

ADOPTING AN OVERARCHING HIV AND AIDS WORKPLACE POLICY FOR THE EDUCATION SECTOR

WHAT IS AN HIV AND AIDS WORKPLACE POLICY?

According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), a workplace policy provides a framework for action to reduce the spread of HIV and manage the impact of AIDS.¹ Such a policy does the following things:

- ▶ makes an explicit commitment to action
- ▶ is consistent with appropriate national laws
- ▶ specifies standards of behaviour for all employees
- ▶ helps people living with HIV and AIDS to understand the support and care they will receive
- ▶ implements programmes to prevent further spread of the virus
- ▶ helps workplaces plan and manage the impact of HIV and AIDS

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT FOR THE EDUCATION SECTOR TO ADOPT AN HIV AND AIDS WORKPLACE POLICY?

- ▶ Schools are both educational environments and workplaces that employ thousands of people in the Caribbean.
- ▶ Educational systems must address the need to develop, support and protect those who work within them. Workplace policies must address all aspects of the HIV and AIDS epidemic.
- ▶ A workplace policy can help school administrators, teachers and support staff protect themselves, students and their families from HIV transmission and can minimise the impact of illness and death.
- ▶ Implementing HIV and AIDS policies in schools can curb unfair employment practices such as mandatory HIV testing and discrimination against students and teachers.
- ▶ An HIV and AIDS policy provides guidance to supervisors who deal with the issues that arise in the workplace. It also informs employees about their responsibilities, rights and expected behaviour while on the job.
- ▶ A policy will set the framework for addressing the needs of students, both infected and affected.
- ▶ A policy can establish an environment conducive to prevention, treatment, care and support for people living with HIV and AIDS (PLWHA) in the education sector.

¹ ILO/AIDS, "A Workplace Policy on HIV/AIDS: What It Should Cover" (Geneva: ILO/AIDS), <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/protection/trav/aids/examples/workcover.pdf>.



WHAT SHOULD AN HIV AND AIDS WORKPLACE POLICY INCLUDE?

Supportive workplace policies in schools include:

- ▶ HIV prevention training education for all school personnel
- ▶ required coordination between health and education authorities at local and district levels in planning and implementing HIV interventions in schools
- ▶ policies for students and school personnel that support privacy, attendance, employment and infection control
- ▶ policies that support HIV prevention and other health interventions at all levels of schooling, starting in the earliest grade and continuing through the last grade
- ▶ designation of a school-level coordinator with the responsibility and authority to deal with health issues
- ▶ a code of professional ethics that protects students, teachers and staff from sexual harassment and abuse¹

WHAT CAN WE DO NEXT?

- ▶ Find out what policies have been drafted in your country and in other countries. For example, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Culture in Jamaica has created a National Policy for HIV and AIDS Management in Schools.
- ▶ Use the Rapid Appraisal Framework in the Workbook enclosed in this folder to quickly assess the progress of your country's education sector in creating an overarching workplace policy on HIV and AIDS.
- ▶ Keep in mind that drafting a policy is not enough. Action must be taken to educate all school personnel—administrators, teachers and staff—on this policy through workplace training programmes on HIV and AIDS.² Staff must know that this policy will be enforced by all school officials.

WHERE CAN WE GO FOR MORE INFORMATION ON CREATING AN HIV AND AIDS WORKPLACE POLICY FOR OUR EDUCATORS?

- ▶ Barbados Employers' Confederation. *Dealing with AIDS in the Workplace: Guidelines for Managers and Supervisors*. St. Michael: Barbados Employers' Confederation, 2001.
- ▶ Kelly, M., and B. Bain. *Education and HIV/AIDS in the Caribbean*. Kingston, Jamaica: UNESCO, 2005.
- ▶ International Labour Organization Subregional Office for the Caribbean: www.ilocarib.org.
- ▶ International Labour Organization Code of Practice on HIV and AIDS in the Workplace: www.ilo.org.
- ▶ Jamaica Ministry of Education, Youth and Culture. *A National Policy for HIV and AIDS Management in Schools*. Kingston: Jamaica Ministry of Education, Youth and Culture, 2001.
- ▶ Haiti Ministère de L'Éducation Nationale de la Jeunesse et des Sports [MENJS]. *Plan stratégique sectoriel de l'éducation pour la prévention et la lutte contre la VIH/SIDA*. Port au Prince, Haiti: MENJS, 2002.
- ▶ The National AIDS Coordinating Committee in your country.
- ▶ UNESCO, The FRESH School Health Toolkit website and CD Rom, HIV and AIDS Tools <http://www.unesco.org>

¹ World Health Organization [WHO], "Preventing HIV/AIDS/STI and Related Discrimination: An Important Responsibility of Health-Promoting Schools," *WHO Information Series on School Health 6* (WHO/HPR/HEP/98.6) (Geneva: WHO, 1999).

² M. Kelly and B. Bain, *Education and HIV/AIDS in the Caribbean* (Paris: UNESCO, 2005).

