



HOW TO PROVIDE CARE, SUPPORT AND TREATMENT

Access to care, support and treatment reinforces effective prevention, and is an important motivation for voluntary testing.

Where an occupational health service is in place, this can be adapted to provide treatment and prevention education. Smaller enterprises fear that providing care will be costly. But in the long run it is more costly not to invest in the health of the workforce.

In practice, many aspects of care and support do not require much investment. Having a policy of “zero tolerance” for discrimination and retaining HIV-positive employees as long as they are fit to work makes a vital contribution. It means that enterprises not only reduce disruption to production and maintain morale, but also set an example to the community at large.

“If you take away our jobs, you kill us faster than the virus. Work is more than medicine to us. It keeps us going, and enables us to bring home food and medicine.”

Naveen Kumar, India

Depending on the size of the enterprise and available resources, care and support involves a range of services responding to the needs of workers for medical treatment, material and psychological support, and protection against discrimination and dismissal. Your workplace policy should make clear what the company or public sector workplace is committed to providing in terms of care and support.

Providing care and treatment

Your workplace can help extend access to care and treatment by taking action in one or more of the following areas:

- Encourage confidential voluntary counselling and testing so that workers know their status and can take informed decisions;
- Provide information on and referral to community testing and treatment services;
- Provide palliative care and treatment for common opportunistic infections – including taking part in TB control programmes where these exist;
- Provide facilities for the delivery of antiretroviral treatment (ART) which is funded or subsidized by the state/donors;
- Develop a programme to support treatment adherence and encourage healthy living, including information on nutrition, rest and exercise.

Know your status

The ILO recommends that voluntary testing should be carried out by public health services and not at the workplace, but recognizes that some larger companies have good facilities in place. It should be strictly confidential and carried out with the informed consent of the worker, who must understand the implications of taking the test and be counselled before and afterwards. Follow-up care and support must be available for those who test positive.

Providing support

The *ILO Code of Practice on HIV/AIDS and the world of work* says that HIV/AIDS «should be treated like any other serious illness or condition» that may affect a worker. Keeping an employee at work is the best support an employer can give.



Workers with HIV can also be assisted by:

- An open, accepting and supportive environment for workers who disclose their HIV status, and provisions against stigma and discrimination;
- Reasonable accommodation: adjustments to tasks, the work environment, working hours and conditions of work, including rest breaks, to help affected workers continue in their jobs – this should be applied to employees who are carers as well as those living with HIV;
- Ensuring access to social security, health insurance and other statutory or company benefits, as well as encouraging the development of micro-insurance and income support schemes;
- Providing facilities for self-help support groups and counselling, as appropriate, and information on services in the community.

Ensuring confidentiality

Protecting the privacy of affected workers and ensuring confidentiality of medical data is a key component of your company's HIV response.

Extending access through partnerships

Employers do not have to take action on their own. They can work with local trade unions to develop joint workplace programmes as well as liaising with the Ministry of Labour and national AIDS bodies. Other possibilities include:

- Linking up with NGOs and community organizations such as networks of people living with AIDS and home-based care groups,
- Joining with other enterprises to pool resources and set up a joint programme,
- Taking part in public-private partnerships involving other actors, including the state and donors such as the Global Fund: the co-investment approach helps extend workplace facilities to the families of employees and the local community.

“Our experience is that the people who get on to treatment see an improvement in health. The vast majority of them go back to work and they continue with normal lives.”

James Steele, Manager of the AngloGold Ashanti AIDS programme.

Further information:

- *ILO Code of Practice on HIV/AIDS and the world of work*
- *Implementing the ILO Code of Practice on HIV/AIDS and the world of work, an education and training manual – module 7*
- *Employers' organizations & HIV/AIDS: Information, tools and good practice for workplace action against HIV/AIDS, CD-ROM*
- *Using the ILO Code of Practice on HIV/AIDS: guidelines for trade unions*
- *HIV/AIDS workplace programmes and public-private partnerships through co-investment – extension of treatment and care into the community (ILO, GTZ, GBC, GHI, World Bank, Global Fund)*

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