UNITE TO END HIV
A Abstain from casual sex
B Be faithful
C Consistent condom use
D Detect early

Implementation Guide for

Managing HIV in the Workplace



ntuc National Trades Union Congress

Health Promotion Board

SNEF

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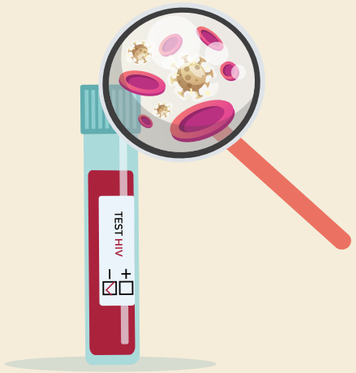
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EMPLOYERS CAN PLAY AN INTEGRAL ROLE IN REDUCING STIGMA AND PREJUDICE TOWARDS HIV IN SINGAPORE

Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) is the virus that causes acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS), which is the advanced stage of an HIV infection. HIV infection weakens the body's protective immune system and makes it vulnerable to other opportunistic infections.

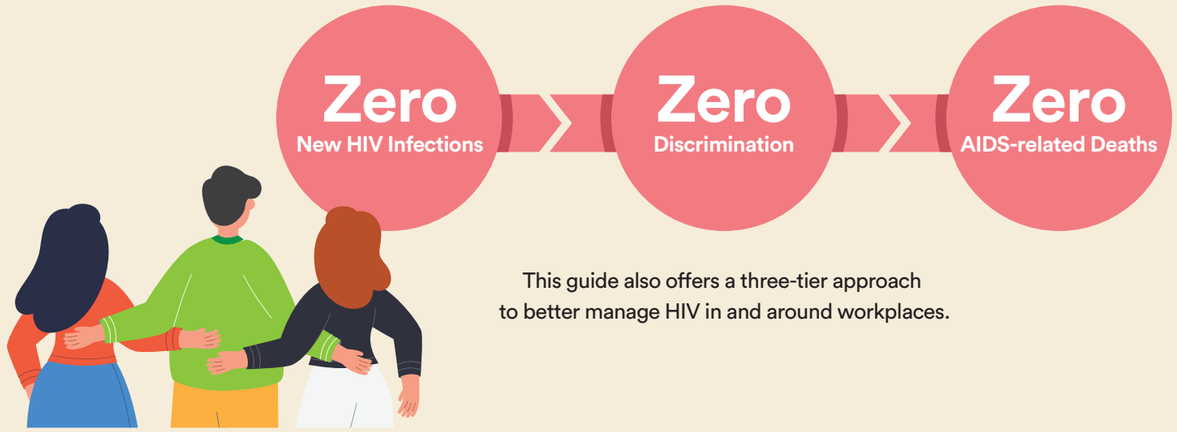


It currently affects over 8,500 individuals in Singapore, with approximately an average of 372 new cases between 2015 to 2021 new cases being detected every year[1]. However, the actual prevalence of the disease is estimated to be much higher since almost half of new cases annually are not detected until they are in the late-stage of HIV infection.



Working Towards Earlier Diagnosis

Those diagnosed with late-stage HIV cite the fear of real or perceived workplace stigmatisation and discrimination as a reason for not getting tested earlier[2]. However, with early detection and treatment, people living with HIV can expect a lifespan similar to individuals without HIV and be just as productive in the workplace. Even today, there are still misconceptions about the disease as well as stigmatisation and discrimination towards people living with HIV.



This guide also offers a three-tier approach to better manage HIV in and around workplaces.

SOURCE: [1] MOH | UPDATE ON THE HIV/AIDS SITUATION IN SINGAPORE 2021 (JUNE 2022)
https://www.moh.gov.sg/resources-statistics/infectious-disease-statistics/hiv-stats/update-on-the-hiv-aids-situation-in-singapore-2021-(june-2022)

SOURCE: [2] TAN SY, YONG LMO, YUET JEF, WONG NHS, CHEW LL & KOH YL.
Securing and sustaining employment: Concerns of HIV patients in Singapore. Social Work in Health Care. 2013; 52:10, 881-898.

