmitted.
7. The employer cannot ask an applicant or an employee for medical or personal information or ask them to be tested for HIV.

The only exceptions arise if the test is required by a country where the employee has agreed to work, or if the health and safety of others is threatened as a result of the employee being HIV-positive.

Finally, an employee can agree to HIV testing after being accidentally exposed to body fluids or blood, and then only after attending counselling from a qualified person of their choice. In all cases, the test must be carried out with the consent of the employee.

8. The employer must ensure the confidentiality of information about employees, including medical information, by taking the necessary steps. All information in the medical records must be kept under the supervision of the health professional. This person, in accordance with their code of ethics, cannot divulge any information relating to a medical diagnosis. Only information about the employee's ability to work may be given to the employer.
9. In a workplace where there is a particular risk of exposure to HIV (health services, for example, where workers can come into contact with blood), the employer must offer education and training programs and provide the material necessary for implementing infection control measures. The employer must also make sure these measures are respected.

STRATEGIES FOR CIRCULATING INFORMATION

The circulation of information is an essential asset for a company since it increases the understanding of AIDS and the ways that HIV is transmitted and ultimately leads to a more humane attitude towards people with HIV and AIDS sufferers.

The information circulation strategy that is implemented should include information activities on a continual basis and special activities organized whenever the need or opportunity arises in the course of the year.

CONTINUAL INFORMATION ACTIVITIES

Depending on the need and means available, there are several different ways of circulating information and sustaining employee interest. For example:

- Circulation of the company's internal policy;
- Distribution of written material on AIDS;
- Posters in strategic locations (lounge, cafeteria, etc.);
- Publication of articles in the company newsletter (see sample on page 33);
- Circulation of messages or memos to ensure the information is kept up to date (see sample on page 35);
- Provide documents, brochures or flyers about AIDS for employees.

Federal and provincial agencies have designed both printed and audiovisual communication tools that are readily available (see the Resources and Information section, page 27).

SPECIAL ACTIVITIES

It is a good idea to organize educational workshops (see sample on page 36) that deal with the different issues surrounding AIDS. For example, businesses can take advantage of World AIDS Day, which is highly publicized and held each year on December 1st, to organize workshops. They might also include an activity on AIDS/HIV as part of the occupational health and safety week or any other event that should be drawn to the attention of employees. There are all sorts of topics that can be addressed in conjunction with these activities, including:

- Biomedical aspects of AIDS (how HIV affects the body, symptoms, development and stages of the infection, etc.);
- How HIV is transmitted... and how it is not transmitted;
- Prevention methods such as using a condom, safe sex, general precautions, etc.;
- HIV/AIDS testing;
- Ethical and legal issues such as compensation for discrimination;
- Psychological and social implications of waiting for HIV test results or being diagnosed with HIV, and during the different stages of HIV infection as the disease progresses;
- The quality of life of individuals who have HIV or AIDS; how to support them and enable them to continue to fulfil their role within the company;
- Public and community resources.

These activities can be organized by designated company personnel. There are also outside resources (see AIDS in the Workplace in the Resources and Information section, page 27) that can help the company plan and coordinate these workshops.

RESOURCES AND INFORMATION

AIDS TRAINING PROGRAM



Aids in the Workplace

Do you need help? You don't know how or where to start? AIDS in the Workplace can help you. This program is essentially a consultation service on AIDS-related problems for companies, private organizations and agencies in Québec's public and parapublic sectors. Its mandate is to:

- Provide tools for evaluating and analyzing the needs of the company, organization or agency;
- Help companies, organizations or agencies develop an AIDS policy in the workplace;
- Implement training sessions for management and staff;
- Provide information booths about AIDS;
- Conduct a follow-up after training;
- Intervene in crisis situations;
- Provide resource personnel;
- Provide documentation about HIV/AIDS;
- Assess the impact of training in the workplace;
- Ensure that information about AIDS is current.

This program is recognized by the ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux du Québec and by Health Canada.

For more information, call:

Montréal area: (514) 282-1015

Elsewhere in Québec: 1-800-667-7432

Electronic mail : http://pages.infinit.net/cocqsida/smt_01.htm

EDUCATIONAL MATERIAL ON AIDS/HIV AND ON STDs (BROCHURES, FLYERS, ETC.)

You can send a fax to the ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux at (418) 644-4574, or contact the Régie régionale de la santé et des services sociaux, Direction de la santé publique, for your region.

