

Guidelines for Faculty and Staff Regarding HIV Infection

December 1995
(Revised October 15, 2003)

INTRODUCTION

These *Guidelines* complement the *Princeton University [Policy on HIV Infection](#)*. They provide guidance to all employees who have questions concerning HIV and its possible presence in the workplace. The *Guidelines* are based on the most current epidemiological data available from the U.S. Public Health Service, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. They affirm the conclusive evidence that people living with HIV infection pose no threat of transmission through casual contact to those who are uninfected. University policies relating to HIV infection are consistent with those for any other serious illness and/or disability.

Fundamental to Princeton's response to HIV infection and other chronic illnesses, is the commitment to respect the rights and reasonable concerns of everyone, including those individuals living with these conditions. Education, understanding, compassion, and confidentiality are crucial in dealing effectively and responsibly with the profound issues surrounding this public health problem.

HIV Infection-What Is It?

"HIV infection is a chronic, progressive, immune deficiency disease, the most severe phase of which is AIDS" (see [footnote](#)). HIV infection is a progressive decrease in immune function and concomitant increase in susceptibility to opportunistic infections, which may lead to premature death.

More than ten years into the epidemic, data continue to demonstrate that HIV is transmitted exclusively through human tissues and organs and four body fluids: (1) blood and blood products, (2) semen, (3) vaginal secretions, and (4) breast milk. Only a limited number of behaviors or conditions result in efficient transmission of the virus. These include: (1) engaging in unprotected vaginal or anal intercourse, oralgenital or oralanal contact with either a man or woman;

(2) sharing needles (including for tattoos or ear piercing), syringes, or sex toys with a person infected with HIV; (3) receiving contaminated tissues or organs by transplantation, or blood or blood products through transfusion (a risk that decreased substantially due to screening of all tissues, organs and donated blood); (4) being exposed to contaminated blood, e.g., by accidental needlesticks and related injuries; and (5) being born to or being breastfed by a mother infected with HIV. There exists no known risk of contracting HIV through casual contact.

HIV Prevention, Education and Training

In the absence of a cure or vaccine, effective education is the best protection. It is particularly crucial because many people infected with HIV have no knowledge that they are HIV positive and can infect others. It is everyone's responsibility to take the necessary precautions to protect her/himself and thus help prevent transmission of HIV

Information and Training for Members of the Campus Community

Princeton University Health Services (PUHS) has primary responsibility for HIV prevention education. The Office of Human Resources is available to address employment-related issues for administrative and support staff. The Dean or Associate Dean of the Faculty is available to address employment-related issues for the faculty and professional research, technical and library staffs. These guidelines and the policy are published in the *Policy and Procedure Manual* and are summarized in the *Rules and Procedures of the Professional Research and Technical Staffs of Princeton University* and the *Rules and Procedures of the Faculty of Princeton University*.

Questions of a medical nature should be directed to the Office of Employee Health in PUHS.

The campus community is periodically invited to informal discussions where questions and concerns about HIV can be addressed. These informational sessions are coordinated both by PUHS and by the Office of Human Resources and included in their training bulletins.

OSHA Mandated Training and Other Requirements for Occupational Exposure

In fulfilling its responsibility under federal law, the University has assigned the responsibility for coordinating the OSHA mandated training for all employees who may be at risk for occupational exposure to the Office of Occupational Health and Safety.

The OSHA Bloodborne Pathogen Standard requires that employers provide training and other specific protective measures for those employees who are "reasonably anticipated" to experience occupational exposure. It is each department's responsibility to:

- (1) identify any employees at risk,
- (2) prepare a written Exposure Control Plan as appropriate,
- (3) arrange for the necessary training and hepatitis B vaccination for at-risk employees before work begins, and
- (4) ensure that relevant practices and procedures are in place.

Those employees who may be exposed to blood, body fluids, human tissues or organs as part of their job responsibilities are expected to follow special procedures known as "universal precautions." These employees must be provided the necessary training and medical consultation required by the OSHA Bloodborne Pathogen Standard.

The Office of Occupational Health and Safety should be contacted to initiate the process. Initial and annual refresher training are available. For new employees the Interim Training Record Form #13 must be completed, and an appointment made with the Office of Employee Health in the Princeton University Health Services at McCosh Health Center. Confidential records will be maintained to document necessary training.

Participation in the University Community

Princeton University subscribes to a policy of equal opportunity. Admission and employment decisions for all University programs, departments, and offices are based both on Princeton's educational objectives and institutional needs and on the University's commitment to the principle of equal opportunity and nondiscrimination against qualified people with disabilities.

Employment Decisions. Princeton University will neither query job applicants nor base hiring decisions on an applicant's HIV status. The University does not require anyone to submit to the HIV antibody test as a condition of employment.

Accommodations For Employees Affected by HIV Infection. The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and the New Jersey Law Against Discrimination protect applicants and employees with disabilities. Under these Acts and University policy, HIV infection is considered to be a disability and, as with all disabilities, Princeton University makes reasonable accommodations for employees infected with HIV. Questions regarding or requests for reasonable accommodations should be directed to the Associate Provost, the Office of Human Resources, or the Office of Dean of the Faculty.