SOURCE: [3] ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS. ASEAN DECLARATION OF COMMITMENT: GETTING TO ZERO NEW HIV INFECTIONS, ZERO DISCRIMINATION, ZERO AIDS-RELATED DEATHS
https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/ASEAN_Declaration_of_Commitment.pdf

QUICK FACTS



Around half of new cases annually are already at late-stage HIV infection at the time of diagnosis

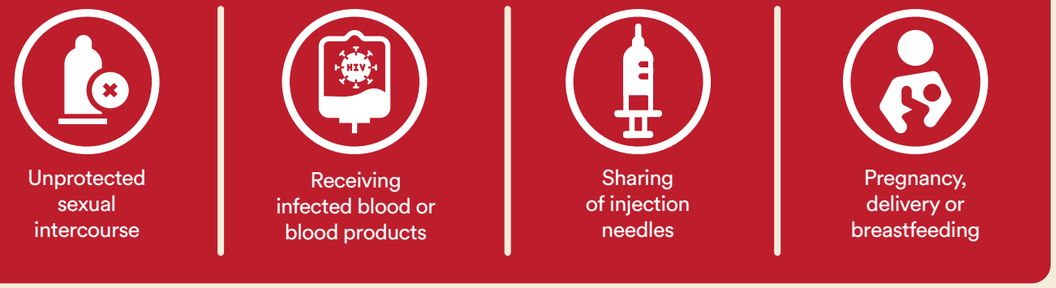


HIV detected through voluntary testing is more likely to be at an earlier stage of infection



Early detection and treatment will help suppress the viral load and prevent the onset of AIDS

HIV CAN BE TRANSMITTED THROUGH



HIV CANNOT BE TRANSMITTED THROUGH



There is no evidence to show that HIV has been transmitted in common workplace settings and therefore no special precautions are needed to prevent HIV infection in the workplace other than providing a safe and healthy work environment.

Even in healthcare settings, where the likelihood of a healthcare worker being exposed to HIV-infected blood and fluids is generally higher, the risk of transmission remains low with the practice of proper precautions, thus it is rare to acquire HIV in such settings.

PUTTING THE THREE-TIER APPROACH INTO ACTION

Employers play a vital role in reducing stigma and prejudice towards HIV in Singapore. The three-tier approach provides practical steps for workplaces to develop and implement practices for prevention and management of HIV.

The three-tier approach offers a framework for workplaces to be effective in implementing positive change and creating a more supportive work environment.

TIER 1 - IMPLEMENTING Workplace Education

There are still misconceptions and a lack of understanding about HIV. Providing relevant information and training gives employees the knowledge and tools to facilitate management of HIV in the workplace.

Pledge your support and implement at least one of these:

- ☐ Make available or circulate HIV related educational materials, including where to get tested for HIV. These can be obtained from support organisations as listed under the resource section
- ☐ Organise educational talks and workshops, or attend conferences about HIV
- ☐ Conduct training for staff on handling matters related to HIV
- ☐ Organise quizzes or contests with attractive prizes
- ☐ Provide educational materials on mental well-being for people living with HIV or people at risk
- ☐ Organise interactive exhibitions or edutainment activities to learn about HIV



TIER 2 - ACHIEVING a Supportive and Inclusive Workplace Environment

A supportive environment can create a culture of empowerment, trust, care, respect and shared beliefs among employees. This can positively impact people living with HIV.

Pledge your support and implement at least one of these:

- ☐ Encourage participation in Corporate Social Responsibility activities with organisations supporting people living with HIV
- ☐ Communicate the necessity to keep personal medical information confidential
- ☐ Encourage participation in HIV-related events
- ☐ Have incentive or recognition programmes for employees who participate in HIV-related initiatives
- ☐ Facilitate access to a counselling service or helpline
- ☐ Provide training to supervisors and managers to develop supportive leadership skills
- ☐ Making HIV screening available and optional as part of annual corporate health check for employees





TIER 3 - ESTABLISHING Workplace Policies

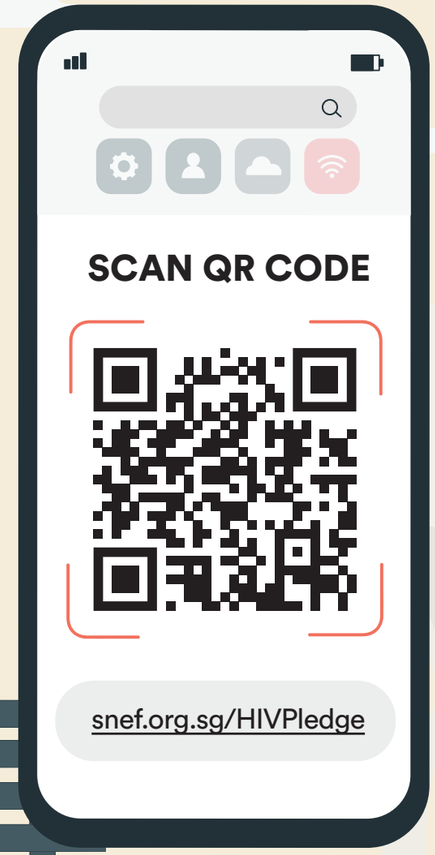
Workplace policies formalise the approach of the organisation and provide guidance for decision-making at all corporate levels. They demonstrate and enforce the organisation's attitudes and commitment to eliminating stigma and discrimination towards people living with HIV in the workplace.

