

AIDS/HIV

AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome) and infection with HIV (human immunodeficiency virus), the pathogen that can be transmitted from one person to another in certain specific ways and causes AIDS, are serious threats to the lives and health of people in Massachusetts. HIV is transmitted through unprotected sexual intercourse, through blood-to-blood contact, including when intravenous needles are shared, and can be acquired in the womb, at the time of birth, or during breast-feeding. Symptoms of AIDS appear in an adult an average of ten years after infection with HIV. The disease progresses more rapidly in infants and children.

Due to prevalent patterns of sexual activity and substance abuse, many of our young people are at significant risk of infection with HIV. Our schools must play a major role in the concerted effort to stop the spread of the virus by helping students make healthy choices about their personal behaviors.

Due to the rising rate of HIV infection and other sexually transmitted diseases among adolescents, the need to address infection prevention in all ways possible is critical. The Massachusetts Board of Education's Policy on AIDS/HIV Prevention Education states that AIDS/HIV prevention education should include information about sexually transmitted diseases, as well as the value of both sexual abstinence and the use of protection in the prevention of infection.

Further, as the number of individuals infected with HIV or diagnosed with AIDS continues to grow, we need to come to terms with these members of our local communities. Schools must also play a part in assisting students and staffs develop informed and compassionate responses towards those affected by AIDS/HIV.

The following components are included in this policy:

- Disclosure and attendance of students and employment of staff who are HIV infected.
- Use of Universal Precautions by all working and/or studying in the school system.
- Personnel / faculty training that includes basic information about AIDS/HIV, instruction in the use of recommended universal precautions when dealing with blood spills and training regarding relevant policies dealing with HIV infected students and staff.

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Chairperson, HWRSD School Committee: Alexa McCloughan  
(Original Signature on file in the Superintendent's Office)

HAMILTON-WENHAM REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT  
WENHAM, MA

- Development of age appropriate curriculum at all grade levels.

**DISCLOSURE and ATTENDANCE**

Pupils or staff members are not required to disclose HIV infection status to anyone in the education system. HIV antibody testing is not required for any purpose. Individuals are protected by the privacy rights addressed in Massachusetts General Laws, c.111, s70F. These laws prohibit health care providers, physicians and health care facilities (including school-based clinics) from disclosing HIV test results, or even the fact that a test has been performed, without the specific, informed, written consent of the person who has been tested. This statute prohibits testing a person for HIV antibodies without their written informed consent, and protects against the nonconsensual release of medical records (including health records) which contain such information.

Students' parent(s) or guardian(s) are the gatekeepers of information relating to a student's AIDS/HIV status. They are not obliged to disclose this information to school personnel.

A student who is diagnosed with AIDS or presents evidence of being immuno-compromised is at a greater risk of contracting infections. This means there may be good reasons to inform the school nurse or school physician of a student's AIDS diagnosis or HIV infection status. This student's parent(s) or guardian(s) would benefit from information from the school nurse or school physician about the occurrence of threatening contagious diseases (such as chicken pox or influenza) when making a decision regarding school attendance. The school nurse or school physician may also need to attend to the particular needs of HIV-infected students regarding immunization schedules and medications.

In consultation with the student's primary care physician, the student's parent(s) or guardian(s) may decide to inform certain school personnel about the student's AIDS/HIV status, particularly the school nurse or school physician. If they so choose, the following guidelines are recommended:

- The student's parent(s) or guardian(s) may inform the school nurse or school physician directly.
- Alternatively, the student's parent(s) or guardian(s) may request that their primary care physician make the disclosure. In this case, specific informed, written consent of the student's parent(s) or guardian(s) is required.
- Further disclosure of a student's HIV status by the school nurse or school physician to other school personnel requires the specific, informed, written consent of the student's parent(s) or guardian(s).

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Since it is known that HIV is not transmitted through casual contact, any student with AIDS/HIV infection will continue his/her education in a regular classroom unless the health status interferes significantly with performance.

A school nurse shall keep records, notes, and other documents referencing a person's HIV status in a separate, confidential part of the nurse's personal nursing notes. Access to these confidential records is limited to those named in written permission from the person (or parent or guardian); and to emergency medical personnel. Information regarding HIV status will not be added to a student's permanent educational or health record without written consent.