Canadian Public Health Association

National AIDS Documentation Centre

1565 Carling Ave., suite 400

Ottawa, Ontario

K1Z 8R1

Telephone: (613) 725-3769

Fax: (613) 725-9826

HUMAN RIGHTS

Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse

For information about your rights or to find out whether you can file a complaint:

Montréal: (514) 873-7618

Outside Montréal: 1-800-361-6477

Québec City: (418) 643-4826

Outside Québec City: 1-800-463-5621

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To reach the Commission's other departments (communications, investigations, research, equal access, education, library):

Montréal: (514) 873-5146

Outside Montréal: 1-800-361-6477

Québec City: (418) 643-1872

Outside Québec City: 1-800-463-5621

For all information from regional offices:

Hull: (819) 776-8113

Rouyn: (819) 797-0915

Sept-Îles: (418) 962-4405

Sherbrooke: (819) 822-6925

TESTING FOR HIV/AIDS

For information about the anonymous HIV/AIDS testing centre nearest you, contact the INFO-SANTÉ CLSC service for your area.

COMMUNITY AIDS SERVICES

There are many community agencies and organizations in Québec working with AIDS. They offer education and prevention services as well as help and support for people with HIV or AIDS and those around them. For more information or support, please call:

La Coalition des organismes communautaires québécois de lutte contre le sida (COCQ-sida) (514) 844-2477

Company guide



This section contains samples designed to help you write or develop:

- an employee questionnaire,
- an action plan,
- articles,
- memos,
- workshops.

EMPLOYEE QUESTIONNAIRE

Does AIDS affect you?

All information will be kept strictly anonymous and confidential

1. Sex:
 Male Female

2. Age:
 18 to 35 36 to 50 51 or over

3. Do you know anyone with AIDS?
 Yes No Do not know

4. Would you know what to say or how to react to someone with AIDS?
 Yes No Do not know

5. Are you familiar with the rights of individuals with AIDS?
 Yes No Do not know

6. Do you know how the AIDS virus is transmitted?
 Yes No Do not know

7. Do you know how to prevent transmission of the AIDS virus?
 Yes No Do not know

8. Would you be afraid to work alongside someone with AIDS?
 Yes No Do not know

9. Would you like more information about AIDS?

Yes

No

Do not know

10. What type of information would you like about AIDS?

(You may check more than one box).

How the AIDS virus is transmitted

Prevention and protection

Attitudes, values and behaviour relating to HIV/AIDS

Rights and laws

AIDS testing

The illness and its symptoms

The life of a person with AIDS

Blood transfusions and donation

Other (specify):

11. Would you agree to your company adopting a policy on AIDS in the workplace?

Yes

No

Do not know

Comments:

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION

AIDS ACTION PLAN

FIRST:

- Using the confidential questionnaire filled out by employees, determine the level of employee knowledge about HIV and AIDS as well as anxiety expressed.
- Analyze findings to determine employee needs.

THEN:

1. Set priorities (determine the most pressing need for information).
2. Establish communication objectives (what message do you want to convey to employees?)
3. Determine the best ways to respond to needs and communication objectives (workshops, letters, memos, etc.).
4. Evaluate the material and information available within the company and complete it, as needed, with the help of outside resources.
5. Create an AIDS calendar; schedule one or more activities and plan for circulation of information and material, publication of articles, etc.

ARTICLE ON AIDS FOR PUBLICATION IN THE COMPANY NEWSLETTER

We hear about it everywhere and it often prompts fear or anxiety, but do you **really** know what AIDS is?

AIDS, or *Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome*, is caused by a virus known as HIV, or the *human immunodeficiency virus*. This virus attacks the immune system, which is responsible for protecting the body against invading germs. By destroying the immune function, HIV reduces the body's resistance to infectious disease and opens the door to certain types of cancer. It is chiefly these opportunistic infections and cancers that cause death in AIDS patients.

How is HIV transmitted?

HIV is transmitted in three ways:

- Through unprotected sex (i.e. without a condom) involving anal or vaginal penetration;
- Through the bloodstream during accidental contact with infected blood or contaminated or unsterilized objects (syringes, needles, cutting instruments) used to inject drugs or steroids or for tattooing or body-piercing;
- By an infected mother to her baby during pregnancy, childbirth or breastfeeding.

Can people infected with HIV transmit the disease?

Yes, people who are seropositive for HIV can transmit the virus whether or not they show any outward signs of the illness.