Pledge your support and implement at least one of these:

- ☐ Sign the Employer's Pledge of Fair Employment Practices
- ☐ Adopt the Tripartite Standard on Recruitment Practices
- ☐ Put in place fair hiring policies which are based on merit
- ☐ Ensure employees are allowed time off to participate in activities that support people living with HIV
- ☐ Include HIV-related medical expenses as part of corporate health benefits for employees
- ☐ Ensure employees are allowed time off to seek medical treatment
- ☐ Have a clearly stated policy on non-tolerance of discriminatory behaviour in the workplace that includes language around infectious diseases, especially HIV
- ☐ Accommodate a switch to alternative work arrangements (if necessary)



SHOW US YOUR GOOD WORK!
PLEDGE YOUR SUPPORT HERE





CASE STUDIES

The following case studies illustrate some of the challenges companies may face in dealing with employees living with HIV.

All names have been changed to protect the identity of the people involved.

CASE STUDY 1 — Jim

Jim has been living with HIV for over 10 years but has never disclosed his HIV status to his company. His condition has not affected his ability to perform his job.

One of the company's vendors informed the company that Jim was seen entering the National Centre for Infectious Diseases. Subsequently, the company instructed Jim to undertake a medical screening, inclusive of HIV testing, for the purpose of upgrading his medical coverage. Jim suspected that the company knew about his HIV status as no one else was asked to undertake the screening. He contacted his social worker for advice.

With Jim's consent, the social worker spoke to the company. The social worker explained that HIV cannot be transmitted in the workplace. The company did not force Jim to change his job scope. There was a mutual agreement that the company maintained all other terms of employment.



His employer should not have requested Jim to take the HIV screening or ask him about HIV status.

Employees' employability should not be dependent on their HIV status.

It is good that the company did not force Jim to change his job scope. It is also good that the company maintained the employment contract terms and salary. Redeploying Jim to other roles is not needed as HIV cannot be transmitted in a workplace setting.

CASE STUDY 2 — Peter

Peter, a Singaporean, was based in an overseas office of a Singaporean company. One day, he was suddenly called in for an urgent meeting. His company doctor, as well as his direct supervisor, company manager and Human Resources manager, had all flown in from Singapore especially for the meeting.

The panel informed him that company medical tests had revealed that he has HIV. All three of Peter's company directors had been informed of his HIV status before he knew of it himself. Peter could not remember much more of the meeting, except feelings of panic and shock.

Peter was concerned that he would be asked to leave the company and thought it would be tough for him to find a similar job as he was already 40 years old.

The company assured him that he would not lose his job, and arranged for him to be transferred to the Singapore office, so he would not need to travel as much. Peter is grateful that the company has stood by him, and even supported him beyond what he thought was necessary.



Peter's HIV status should have been kept confidential, and not be disclosed to others, including directors of the organisation.

The results of company medical packages, especially of HIV (regardless of positive or negative status) should never be revealed to anyone except for the patient and the doctor unless the patient chooses to disclose that information or as required by law.

It is good that the company was proactive in exploring alternative work arrangements. However, the company should review and tighten their policy on maintaining confidentiality of personal medical information.

CASE STUDY 3 — Alan

Alan started working as a retail assistant and initially performed well in his role. However over time, his reporting officer Kelvin noted that Alan had missed a couple of meetings and did not report for work occasionally. He decided to speak with Alan to find out if he was facing any issues. Kelvin was sympathetic and approached the matter in an open-minded manner, which encouraged Alan to reveal that he had been diagnosed with HIV a couple of months back. Kelvin assured Alan that he does not need to worry about his employment.

Alan also shared that he had not followed up on his medical appointments, nor had he started on any treatment. Kelvin encouraged Alan to adhere to his medical appointments and any prescribed medication and treatment. He also assured Alan that there would be no issue in him taking leave to attend his medical appointments, as long as Alan informed Kelvin beforehand. Alan felt comforted that Kelvin understood his situation and was able to provide him with necessary guidance.

