

# **SECS HIV/AIDS Workplace Policy**

as adopted by SECS General Assembly on December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2010

## **Introduction**

SECS recognizes the magnitude and severity of the development of HIV/AIDS epidemic worldwide. As a health care NGO, SECS is committed to the development of policies and the implementation of programs on HIV/AIDS non-discrimination, awareness, prevention and health support.

The policy goal is to provide broad guidelines to the formulation of workplace policies and programmes.

The broad objectives of the policy are to:

- i. provide protection from discrimination in the workplace, to people living with HIV/AIDS;
- ii. prevent HIV/AIDS spread amongst workers;
- iii. provide care, support and counseling for those infected and affected.

To this end, SECS workplace should seek to develop programs and policies to adhere to the following guidelines:

## **Non-Discrimination**

It is the policy of SECS to provide a work environment for its employees that is free from harassment and/or discrimination. Colleagues who engage in acts of harassment and/or discrimination are subject to corrective action that may include termination of employment. Accordingly, colleague situations related to HIV and AIDS are governed by the following Principles:

- SECS will not and does not discriminate against colleagues or applicants having, perceived as having, living with or otherwise affected by HIV or AIDS.
- SECS treats HIV/AIDS the same as other illnesses in terms of all of our employee policies and benefits, including health and life insurance, disability benefits and leaves of absence.
- In accordance with applicable laws, SECS provides reasonable work accommodations when needed for qualified individuals.
- All colleagues must adhere to our non-discrimination policy. Colleagues who refuse to work with, withhold services from, harass or otherwise discriminate against another colleague because of his/her having HIV/AIDS, being perceived as having, living with

HIV/AIDS, or being otherwise affected by HIV/AIDS, will be subject to discipline and/or other corrective actions.

## **HIV Testing, Confidentiality and Disclosure**

- SECS encourages routine, confidential, voluntary testing and counseling as part of its education and awareness programs.
- HIV and AIDS are treated confidentially as medical conditions, in accordance with applicable laws and SECS policies.
- SECS does not require colleagues, their dependents, job applicants or other third parties to undergo HIV testing as a condition of employment or receipt of benefits.

## **Promoting a Safe Work Environment**

SECS is committed to providing a work environment that protects colleague health and safety. This commitment recognizes that HIV/ AIDS cannot be transmitted through casual contact. Employees who know the facts about HIV infection and AIDS are less likely to react negatively or inappropriately to a colleague's illness. Therefore, SECS is expected to manage the risk of HIV infection in the workplace through:

- Appropriate training, awareness, and education on the use of infection control measures in the workplace;
- Provision of appropriate equipment and materials to protect colleagues from the risk of exposure to HIV in the performance of their work;
- Appropriate HIV/AIDS information included in occupational health and first aid training.

## **Education and Awareness**

SECS is concerned about the wellness of our colleagues and their families. Association-provided benefits and programs have an important role in preserving the dignity of those colleagues infected with or affected by HIV/AIDS. They serve to help them maintain normal and productive lives. The Association will provide, either directly or through third parties, an integrated education and awareness program focusing on prevention. Such programs could include:

- Training for managers and supervisors to communicate and ensure compliance with SECS's HIV/AIDS workplace policy and related programs and benefits;
- Access to print, video and computer-based communication strategies to promote:
  - Medically accurate, relevant information on HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment, including education and information on effective programs related to safer sex;
  - Information on safe sexual practices, prevention of sexually transmitted diseases and overall health promotion including information on substance abuse;
  - Information on voluntary HIV/AIDS testing, referral and counseling services; and,

- Where appropriate to local conditions, measures to encourage the use and increased availability of condoms.

## **Access to Treatment and Care**

Colleagues who test positive for HIV can be productive for a long time if they receive the right treatment and medical support. SECS believes that its employees should have access to treatment, including, where available, treatment regimens requiring anti-retrovirals and anti-infectives.

## **Implementation**

Further to effectuate the purposes of this policy:

- Programs should be adapted to comply with local laws. They should strive to be culturally sensitive and conform to local customs and practices, to the extent such customs and practices are consistent with good science, medical knowledge, information and practice.
- Training is essential for the successful implementation of programs and policies related to HIV/AIDS in the workplace. The management team is responsible for budgeting for, designing and implementing an appropriate and effective training program consistent with the overall policy. Training should cover the basic principles of this policy and plans for communication of the policy to local colleagues.
- The management is encouraged to promote awareness of this policy to local business partners, other enterprises and, where considered appropriate, enter into partnerships with them in order to jointly pursue effective policies concerning HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment.