



Workplace Policy on HIV and AIDS

Theatre for a Change (TfaC) recognises the seriousness of the HIV/AIDS epidemic and its impact on the workplace. TfaC supports national efforts to reduce the spread of infection and to minimize the impact of the disease. This policy is designed to protect and promote the rights of people living with HIV and AIDS who work for the organisation.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure a consistent and equitable approach to the prevention of HIV/AIDS among employees and their families, and to the management of the consequences of HIV/AIDS, including the care and support of employees living with HIV/AIDS. The policy has been developed and will be implemented in consultation with employees at all levels. It is in compliance with existing laws regarding HIV/AIDS and with the ILO Code of Practice on HIV/AIDS and the world of work.

Policy framework and general principles

TfaC does not discriminate or tolerate discrimination against employees or job applicants on any grounds, including HIV status. While TfaC recognises that there are circumstances unique to HIV infection, this policy rests on the principle that HIV infection and AIDS should be treated like any other serious condition or illness that may affect employees. It takes into account the fact that employees with HIV may live full and active lives for a number of years. TfaC's commitment to maintaining a safe and healthy work environment for all employees is based on the recognition that HIV is not transmitted by casual contact.

Specific provisions

Rights of employees who are HIV-positive: HIV-positive employees will be protected against discrimination, victimisation or harassment. Normal company disciplinary and grievance procedures shall apply equally to all employees, as will the provision of information and education about HIV and AIDS.

Employment opportunities and termination of employment: No employee should suffer adverse consequences, whether dismissal or denial of appropriate alternative employment opportunities, merely on the basis of HIV infection.

Testing: TfaC rejects HIV testing as a prerequisite for recruitment, access to training or promotion. However, TfaC promotes and facilitates access to voluntary confidential testing with counselling (VCT) for all employees.

Epidemiological testing: Testing programmes for epidemiological purposes will be subject to appropriate consultation with recognised employee representatives and will be subject to independent and objective evaluation and scrutiny. The results of epidemiological



studies will not be used as a basis for discriminating against any class of employee in the workplace. All testing will comply with accepted international standards on pre-and post-test counselling, informed consent, confidentiality and support.

Confidentiality: TfaC recognises the sensitive issues that surround HIV/AIDS and undertakes to handle matters in a discreet and private manner. Where an employee with HIV has revealed his or her status to management, TfaC will keep the identity of such person confidential. However in line with TfaC philosophy on the virus, the employee will be encouraged to be open about his or her HIV status.

Awareness-raising and education: Appropriate awareness and education programmes will be conducted to inform employees about AIDS and HIV which will enable them to protect themselves and others against infection by HIV. Some of these will include the families of employees and the local community. TfaC recognises the importance of involving employees and their representatives in the planning and implementation of awareness, education and counselling programmes, especially as peer educators and counsellors.

Practical measures to support behaviour change and risk management will include the treatment of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and TB, sterile needle and syringe exchange programmes, and the distribution of male and female condoms.

Training shall be arranged for key staff including managers, supervisors, and personnel officers; trainers of trainers (both male and female); peer educators; and occupational safety and health officers.

Reasonable time off will be given for participation in education and training.

Care and support for workers and their families

The promotion of employees' well-being: TfaC will treat employees who are infected or affected by HIV/AIDS with empathy and care. TfaC will provide all reasonable assistance which may include counselling, time off, sick leave, family responsibility leave, and information regarding the virus and its effect.

Work performance and reasonable accommodation: It is the policy of TfaC to respond to the changing health status of employees by making reasonable accommodation in the workplace for those infected with HIV. Employees may continue to work as long as they are able to perform their duties safely and in accordance with accepted performance standards. If an employee with AIDS is unable to perform his or her tasks adequately, the manager or supervisor must resolve the problem according to TfaC's normal procedure on poor performance/ill health.



Benefits: Employees living with HIV/AIDS will be treated no less favourably than staff with any other serious illness/condition in terms of statutory and company benefits, workplace compensation, where appropriate, and other available services.

Healthcare: Theatre for a Change will help employees living with HIV/AIDS to find appropriate medical services in the community, as well as counselling services, professional support and self-help groups if required. Reasonable time off will be given for counselling and treatment

Monitoring and implementing

Theatre for a Change will establish an HIV/AIDS link person to coordinate and implement the HIV/AIDS policy and programme. The responsible officer will report regularly to the management committee.

In order to plan and evaluate its HIV/AIDS policy and programme effectively, Theatre for a Change will undertake a survey to establish baseline data and regular risk and impact assessment studies. The studies will include knowledge, attitudes and behaviour/ practices (KAB/P). Studies will be carried out in consultation and with the consent of employees and their representatives, and in conditions of complete confidentiality.

This policy, and related information on HIV and AIDS, will be communicated to all TfaC employees and the wider public using the full range of communication methods available to the company and its network of contacts.

This policy will be reviewed annually and revised as necessary in the light of changing conditions and the findings of surveys/studies conducted.

All provisions outlined here are reflected in the Conditions of Service – where there is a discrepancy, the CoS will prevail.

Budgeting

Senior Management and the financial department should ensure that all budgets reflect the fact that TfaC is an organisation working with people living with HIV and AIDS

The basic health needs of the infected or affected members of staff are of paramount importance, and this should be reflected in the annual budget of the organisation.