



Guidelines for Managers

HIV/AIDS PREVENTION IN THE WORKPLACE





RUSSIA HAS EMERGED AS A NEW EPICENTER IN THE GLOBAL HIV/AIDS EPIDEMIC, REGISTERING ONE OF THE WORLD'S FASTEST-GROWING RATES OF NEW INFECTION. A GREAT AND URGENT NEED THEREFORE EXISTS FOR REALISTIC AND COMPREHENSIVE HIV PREVENTION PROGRAMS THROUGHOUT RUSSIAN SOCIETY.

Transatlantic Partners Against AIDS (TPAA) has prepared a manual designed to assist Russian employers in developing and implementing HIV prevention initiatives in the workplace. The manual and complementary educational seminars, **"HIV/AIDS Prevention in Companies: Managers' Manual"**, includes recommendations and potential guidelines for business executives, human resources managers, company medical care personnel and other specialists. This brochure provides an overview of the program's key points.



WHY HIV/AIDS IS A BUSINESS ISSUE IN RUSSIA

The growing HIV/AIDS epidemic will likely have a substantial impact on Russia's economy, demographic situation and national security. As of May 2005, some 320,000 HIV/AIDS cases were officially registered in the Russian Federation. However, according to most independent estimates, the real number of people living with HIV/AIDS is at least 900,000 and may be as high as 1.5 million. International experts estimate that 8 million Russians, or 10% of the adult population, could be infected with HIV in the upcoming decade unless adequate prevention and treatment measures are implemented. Individuals in their prime working ages comprise a large majority of those infected to date, a situation that will likely remain consistent in the future as more Russians contract the virus.

Macroeconomic impact of the epidemic

According to the World Bank, Russia may lose up to 4.2% of its GDP growth by 2010 because of the epidemic. This loss may be as high as 10.5%, according to the Bank, if urgent measures are not taken to prevent the spread of HIV. The Bank adds that investment flow into Russia could conceivably fall by 5.5% by 2010 and by 14.5% through 2020. Increased infection rates mean that greater expenditures must be allocated to medicines and health care, thus reducing the amount of resources available to fuel economic growth.

HIV/AIDS' impact at the company level

HIV/AIDS results in lower productivity that is exacerbated by increased absenteeism rates and staff turnover. Due to a decrease in qualified personnel, companies may have to take on inexperienced employees or temporary staff. As a result, the number of workplace accidents will likely increase; additional resources will be needed to train personnel and to pay sick leave and disability compensation; and overall efficiency will probably decline. All of these developments can have adverse effects on the workplace environment as well as on relations with suppliers, sellers and customers.

Role of the business community

Companies can make a significant contribution to curbing the HIV/AIDS epidemic and helping ensure the health and well-being of their employees. International experience testifies to the usefulness and success of prevention programs in the workplace. The recommended elements of HIV/AIDS prevention programs in the workplace based on international experience, analysis of Russia's epidemic and relevant Russian legislation is as follows.



DEVELOP AND DISTRIBUTE A COMPANY POLICY ON HIV/AIDS

To effectively address HIV/AIDS-related issues in the workplace, employers are strongly urged to develop a company policy on HIV/AIDS and to inform all employees about it and what it entails.

The policy should comprise a code of rules that defines the company's position on HIV/AIDS issues, including discrimination, health care and labor rights. It should reflect the company's principles and attitudes toward employees living with HIV/AIDS and spell out sanctions for discriminatory action against HIV-infected employees in the workplace. Such policies are in line with existing Russian legislation and government regulations aimed at protecting the rights of people living with HIV/AIDS.

A company policy does not constitute an action plan. However, it does provide the foundation for an effective prevention program and its implementation. Policies regarding HIV/AIDS might be incorporated into a broader set of corporate operational guidelines and policies related to employee health protection and social accountability.

This policy should be based on a thorough and up-to-date understanding of HIV/AIDS issues, including the recognition that the risk of contracting HIV at the workplace is generally nonexistent.

Recommended elements and objectives of a company HIV/AIDS policy

- Reducing discrimination
- Ensuring HIV-positive employees' ability to work, depending on his/her willingness and ability to perform
- Performance standards and reasonable accommodation
- Confidentiality and non-disclosure of medical information
- Respect for other employees' interests
- Establishing an accountability framework for the employer
- Educating employees
- Providing referrals for services and assistance in the areas of personal health, legal issues and mental health support

An approved policy should be communicated directly to employees and subsequently implemented. Senior staff, key managers and labor leaders should be fully aware of both the content of the policy and their roles in ensuring its effective implementation.