These statutory requirements apply specifically to health care providers. However, case law in Massachusetts leads to the conclusion that other school staff members beside health care providers may be liable for civil damages in the event of nonconsensual disclosure of information related to HIV status or AIDS diagnosis.

**UNIVERSAL PRECAUTIONS (BASIC INFORMATION) FOR SCHOOL SETTINGS**

Universal precautions refer to the usual and ordinary steps ALL school staff and students need to take in order to reduce their risk of infection with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, as well as all other blood-borne organisms (such as Hepatitis B virus).

They are **universal** because they refer to steps that need to be taken in all cases, not only when a staff member or student is known to be HIV-infected.

They are **precautions** because they require foresight and planning, and should be integrated into existing safety guidelines.

Appropriate equipment (mops, buckets, bleach, hot water, hand soap, disposable towels and latex gloves) must be readily available to staff members who are responsible for the clean-up of body fluid spills.

1. Treat human blood spills with caution.
2. Clean up blood spills promptly.
3. Inspect the intactness of skin on all exposed body parts, especially the hands. Cover any and all open cuts or broken skin, or ask another staff member to do the clean-up. Latex gloves contribute an added measure of protection, but are not essential if skin is intact.
4. Clean up blood spills with a solution of one part household bleach to ten parts water, pouring the solution around the periphery of the spill. Disinfect mops, buckets and other cleaning equipment with fresh bleach solution.

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5. Always wash hands after any contact with body fluids. This should be done immediately in order to avoid contaminating other surfaces or parts of the body (be especially careful not to touch your eyes before washing up). Soap and water will kill HIV.
6. Clean up other body fluid spills (urine, vomit, feces) unless grossly blood contaminated, in the usual manner. They do not pose a significant risk of HIV infection.

Adapted from Universal Precautions for School Settings, Massachusetts Department of Education and Medical Update to Massachusetts Policy Guidelines: Infants, Toddlers and Preschoolers with HIV Infection/AIDS in Early Childhood Settings (June, 1989)

### **STAFF DEVELOPMENT**

All school staff members will participate in a planned HIV education program that conveys factual and current information; provides guidance on infection control procedures; informs about current law and state, district, and school policies concerning HIV; assists staff in maintaining parent and community relations; and includes annual review sessions. Certain employees will also receive additional specialized training as appropriate to their positions and responsibilities (teachers, administrators, coaches, athletic trainers, counselors).

#### Training standards for personnel

- School counselors, psychologists, nurses, teachers and other school personnel who work with pupils should be provided appropriate information about the scope of the AIDS epidemic and its ramifications for society.
- School counselors, nurses, teachers and other personnel who work with pupils shall be provided with basic, accurate information about AIDS education/HIV prevention, including the nature of the disease, its causes and effects, the means of detecting it and preventing its transmission, the availability of appropriate sources of counseling and referral, and any other information that may be appropriate considering the age and grade level of pupils served by the school personnel who will receive the in service training.
- School Guidance counselors, nurses, teachers and other personnel who work with pupils should be provided adequate information that stresses the importance of:
  - Facilitating their students' understanding of AIDS/HIV prevention.
  - Emphasizing to students that abstinence from sexual intercourse is the only protection that is 100% effective against AIDS, when transmitted sexually.
  - Students' responsibility in protecting themselves and others.

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- Encouraging a compassionate attitude towards persons with AIDS.
- Providing prevention, intervention, and treatment resources for students who need additional information and help.

**CURRICULUM**

Curriculum will be taught at middle and high school levels that increases student knowledge about AIDS/HIV, allows students to process their feelings about AIDS/HIV prevention and encourages the development of positive self-esteem and concrete decision-making, communication and behavioral skills. At the secondary level, AIDS/HIV education should be part of a more complete sexuality education curriculum that includes information about sexually transmitted infections and the value of both sexual abstinence and the use of condoms as an infection prevention method.

Student involvement in AIDS/HIV educational efforts should be insured so that students feel encouraged to accept personal responsibility for their own behaviors, and to support and extend compassion for community members who are living with AIDS/HIV.

Parents should be able to reinforce AIDS/HIV prevention messages at home, and place these messages in the context of their own personal values and religious traditions.

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