With such a supportive work environment, Alan's performance improved and he was even promoted to Store Supervisor a few months later as recognition of his great performance.



Supportive leadership skills and training related to managing HIV in the workplace can prepare managers and supervisors in handling similar situations.

It is good that the employer provided a supportive environment, giving Alan a peace of mind in a stressful situation. Maintaining the health and wellbeing of staff members can have a positive effect in the workplace, including increased productivity, reduced turnover and better job satisfaction.

RESOURCES AVAILABLE

ORGANISATIONAL SUPPORT

ACTION FOR AIDS
Tel: 6254 0212
Email: info@afa.org.sg / support@afa.org.sg
Website: www.afa.org.sg

DEPARTMENT OF SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS CONTROL CLINIC
Confidential Counselling Tel: 1800 252 1324
Email: apptdsc@nsc.com.sg
Website: www.nsc.com.sg/dsc

HEALTH PROMOTION BOARD
Tel: 1800 225 4482*
Email: hpb_mailbox@hpb.gov.sg
(Attention: Communicable Diseases Department)
Website: go.gov.sg/preventhiv

INSTITUTE OF MENTAL HEALTH
Tel: 6389 2222
Website: www.imh.com.sg

NATIONAL CENTRE FOR INFECTIOUS DISEASES (NATIONAL HIV PROGRAMME)
Tel: 6256 6011
Email: contact@ncid.sg
Website: www.ncid.sg/About-NCID/OurDepartments/Pages/National-HIV-Programme.aspx

NATIONAL TRADES UNION CONGRESS
Tel: 6213 8000
Website: www.ntuc.org.sg

SINGAPORE NATIONAL EMPLOYERS FEDERATION
Tel: 6290 7697
Email: whp@snef.org.sg

TRIPARTITE ALLIANCE FOR FAIR & PROGRESSIVE EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES
Tel: 6838 0969
Website: www.tal.sg/tafep

SAMARITANS OF SINGAPORE
Tel: 1800 221 4444
Website: www.sos.org.sg

LEGISLATION

EMPLOYMENT ACT
Provides basic terms and working conditions for employees covered by the Act

INFECTIOUS DISEASES ACT
Deals with the prevention and control of infectious diseases

EMPLOYMENT OF FOREIGN MANPOWER ACT
Regulates the employment of foreign employees and protects their wellbeing

PROTECTION OF PERSONAL DATA ACT
Comprises various rules governing the collection, use, disclosure and care of personal data

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS ACT
Provides for the regulation of the relations of employers and employees and the prevention and settlement of trade disputes by collective bargaining, conciliation, arbitration and tripartite mediation of individual disputes

WORK INJURY COMPENSATION ACT
Lets employees make claims for work-related injuries or diseases without having to file a civil suit under common law

*Kindly note that airtime charges apply for mobile calls to 1800 service lines and calls are free of charge only if made from regular land lines.

RESOURCES AVAILABLE

PUBLICATIONS

GUIDELINES ON MANAGING HIV IN THE WORKPLACE (2022)

www.snef.org.sg/WID/HIVGuidelines2022.pdf

AN INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION CODE OF PRACTICE ON HIV/AIDS AND THE WORLD OF WORK

www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed_protect/@protrav/@ilo_aids/documents/publication/wcms_113783.pdf

INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION AIDS - A WORKPLACE POLICY ON HIV/AIDS: WHAT IT SHOULD COVER

www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---protrav/---ilo_aids/documents/publication/wcms_121313.pdf

BUILDING A WORKPLACE CULTURE OF EQUALITY - A REFLECTION ON UNAIDS CULTURE TRANSFORMATION JOURNEY TO DATE

www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media_asset/JC3061_UNAIDS-culture-transformation_en.pdf

HIV SELF-TESTING AT WORKPLACES: APPROACHES TO IMPLEMENTATION AND SUSTAINABLE FINANCING

www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240040632

The ASEAN Red Ribbon for Outstanding Workplace (ARROW) Award gives recognition to organisations in every ASEAN member state for their remarkable initiatives to create a safe and healthy working environment through HIV awareness, CSR and prevention programmes for their employees.

Organisations who successfully adopt the three-tiers would stand a chance to represent Singapore in the ARROW Award.

ASEAN Red Ribbon for Outstanding Workplace Award