DESIGN AND IMPLEMENT A WORK-PLACE EDUCATION AND PREVENTION PROGRAM ON HIV/AIDS

A four-stage prevention and education program is recommended for companies:

Stage 1: Training an implementation team on issues related to HIV prevention in the workplace

The prevention program's implementation team should be trained at seminars that highlight and explain important issues related to HIV transmission as well as program planning and implementation. This step should precede the creation of the company's HIV/AIDS policy and the commencement of training and education efforts directed at employees.

Stage 2: Educating managers and specialists

Company managers and social and medical personnel should be the first to be educated and trained in HIV prevention because they are responsible for implementing prevention programs. For one thing, they determine day-to-day company activities and can best elicit respect for policy principles; furthermore, they can and should be prepared to offer comprehensive HIV prevention information to all other employees.

Stage 3: Educating employees

Employees should be provided with basic information on the HIV/AIDS epidemic around the world, in Russia and in their own region; how HIV can be transmitted and ways to prevent transmission; and basic Russian legislation regarding HIV/AIDS. The principles of the company's policy should be communicated clearly and directly, with particular attention given to providing the same information and services to all newly hired staff as they join the firm. All training efforts should also include such issues as relations among employees and security in the workplace.

Stage 4: Educating employees' families

Family education programs are useful in helping employees discuss HIV-related issues and prevention with their children and spouses. Well-designed programs teach employees how to initiate and sustain conversations with children on difficult and complex issues; how to reach teenagers without sounding overly moral or judgmental; and how to discuss potentially risky behaviors, such as unprotected sex and injecting drug use .

OTHER IMPORTANT PROGRAM COMPONENTS

It may be useful to incorporate additional elements, such as the ones described below, into company programs to increase the effectiveness of HIV/AIDS prevention messages.

Encouraging employees to participate in voluntary HIV testing initiatives, employee counseling and treatment

It is much easier and efficient to offer assistance to employees once they are aware of their HIV status. Therefore, companies may want to make extra efforts to provide access to testing services as well as counseling and treatment services for those who need or request them.

Financial assistance and social support for employees whose work capacity is limited due to HIV/AIDS

HIV/AIDS can greatly reduce an individual's ability to work, which in turn can limit his or her income-generating capacity. A household's resources can be further reduced when family members devote increasing amounts of time caring for a person with AIDS. HIV/AIDS policies in many companies therefore provide social support services and financial assistance to people living with HIV/AIDS or to their relatives in such situations.

Workplace drug and alcohol abuse prevention

Drug and alcohol use are often risk factors for HIV transmission and may be disruptive in the workplace for many other reasons as well. A thorough HIV/AIDS prevention policy often consists of educating employees as to the negative effects of drug and alcohol abuse and providing non-judgmental and confidential referrals and assistance for professional counseling and therapy, including rehabilitation services.

Employee assistance programs

Employee assistance programs can constitute an integrated and effective approach to reducing a company's financial losses as a result of various emotional and physical problems stemming from mental illness (including depression), HIV/AIDS

and drug and alcohol abuse. These problems are often closely linked, with one leading to another. Employee assistance programs generally require additional training of managers and relevant personnel as well as cooperation with organizations that provide qualified counseling and other forms of assistance that employees may need or request.

Education and prevention programs in the regions

Many companies take part in HIV/AIDS education and prevention programs in their regions. Their participation may involve several different populations, including employee families, young people and vulnerable groups such as migrants and the poor.

Support for medical institutions and NGOs providing services to people living with HIV/AIDS

Many companies support government agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that provide HIV/AIDS-related medical, psychological and social assistance. This kind of outreach may help build support for the company among employees, thus boosting morale and productivity, as well as enhancing the quality of services and assistance available to employees, their relatives and the region's population on the whole.

A company may consider adding new elements to its HIV/AIDS prevention program after a final consideration of its needs and a thorough situation assessment.

MONITORING AND EVALUATING A COMPANY HIV/AIDS PREVENTION PROGRAM

Companies should regularly monitor and evaluate their HIV/AIDS prevention programs. This effort will help ensure the programs' usefulness and effectiveness.



HEALTH@WORK EDUCATION PROGRAM

TPAA experts designed a comprehensive education program, “HEALTH@WORK”, which may be helpful to companies seeking to develop HIV/AIDS prevention programs in Russia. The program includes a series of interactive seminars for different groups of company personnel. An additional program module focuses on workplace drug abuse prevention methods. TPAA experts are also available to conduct training for company trainers; and provide consultation services and assistance in prevention program development and implementation.

TRANSATLANTIC PARTNERS AGAINST AIDS (TPAA)

is an independent, non-governmental organization that leverages the political, civic, scientific and economic resources of North American, European, and Eurasian partners to combat the rapid and devastating spread of HIV/AIDS in Russia, Ukraine and neighboring countries.

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