The virus has a long incubation period in the human body (it is estimated that it can last as long as ten years). This means that for this length of time a person can have the virus and yet remain in perfectly good health. They run the risk, however, of developing AIDS and contracting serious illnesses. Anyone with HIV, whether they are in good or bad health, can transmit the virus.

Is it known how HIV cannot be transmitted?

Yes, we know that there is absolutely no risk of HIV transmission during most everyday interactions.

HIV is therefore not transmitted by normal social contact (shaking a colleague's hand or sharing a telephone, office supplies or food).

Similarly, HIV cannot be transmitted via swimming pools, toilets, gymnasiums, the subway or buses. There is no danger associated with giving blood, drinking from a water fountain, sending children to school or taking a shower in a sports centre locker room. Pets and mosquitoes cannot transmit the AIDS virus.

What can we do to reduce the risk of contracting HIV?

Once you know how to protect yourself, it is relatively easy to avoid contracting HIV.

Sexual relations with any partner, no matter how well we know them, must be protected by using a latex condom. It is also a good idea to abstain from alcohol and drugs because they make us less vigilant and more forgetful. Trips and evenings out are also conducive to spontaneous and unprotected sexual encounters. It is therefore important to always carry a condom if there is any possibility that you may find yourself in such a situation.

Never share syringes or used and dirty needles utilized for injecting drugs or steroids, tattooing or body-piercing. Always use a new syringe and never share injection equipment. If it is impossible to obtain a new syringe, disinfect the old one with pure bleach and rinse with water.

MEMO ABOUT AIDS

TO: All personnel
FROM: Management or the union
RE: **AIDS awareness program**

AIDS is a serious disease which has killed thousands of people worldwide. In Québec, AIDS has already caused the death of over 3,410 people. Compared with the other provinces, it is unfortunately Québec that has the most cases of women and children with AIDS. Although treatment is now available that can improve the quality and duration of the lives of people with AIDS, it is still a fatal disease in the long term that is transmissible but avoidable.

AIDS is caused by a virus known as the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). If a person is infected by this virus, they run the risk of developing full-blown AIDS and dying.

The best defense against this terrible disease is prevention. This means getting involved early enough to prevent more individuals from becoming infected due to lack of information. We are also trying to prevent reactions such as panic, fear and discrimination towards people with HIV and AIDS.

The challenge facing society as a result of AIDS is enormous, and we have decided to get involved by adopting an AIDS policy and offering education and information activities.

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One of the biggest challenges in our program is to dispel myths and false information about the ways AIDS is transmitted. Doctors and specialists agree that one thing that is certain about AIDS is how it can and cannot be transmitted. There is no risk of infection in your workplace, and working alongside a person who has HIV or AIDS in no way increases your personal risk.

We hope that the activities we have organized and the policy we have adopted will help you become better informed. This way, you will be able to share your knowledge with your family and those around you. Information and education are the most effective ways of fighting this epidemic.

We trust that you will all participate in the information activities. We also suggest that you contact the health service or the person in charge of employee assistance for additional information.

Sincerely,

President and General Manager, The Union

AIDS WORKSHOP (THREE HOURS)

INTRODUCTION

Word of welcome

Presentation of the program

EVALUATION OF NEEDS

Exercise: Word association on the AIDS theme

Exercise: AIDS in the workplace. What do we need to do?

FACTS ABOUT AIDS

Presentation: Issues involved, stages of the disease, transmission

PREVENTION

Presentation: Protection, risk of infection during everyday activities, general precautions

Exercise: Risks and the workplace routine

RIGHTS AND LAWS IN QUÉBEC AND CANADA

Presentation: Confidentiality

BREAK

ATTITUDES, VALUES AND BEHAVIOUR

Exercise: Brainstorming on attitudes. Help participants understand the basis for attitudes about AIDS and people with AIDS.

Exercise: Ethics and individuals with HIV or AIDS. How to incite support for these people.

EMPLOYEES WITH AIDS

Exercise: What should you say? Who should you say it to and how? Help participants communicate with people with HIV/AIDS

Exercise: Working alongside someone who has AIDS. Thoughts on the effects AIDS has on professional and personal life.

EVALUATION/CLOSING



For more copies of the guide AIDS and the Workplace, Let's Do Something About It, And How!, contact

AIDS in the Workplace

Montréal area:
(514) 282-1015

Elsewhere in Québec:
1-800-667-7432

Electronic mail :
http://pages.infinet.net/cocqsida/smt_01.hmt

Ce document est aussi disponible en français sous le titre *Sida et milieu de travail, Investir dans l'action, Et comment!*