



## HIV/AIDS POLICY

<b>Policy:</b>	<b>Effective Date: 11 October 2007</b>
<b>Approved: 11 October 2007</b>	<b>Review Date: 11 October 2010</b>

### Why Have a Policy?

A workplace policy provides the framework for action to reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS and manage its impact. It:

- makes an explicit commitment to municipality's action;
- ensures consistency with appropriate national laws;
- lays down a standard of behaviour for all employees (whether infected or not);
- gives guidance to supervisors and managers;
- helps employees living with HIV/AIDS to understand what support and care they will receive, so they are more likely to come forward for voluntary testing;
- helps to stop the spread of the virus through prevention programmes;
- assists the municipality to plan for HIV/AIDS and manage its impact, so ultimately saving money.

Policies should be shaped by local needs and conditions - no single policy is relevant to all situations - but the components below can usefully be included. Having taken into account the specific needs of Fezile Dabi District Municipality, the policy outlined below is recommended as the final product.

## **THE POLICY**

### **1. GENERAL STATEMENT**

Fezile Dabi District Municipality (Fezile Dabi) recognizes the seriousness of the HIV/AIDS epidemic and its impact on the workplace. The municipality supports national efforts to reduce the spread of infection 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 among employees and their families, and to the management of the consequences of HIV/AIDS, including the care and support of employees living with HIV/AIDS. The policy has been developed and will be implemented in consultation with employees at all levels. It is in compliance with existing laws regarding HIV/AIDS.

### **2. POLICY FRAMEWORK AND GENERAL PRINCIPLES**

Fezile Dabi does not discriminate or tolerate discrimination against employees or job applicants on any grounds, including HIV status. While Fezile Dabi recognizes that there are circumstances unique to HIV infection, this policy rests on the principle that 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 with HIV may live full and active lives for a number of years. The Municipality'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. SPECIFIC PROVISIONS**

#### **Stigma, discrimination and rights**

No rights - from confidentiality to access to benefits - should be affected by an individual's HIV status, real or suspected. Stigma and discrimination compromise employee welfare and a safe and healthy work environment. They also undermine HIV prevention efforts, which depend on an atmosphere of openness, trust and respect for basic rights.

#### **Rights of employees who are HIV-positive.**

HIV-positive employees will be protected against discrimination, victimization or harassment. Normal municipality disciplinary and grievance procedures shall apply equally to all employees, as will the provision of information and education about HIV and AIDS;

### **Employment opportunities and termination of employment.**

No employee should suffer adverse consequences, whether dismissal or denial of appropriate alternative employment opportunities, merely on the basis of HIV infection;

### **Testing.**

Fezile Dabi rejects HIV testing as a prerequisite for recruitment, access to training or promotion. However, the municipality promotes and facilitates access to voluntary confidential testing with counselling (VCT) for all employees;

### **Epidemiological testing**

Testing programmes for epidemiological purposes will be subject to appropriate consultation with recognized employee representatives and will be subject to independent and objective evaluation and scrutiny. The results of epidemiological studies will not be used as a basis for discriminating against any class of employee in the workplace. All testing will comply with accepted national and international standards on pre-and post-test counselling, informed consent, confidentiality and support;

### **Confidentiality**

The Municipality recognizes the sensitive issues that surround HIV/AIDS and undertakes to handle matters in a discreet and private manner. Where an employee with HIV has revealed his or her status to management, the Municipality will keep the identity of such person confidential. However in line with the Municipality's philosophy on the virus, the employee will be encouraged to be open about his or her HIV status.

### **Awareness-raising and education**

In the absence of a vaccine or cure, information and education are vital components of an AIDS prevention programme. Because the spread of the disease can be limited by informed and responsible behaviour, practical measures such as condom distribution are also important means of supporting behaviour change within the workplace community.

### **Awareness and education Programmes**

Appropriate awareness and education programmes will be conducted to inform employees about AIDS and HIV which will enable them to protect themselves

and others against infection by HIV. Some of these will include the families of employees and the local community.

### **Employee involvement**

The Municipality recognizes the importance of involving employees and their representatives in the planning and implementation of awareness, education and counselling programmes, especially as peer educators and counselors.

### **Prevention measures**

Practical measures to support behaviour change and risk management will include the treatment of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and TB (*or, where necessary referral to STI and TB treatment services in the community*), and the distribution of condoms.

### **Training**

Training shall be arranged for key staff, including managers, supervisors, and personnel officers; union representatives; trainers of trainers (both male and female); peer educators; and occupational safety and health officers.

### **Time**

Reasonable time off will be given for participation in education and training.

### **Care and support for workers and their families**

It is in the interest of both the municipality and employees if infected individuals are assisted to remain at work as long as possible.

### **The promotion of employees' well-being**

The Municipality will treat employees who are infected or affected by HIV/AIDS with empathy and care. The Municipality will provide all reasonable assistance which may include counselling, time off, sick leave, family responsibility leave, and information regarding the virus and its effect.

### **Work performance and reasonable accommodation.**

It is the policy of the Municipality to respond to the changing health status of employees by making reasonable accommodation in the workplace for those infected with HIV. Employees may continue to work as long as they are able to perform their duties safely and in accordance with accepted performance

standards. If an employee with AIDS is unable to perform his or her tasks adequately, the manager or supervisor must resolve the problem according to the municipality's normal procedure on poor performance/ill health.

### **Benefits.**

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

### **Healthcare**

This Municipality will help employees living with HIV/AIDS to find appropriate medical services in the community, as well as counselling services, professional support and self-help groups if required. Reasonable time off will be given for counselling and treatment.

Appropriate support and counselling services will be made available to employees.

## **4. IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING**

### **Baseline study**

In order to plan and evaluate its HIV/AIDS policy and programme effectively, Fezile Dabi will undertake a survey 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.

### **Communication**

This policy, and related information on HIV and AIDS, will be communicated to all Fezile Dabi employees and the wider public using the full range of communication methods available to the municipality and its network of contacts.

### **Policy review**

This policy will be reviewed annually and revised as necessary in the light of changing conditions and the findings of surveys/studies conducted.

## 5. BUDGET AND FINANCE

When it becomes necessary, Fezile Dabi will make every effort to establish a budget for HIV/AIDS activities but realizes that many interventions can be put in place at little or no cost. Many of the required services are available in community facilities

## 6. AUTHORITY

Formulation Policy	:	Director Corporate Services
Authorisation Policy	:	Council
Ownership & Maintenance Manager	:	Deputy Director :

Corporate Services