

**MINISTRY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT & REGIONAL
DEVELOPMENT**

WORKPLACE POLICY ON HIV/AIDS

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Signed on: December 23, 2004

MINISTRY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT & REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

WORKPLACE POLICY ON HIV/AIDS

1. GENERAL STATEMENT

- ❖ **Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development (MOLGRD)** recognizes the seriousness of the **HIV/AIDS** epidemic, as well as the two other opportunistic infections **Malaria** and **TB** and its impact on the workplace. The Ministry supports the National efforts as outlined in the **National Development Strategy (Health Promotion and Protection- 19.IV.1.64)** to reduce the spread of these infections and minimize the impact of the disease.
- ❖ The purpose of this policy is to ensure a consistent and equitable approach to the prevention of **HIV/AIDS, Malaria and TB**, amongst employees and their families throughout the Ten (10) Administrative Regions of Guyana, and to the management of the consequences of **HIV/AIDS**, including the care and support of employees living with **HIV/AIDS**. **This policy has been developed and will be implemented in consultation with employees at all levels of the Ministry and throughout the Regional Administrations, (RDC), Neighbourhood Democratic Councils, (NDC), Municipalities, and inclusive of the Community Development Councils (CDC).**

2.

POLICY FRAMEWORK AND GENERAL PRINCIPLES

MOLGRD recognizes the policies as outlined in Guyana's National Development Strategy, The Ministry of Health 5 year Strategic Plan, the Millennium Development Goals, as well as the 10 key principles of the ILO Code of Practice on HIV/AIDS and the world of work as a basis for its action on HIV/AIDS. It takes into account existing legislation prohibiting discrimination and protecting the safety and health of workers. (The legislation relevant to the application of the policy includes

- ❖ **GUYANA Act No. 26 of 1997: Prevention of Discrimination Act 1997.**
 - ❖ **Guyana Act No: 32 of 1997: Occupational Safety and Health Act 1997.**
- While MOLGRD recognizes that there are circumstances unique to HIV infection, this policy rests on the principles that the 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 may live full lives for a number of years. The Ministry'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.**

3. SCOPE

This policy applies to all categories of employees in the Ministry of Local Gov't and Regional Development.

4. SPECIFIC PROVISIONS

The Protection of the Rights of those affected by HIV/AIDS

❖ **Protection against discrimination, victimization and harassment. All employees will be protected against discrimination; victimization or harassment based on their real or perceived HIV status.**

❖

Employment opportunities and termination of employment

No employee will suffer adverse consequences, whether dismissal or denial of employment opportunities, merely based on HIV infection. However, the Ministry of Local Government in collaboration with the Ministry of Health's Country Coordinating Secretariat will promote and facilitate access to voluntary counseling and testing (VCT) for all employees. All VCT will comply with accepted international and national standards on pre-and post-test counseling, informed consent, confidentiality and support.

Confidentiality

Job applicants, employees and workers will not have to disclose their HIV status.

The Ministry recognizes the sensitive issues that surround HIV/AIDS. Where an employee chooses to reveal his or her HIV status to the Permanent Secretary, the Ministry will keep the identity of such person strictly confidential.

Mechanisms will be created to encourage openness, acceptance and support for those employees who voluntarily disclose their HIV status within the workplace including-

- **Encouraging persons openly living with HIV or AIDS to conduct or participate in education, prevention and awareness programmes.**
- **Encouraging the development of support groups for employees living with HIV/AIDS and**
- **Ensuring that persons who are open about their HIV status are not unfairly discriminated against or stigmatized.**

5.

AWARENESS-RAISING AND EDUCATION

- Appropriate awareness and education programmes will be conducted by the Ministry of Health to inform employees about **HIV and AIDS**, which will enable them to protect themselves and others against infection by HIV. All programmes will take into consideration the needs of both sexes. Some of these will include families of employees and all Regional communities as outlined in the **MULGRU HIV/AIDS Project Proposal**.
- The Ministry recognizes the importance of involving employees and their representatives in the planning and implementation of awareness, education and counseling programmes, especially as peer educators and counselors.
- **Practical measures to support behaviour change and risk management will include referrals to the GUM clinic, Malaria and TB treatment programmes, and possibly distribution of male/female condoms.**
- **Training will be arranged for key staff including managers, supervisors and personnel officers, (both male and female) drivers, overseers and community workers.**
- **Reasonable time off will be given, when possible/deemed necessary for participation in education and training about HIV/AIDS and related health matters.**

6. CARE AND SUPPORT FOR WORKERS AND THEIR FAMILIES

The promotion of employees' well-being

The Ministry of Local Gov't will treat employees who are infected or affected by HIV/AIDS with empathy and care. The Ministry will provide some reasonable assistance, which may include counseling time off, sick leave, and information regarding the virus and its effect.

Work performance and reasonable work site

- **It is the policy of the Ministry to respond to the changing health status of employees by providing suitable work sites for those infected with HIV.**
- **Employees may continue to work as long as they are able to perform duties safely and in accordance with the Public Service rules and regulations on performance standards.**
- **If an employee with AIDS is unable to perform his or her tasks adequately, the Division Head or Supervisor must resolve the problem according to the Ministry's normal procedures on poor performance/ill health.**

Benefits

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

Health care

- **The Ministry of Local Government in collaboration with the Ministry of Health will help employees living with HIV/AIDS to find appropriate medical services in the community, as well as counseling services, professional support and self-help groups if required. Reasonable time off will be given for counseling and treatment.**

IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

- **MOLGRD has established a Ministerial HIV/AIDS committee to coordinate and implement its HIV/AIDS policy and programme. The Committee is chaired by Minister HARRIPERSAUD NOKTA, with Mr. Ganga Persaud as Co-chair and ten members of staff representing all constituents of the Ministry:- as follows**

1.	Ms. Margo Boyce	Co-coordinator
2.	Ms. Alertha Stacia Glasgow	Secretary
3.	Ms. Chateventea Mahese	Member
4.	Ms. Juanita Johnson	Member
5.	Ms. Routee Persaud	Member
6.	Ms Aretha Henry	Member
7.	Mr Mahindra Ichri	Member
8.	Mr. Paul Clarke	Member
9.	Mr. Basiloff Boodell	Member
10.	Mr. Puran Persaud	Member

Advisors to the Committee

- **Mr. Roshan Ali**
- **Ms. Joan Elvis**
- **Mrs. Wynette Small**

- **The implementation of this policy will conform the Ministry's normal disciplinary and grievance procedures. Confidentiality will be assured during all procedures.**

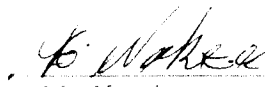
- **In order to plan and evaluate its HIV/AIDS policy and programme effectively, the Ministry of Local Government with assistance from the Ministry of Health will undertake to establish baseline data and regular risk and impact assessment studies. The studies will include knowledge, attitudes and behaviour/practices (KAB/P). Studies will be carried out in consultation and with the consent of employees and their representatives and in conditions of complete confidentiality.**

- **The policy and related information on HIV/AIDS will be communicated to all staff of the Ministry of Local Government as well as the local democratic Organs and Municipalities.**

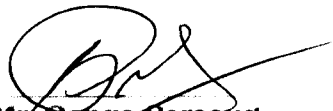
- **The policy will be reviewed annually and revised as necessary in view of changing conditions and the findings of surveys/studies conducted.**

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE MINISTERIAL HIV/AIDS COMMITTEE

1. The Committee has representation from the Ministerial level. **Permanent Secretary, Managers, Supervisors, and staff.**
2. The Committee will meet at least once every month for the first year and once every quarter during year 2006 onwards.
3. A review of the National and international laws as it relates to HIV/AIDS, stigma and discrimination.
4. Identification of the health and information services readily available both at the Ministry and in the respective communities.
5. Establishment of an HIV/AIDS Behavior Change Communication programme, with timetables and lines of responsibility.
6. Dissemination of the policy and programme through for example notice boards, mailings, pay slips inserts, special meetings and training sessions.
7. Monitor, implementation, and impact of the policy and programme.
8. Review yearly the policy and programme in light of internal and external monitoring about the virus and its workplace implications.



Honorable Harripersaud Nokta, MP
Minister of Local Government & Regional Development & Chairman of MOLGRD-Ministerial HIV/AIDS Committee



Mr. Ganga Persaud
Permanent Secretary & Co-Chairman of MOLGRD Ministerial HIV/AIDS Committee

December 23, 2004