

PURPOSE:

To outline the County's policy and procedures respecting Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) Infection, including Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS).

POLICY STATEMENT:

The County of Elgin believes it is possible to continue the employment of persons with HIV/AIDS infection in a compassionate supportive way while ensuring the safety of employees and the public. In this regard the County of Elgin views HIV/AIDS in the same light as any other illness or disability. As with any other serious illness or disability every person with HIV/AIDS is assessed on an individual basis to accommodate variations in the progression and impact of the illness.

Therefore employees with HIV/AIDS infection have a right to continue to work provided they are able to perform the essential duties of their jobs in a satisfactory manner and do not present a health or safety hazard to themselves or others.

All employees, including individuals known or thought to be infected with HIV have a right to confidentiality and freedom from harassment in the work place.

Employees, persons seeking employment and members of the public known or thought to have HIV infection, must have their rights to non-discrimination and privacy protected.

Health and Safety measures implemented in the work place must serve to reduce the risk of HIV transmission for those who are occupationally exposed to HIV/AIDS.

EDUCATION:

The County of Elgin will provide to all of its employees information about HIV/AIDS, through a cross-County programme of in-service education and will provide further information and assistance to enable them to deal with problems which may arise concerning HIV/AIDS.

The County of Elgin shall take steps to ensure that any new medical or treatment information will be immediately communicated to employees and incorporated into this policy.

The Human Resources Department will co-ordinate the development of specific operating procedures so as to enable employees to take steps to protect themselves and to respond to problems caused by life-threatening diseases and to people's perceptions and reactions to actual or suspected cases that may affect the work place.

It will be the intent of such procedures to maximize health and safety protection for employees whose work-related activities may bring them into contact with the blood or body fluids of other people.

PERSONAL HYGIENE:

The same precautions taken to protect against Hepatitis B and other blood borne infections are equally applicable against the HIV namely:

- Proper hand washing procedures
- Covering of open areas on hands
- Cleaning equipment according to recommended procedures, using disposable gloves, gowns, face and eye protection, or other protective clothing and equipment, pursuant to established procedures.

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- Cleaning or disinfecting equipment or clothing contaminated with blood or body fluids using appropriate procedures and materials (most widely recommended practice is to use 1:9 solution of bleach and water)

EMERGENCY PERSONNEL:

Public Works crews may come into contact with blood and other body fluids in emergency situations, even if these fluids contain the HIV, the risk is very low as the virus infected blood of one person must get into the blood stream of another person to cause an infection. Nevertheless, it is important that procedures be established and protective equipment provided to guard against infection of any kind.

Employees are encouraged to advise their supervisor of any concern about AIDS safety or safety procedures.

WORKPLACE EXPOSURE:

Exposure is contact with blood or body fluids that could be infectious:

Exposure occurs through:

1. Needlestick or puncture wounds.
2. Broken or non-intact skin.
3. Mucous membranes of the nose, mouth or eyes.

Workers who are exposed should:

1. Wash affected area.
2. Report the incident as per Occupational Health & Safety Procedure for reporting Accidents/Incidents. See Policy 8.30 Appendix 3.
3. Be examined by medical authority and sent for counselling.

GENERAL:

The County of Elgin does not require HIV antibody testing of its employees or job applicants. The County does not require an infected employee or the attending physician to report the diagnosis to the employer with the exception of applying for Benefits in accordance with the provisions of Short Term and Long Term Disability.

HIV infection cannot be transmitted in the course of usual work place transactions. Refusal to work with or discriminatory acts against a person known to be or suspected of infection with HIV or AIDS will not be permitted.

HEALTH BENEFITS

Illness and absence from work caused by HIV/AIDS infection are no different from other situations. Employees will receive all benefits for which they are eligible.

Additional information and assistance with benefit matters can be obtained by contacting the Human Resources Department.

COMMITMENT TO RESIDENT CARE

Since work acts involving residents with HIV related disease are unlikely to endanger workers' health, refusal to care for individuals with HIV related disease may result in disciplinary action being imposed. The employer may however permit some reassignment requests based on individual circumstances related to health - the rationale being to minimize the risk of transmission of secondary, opportunistic infections associated with HIV related disease to those health care workers whose health may already be at greater risk.

UNIVERSAL BLOOD AND BODY FLUID PRECAUTIONS

The concept of universal blood and body fluids precautions is premised on the possibility that ALL residents may be infected with blood borne pathogens. Defined, universally applied blood and body fluid precautions are used to minimize the risk of exposure to blood and body fluids which may be infectious.

Universal precautions are intended to supplement rather than replace general infection control procedures and do not necessarily eliminate the need for other category or disease-specific isolation precautions where indicated.

It is necessary for health care workers to consistently use blood and body fluid precautions in the care of all residents for the protection of both the health care provider and the resident.

Health care workers are responsible for observing precautions to prevent accidental exposure to blood and body fluids. Compliance with the County's policies and procedures aimed at providing a safe care and work environment are promoted through education, counselling, and if necessary, disciplinary action.

ONTARIO HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION:

Employees who believe they are being harassed through their contact or association with an HIV/AIDS infected person should consult with the Human Resources Department.

County of Elgin

Human Resources Policy Manual

Code - **A**

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Section: **8**

Subject: **HIV/AIDS Policy**

Policy Number: **8.310**

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Date Last Revision:

REFERENCES

Documentation from the following was utilized in the development of this policy:

1. Canadian Centre of Occupational Health and Safety, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada
2. Centres for Disease Control, Atlanta, Georgia, U.S.A.
3. Health & Welfare Canada, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada
4. Occupational Health & Safety - A Training Manual, 2nd Edition, Clark, Pitman Ltd., Mississauga, Ontario, Canada
5. Canadian Hospital Association, HIV Related Diseases, Guide to Policies for Health Care Institutions.

This Policy has been developed in consultation with the Elgin-St. Thomas Health Unit.