

Workplace HIV and TB for Educators

The health of educators working in schools, similar to any other worker is crucial in order to live a healthy, normal and productive life. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa states that - "Everyone has the right to an environment that is not harmful to their health or well-being." The health of educators is determined by among others, access to health services. Since workers are the backbone of the economy as they influence the world of work, their families and society as a whole, it is imperative that aspects of educator's health such as prevention of occupational hazards should be a priority. The Department of Basic Education (DBE) should implement a comprehensive workplace HIV and TB health programme in support of its draft policy on HIV and TB educators.

Purpose

The purpose of this document is raise awareness to the DBE about HIV and TB in the education sector. It will assist in strengthening the employer's health efforts in providing workplace HIV and TB services for educators.

A functional and an effective HIV and TB workplace health programme should comprise of the following;

HIV and TB policy:

- Ideally, every workplace should have a safety, health, environment, risk and quality (SHERQ) policy covering occupational health and safety (OHS) including HIV and TB.
- However, due to the high burden of HIV and TB in South Africa it is advisable to have a separate HIV and TB in the workplace

policy OR alternatively, a standard operating procedure where a comprehensive OHS policy exists.

- It is important for senior management and organised labour to show commitment and support for the HIV and TB workplace health policy.
- Senior management should work with the health and safety committee and organised labour in developing an HIV and TB workplace policy.

Workplace HIV and TB programme for educators

At the cost of the employer the provision of a comprehensive HIV and TB workplace programme with appropriate health personnel should consider the elements below:

Primary Prevention

- Health risk assessment for HIV and TB in line with the Occupational Health and Safety Act 85 of 1993 and relevant regulations.
- Employees to be educated on the policy, HIV and TB hazards and training on stigma and discrimination in the workplace using different media and communication platforms.
- The employers through the OHS should ensure that both female and male condoms are available and are placed in strategic points ensuring privacy.
- The OHS personnel to encourage employees to participate in the HIV and TB awareness campaigns (commemorate World HIV and TB day) and ensure confidentiality.

Secondary prevention

- The employer to provide regular TB screening, and voluntary HIV testing and counselling through partnerships with private, public and not for profit organisations.
- Employees who are diagnosed with TB should be encouraged to test for HIV.
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- The employer to implement a medical surveillance programme which incorporates HIV and TB, where appropriate and possible.
- Establishment of a referral system for treatment, care and support.
- If the employer is unable to provide healthcare services related to HIV and TB, the employer should encourage its employees to consult the nearest health facility as soon as they experience signs and symptoms related to HIV and TB.
- Refer for post-exposure prophylaxis.

Tertiary prevention

- Vocational rehabilitation

Collection of information and its utilisation

- Information collected from employees who are accessing HIV and TB services should be documented.
- Data should be analysed regularly to give a description of the both HIV and TB cases in the BES.
- The results of the analysis should be communicated to the top management of the DBE, concerned employee and labour representatives for public health action (e.g. to identify trends of infections, identify high risk area. etc.).
- The programme should be evaluated (as per the policy) regularly in order to establish its effectiveness and to assess if it is meeting its objectives.

