

THE PRESIDENT'S COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES WASHINGTON, D.C. 20036-3470

FACT SHEET ON: AIDS IN THE WORKPLACE AND ITS IMPACT ON HEALTH INSURANCE AND OTHER CORPORATE POLICIES REGARDING INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

The Question

- o Will companies develop resistance to employing persons with disabilities as a result of possible elevation of health insurance costs due to coverage of workers with AIDS?

NO - According to a recent survey made by the Medical, Health and Insurance Committee of the President's Committee on Employment of People With Disabilities.

- o The President's Committee, concerned about the impact AIDS would have on corporate human resource policies and the effect these policies would have on the hiring of persons with disabilities, conducted a short employer survey to provide a more thorough understanding of the effect AIDS may be having on current employer practices.

o Action

Large employer groups were selected from the Fortune 100 listing and questionnaires were sent to all groups on this listing. Sixty-seven of the one hundred companies surveyed responded. Respondents were assured that the specific practices of their employers would remain confidential. Therefore, the survey results do not identify individual company's practices but a section is devoted to remarks which present the beliefs and practices of the companies.

o Results

Generally, companies are treating AIDS as they would any other disability of a life-threatening nature. Overall, we can conclude that the vast majority of large size employers who responded treat AIDS as they would any other illness and are not planning to change their personnel policies toward persons with disabilities as a result of the AIDS epidemic.

- o Only three percent of the companies surveyed are contemplating changes in personnel policies due to corporate concern about AIDS. Five percent of the companies anticipate some changes in general corporate policy because of AIDS. These changes will center around the development of written corporate policies for life-threatening illnesses and employee education about AIDS.

A minority of those surveyed are contemplating testing their employees for the AIDS virus (7.5%); and 4.5% are considering limitations to benefit programs. The questions and responses follow.

Question 1

Has your company made any changes in personnel policies or practices related to the hiring of persons with disabilities due to concern over AIDS?

65 (97.5%) said NO, 2 responded YES.

Question 2

If YES to question 1, please explain what changes have been made.

The responses for the 2 companies that have made changes in personnel policies related to the hiring of persons with disabilities are:

“Security personnel and other employees trained in CPR have been given information about AIDS, instructed in the use of masks, etc. Medical department personnel wear gloves.”

“Clarified under what circumstances employees with infectious diseases would be prohibited from food handling.”

Question 3

If NO to question 1, is your company planning on making any changes?

61 (94%) answered NO. 3 (5%) answered YES (with 1 abstention).

Question 4

If yes to question 3, what changes is your company contemplating?

The responses from the 3 companies that are planning changes in personnel policies are:

“A new personnel policy on life threatening illnesses has been written for review and comment.”

“We will formally publish a policy which states company policy for all serious illnesses.”

“We plan to initiate efforts to increase awareness and promote a better understanding by employees of the AIDS disease and its impact on the workplace.”

Question 5A

Has or will your company be establishing any personnel procedures specific to the AIDS epidemic such as:

- o the testing of new or existing employees for the AIDS virus?
62 (93%) answered NO* with 3 (5%) answering YES and 2 responding POSSIBLE.

* Three companies responded NO and added -

“The above represents our present position. This may change as practices in other companies and court rulings evolve.”

“Info on AIDS will be communicated to employees.”

“Still studying the implications (primarily financial) of AIDS Hospitalization costs in the Medical Plan.”

Question 5B

- o any special limitations in your benefit program for AIDS coverage?
64 (96%) responded NO with 2 (3%) answering YES with 1 POSSIBLE.

If YES, will these limitations apply to people with disabilities as well?

Only 1 company of the 3 answering YES to question 5A responded to Question 5B, and the response is unknown at this time.

Comments

A section of the questionnaire was left blank to allow room for any comments on the subject. Fourteen companies responded with the following comments:

“We treat people with AIDS the same as we would treat anyone with a disability. We accommodate them to the extent we can reasonably do so. We have developed a training program to help educate co-workers who may be fearful of working alongside employees with AIDS.”

“We will continue to treat AIDS as a Medical Disability and will accommodate employees with AIDS to the extent that is practical.”

“Hiring will continue to be based upon ability to do the job.”

“Any AIDS cases will be handled as any other chronic illness according to the terms of the Benefit Plans.”

“We plan to treat AIDS as any other illness.”

“AIDS is treated like any other illness at the worksite.”

“AIDS will be treated like any other disability under the company’s benefit plans.”

“We are treating AIDS as any other life-threatening illness.”

“We regard AIDS like any other illness and/or disability.”

“We do not anticipate changes at present. But we are continuing to study the situation.”

“Handling the same as any other serious illness for all purposes.”

“AIDS is treated like any other disabling condition.”

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**All public documents produced by the
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