

CENTRE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL LAW AND GOVERNANCE

WORKPLACE HIV/AIDS POLICY

In light of the severity of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Tanzania, CELG maintains an HIV/AIDS Workplace Policy to guide worksite interventions for its staff. This policy contains general principles regarding prevention, treatment, support and care. It complements the existing policies, regulations, or laws of the organization. In order to improve the internal management workforce's healthcare, the policy is also in line with the Tanzania HIV/AIDS policy. CELG's HIV/AIDS policy does not, however, vest any legal rights or benefits for staff or any person against the organization in relation to HIV/AIDS incidences.

Purpose and Objectives of the Policy

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines on CELG's views and commitments with regards to assisting employees who may contract HIV/AIDS, and includes the following objectives:

- Preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS among staff and participants in CELG through information, education and counseling.
- Helping CELG staff or their relatives who may be affected to improve their life by offering the right treatment and support.
- Maintaining a stable workforce and minimize the adverse impacts of the epidemic organization performance.

About the HIV/AIDS Workplace Policy

The HIV/AIDS Policy is a guide which defines CELG's position, roles and practices in preventing HIV transmission and handling HIV infection among workers to safeguard the health of the workforce. The policy informs employees about their rights, responsibilities and expected behavior at the workplace, and also clarifies expectations for both sides, meaning the employee and the organization.

Rationale for a HIV/AIDS Workplace Policy at CELG

- It defines the organization's position and practices in relation to HIV/AIDS at workplace.
- It establishes consistency within the organization.
- It standardizes organization communication on HIV/AIDS.

- It instructs supervisors on how to manage HIV/AIDS issues in their workplace.

Advantages of the HIV/AIDS Workplace Policy

- It protects the human rights and dignity of a person affected with HIV/AIDS.
- It promotes organization investment in human resources.
- It avoids discrimination among workers against a person infected or suspected of being infected with HIV/AIDS.
- It provides a supportive work environment for persons with HIV/AIDS.
- It removes the stigma associated with HIV/AIDS and improves workers' morale and management relations.

Principles of the HIV/AIDS Policy

CELG will not discriminate against employees on the basis that they have or are perceived as having HIV/AIDS.

Consultation

CELG HIV/AIDS workplace policies have been developed and will be implemented in consultation with CELG employees at all levels.

Prevention of HIV/AIDS in the workplace

CELG will provide up to date HIV/AIDS awareness information and will conduct staff training on HIV/AIDS during paid working hours. This training will be obligatory for all staff. Emphasis will be put on how to help our staff make choices for abstinence, behavior change and condom use as integral part of HIV/AIDS prevention.

Staff will have access to free and confidential voluntary counseling, HIV testing and mother to child HIV transmission prevention services. Access to condoms will also be simple and discreet.

Treatment, support and care clause

All workers and their officially known dependants infected by HIV/AIDS are entitled to affordable health services through public and private health services. CELG is aware that ARV (antiretroviral) drugs are provided by our government but CELG will facilitate access to ARVs for all staff and their family members living with HIV/AIDS. CELG will also identify eligible candidates for ARVs and facilitate access to ARVs and other health care in a confidential environment.

Equity clause

Employees living with HIV/AIDS have the same rights and obligations as other staff members. Employees will be protected against any form of discrimination based on real or perceived vulnerability from HIV infection.

Confidentiality clause

CELG will ensure that there is confidentiality regarding HIV/AIDS-related information of staff, their dependants, and clients.

The aim of this confidentiality clause is to encourage more staff to go for voluntary counseling and testing (VCT).

Disclosing HIV positive status to CELG is entirely voluntary, although HIV positive staff are encouraged to disclose their status to the Administrator in order to receive full support as per the provisions of this policy.

Non-discrimination clause

The policy will implement practices and procedures in managing individuals with HIV/AIDS and prohibits discrimination against applicants or employees who are HIV positive. HIV status will not be considered when deciding if someone is suitable for a posting or promotion. Discrimination or harassment of staff with HIV status will be taken as a disciplinary offence. The policy will make all reasonable efforts to accommodate the needs of people living with HIV/AIDS within the limits of what is practical in any given situation.

Termination of Employment clause

No staff will be terminated from service because of HIV-related illnesses so long as they are otherwise fit for appropriate work. In case of termination due to extended illness, staff with HIV will be accorded the same benefits and conditions as apply to termination due to other serious illness.

Gender equality clause

The policy advocates equality and will strive towards preventing all forms of gender discrimination and sexual abuse in the context of HIV/AIDS or any other reason.

Program development clause

CELG understands the sensitivity of workers towards sex and sexuality and intends to conduct sensitization programs using various methods. Emphasis will be put on fostering a supportive working environment for employees, as well as promoting safer sex behavior and early detection and treatment of sexually

transmitted diseases. The programme management team will collaborate with other agencies involved in HIV/AIDS as well as public health services.

Voluntary Counseling and testing clause

The policy advocates VCT and assures non discrimination and confidentiality and will develop active campaigns to encourage employees to seek VCT. The health and safety environment advisor will facilitate free access to VCT.

Care, support and treatment clause

CELG is committed to facilitating long term provision of care and support services including ARVs in partnership with government health services, medical insurance schemes and international donors. The health and safety environment advisor will assume the responsibility of monitoring compliance and regular medical tests of employees or employees' relatives on ARVs.

Mobilizing staff clause

CELG acknowledges that a viable workplace HIV/AIDS prevention policy requires joint effort between staff and management. Both sides are to ensure effective implementation of this policy.

Monitoring and evaluation clause

Monitoring methods will include both quantitative and qualitative indicators. Questionnaires, focus groups and key informant interviews will be used. Results analyses will determine effective policy progress.

Information and education clause

Under the provision of this policy, CELG is committed to providing quality information and education on the prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS in order to help staff and clients follow positive living strategies.

- Once this HIV/AIDS Policy is adopted, it will be a part of the induction package to new staff.
- Workshops will be organized according to annual work plans.
- Posters will be displayed in all strategic locations of the organizations.
- Condoms will be available in strategic locations including offices.
However, CELG cannot overlook the fact that using condoms is only one of the three options for HIV/AIDS prevention. The organization is committed to giving people choice in this regard, thus will advocate the ABC approach (Abstain, Be faithful, or use Condoms).
- The organization will ensure that the necessary protective mechanisms are available in the workplace.

- The World Aids Day (December 1) will be marked and used as a platform for sharing information and raising awareness.

Management of the HIV/AIDS policy

This policy is action-oriented, and the following measures will be taken for its effective implementation and management.

Resources

CELG management will ensure that appropriate resources are allocated for the implementation of this policy. This means a willingness to increase the budget allocation for medical treatment and training educators and staff. An HIV/AIDS committee will be created and funds will be allocated to them for easy implementation of their duties.

HIV/AIDS committee

The HIV/AIDS Committee will be established by CELG management and will be responsible for developing an annual work plan based on the current HIV/AIDS Policy. This work plan will be reviewed on a regular basis. In addition, the committee will provide information for the effective implementation of the policy and annual work plan. It will also serve as a mechanism for handling relevant grievances, especially those arising from discrimination and breach of confidentiality. The committee will also have a responsibility to advise senior management on issues related to HIV/AIDS.

The HIV/AIDS committee members will be comprised of:

- A representative from the management team
- A staff representative
- A qualified medical officer (hired)

Monitoring and revision

The HIV/AIDS committee will meet at least twice a year to monitor the implementation of this policy, review the workplace and make recommendations as appropriate.

The committee will also be responsible for reviewing, revising and updating this policy annually in consultation with the management committee.