The University may not request or require a diagnosis of HIV illness, except for documents required in connection with the assignment of medical benefits and in order to return to work. The employee may be asked for physician's certification to be provided to the Office of Employee Health of PUHS as to whether he/she is able to work, whether there are limitations on the work due to illness, and the amount of time that is required to recuperate. In the event that an employee is not able to continue working, he/she may be eligible for paid and unpaid leaves such as for sporadic absence, short-term disability, and long term disability, as explained in the applicable policies for faculty or staff. Under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) of 1993, employees are entitled to up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave during any 12 month period if they have a serious health condition. They are also entitled to leaves for other reasons such as to care for a spouse, domestic partner, child or parent with a serious health condition. Requests for leaves under the FMLA should be referred to the Office of Human Resources or the Office of the Dean of the Faculty.

Confidentiality. However, any disclosures of one's HIV status or other disability to a supervisor is strictly voluntary and is considered confidential. The information should only be shared with those individuals who have a need to know, such as individuals who are assisting in implementing a reasonable accommodation, or health care professionals who are providing emergency treatment. Princeton University encourages those with disabling conditions to inform their supervisors so that supportive services, facilities, and activities can be made readily available. Disclosure to friends and colleagues that one is HIV infected is a personal decision and may increase understanding of HIV infection. Through the University's Employee Assistance Program and the Office of Employee Health, employees infected with HIV may seek limited counseling and assistance for identifying community support services.

During outbreaks of highly contagious diseases, the University will attempt to inform the community so that individuals with immune system compromise can take necessary precautions.

Insurance. Several health care plans may cover the cost of medical management of HIV infection. Individual policies cover illnesses and disabilities at different levels and should be consulted as needed.

CoWorkers of Employees With HIV Infection. Princeton University does not permit discrimination based on HIV status. Acts of discrimination against any member of the community are in violation of University regulations and will not be tolerated. Coworkers of those employees living with HIV are expected to continue to carry out their University responsibilities in normal fashion. Should an employee express fear about working with a person who is or perceived to be HIV infected, the supervisor should arrange for that employee to consult the Employee Health physician for information. If the employee is still concerned, he/she should consult with his/her supervisor, the Office of Human Resources, the Associate Dean of the Faculty, the University Ombuds Officer or the Associate Provost. However, employees who refuse to work with anyone because of concern about the individual's HIV status may be subject to disciplinary action.

Compliance. The Associate Provost and Special Assistant to the President serves as the University's affirmative action officer and is responsible for overseeing programs related to the University's equal opportunity policy. The Associate Provost is also responsible for coordinating the implementation of equal opportunity laws such as the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

Informal Complaints. Questions or concerns about the policy on HIV or its application, or informal complaints should be directed to the Office of Human Resources, the Office of the Dean of the Faculty, the University Ombuds Office or the Associate Provost. Questions about the policy on HIV or its application may be directed to the Office of Human Resources, the University Ombuds Office or the Office of the Associate Provost.

Formal Complaints. Employees who feel that they have been or are being discriminated against may file a formal complaint with the appropriate offices. Administrative and support staff members should submit their formal complaints to the Office of Human Resources. Faculty and professional research, technical, and library staff members should submit their formal complaints to the Office of the Dean of the Faculty. Employees who are members of unions should contact their union representatives or submit their formal complaints through the grievance procedure described in their collective bargaining agreement.

Testing for HIV

AIDS is reportable in every state. However, each state has different laws and regulations on reporting HIV status. In addition to reporting cases of AIDS, New Jersey requires that a positive HIV antibody test result be reported by the health care provider or facility performing the test. New Jersey state law also provides that it is illegal to otherwise disclose this information.

Why Be Tested For HIV?

People should seek testing if they believe they have been exposed to HIV or are concerned about their current HIV status. HIV antibody testing should be used to determine one's current HIV status. The sooner one's positive HIV status is known, the earlier one can receive treatment. Early treatment may prolong life expectancy and can enhance quality of life. For this reason, Princeton University Health Services recommends that all individuals who believe they have engaged in activities that may have placed them at risk for infection, in their personal lives or through work, consider receiving an HIV antibody test. However, it is important to note that negative results of HIV antibody testing do not provide proof that a person is HIV negative. Following an exposure, it can take from six weeks to 12 months for the HIV antibody test to become positive. If a person believes he or she has been exposed,

then an HIV antibody test should be obtained three, six and 12 months later. (In addition to HIV antibody testing, Princeton University Health Services encourages sexually active individuals or individuals who are at risk for occupational exposure to be vaccinated against the hepatitis B virus.)

Occupational Exposure

Employees who have been exposed to human body fluids (blood, semen, vaginal fluids), human tissues or organs through their work should be tested for HIV. PUHS offers free, confidential HIV antibody testing for workrelated exposure. All results (positive and negative) will be recorded in the medical record of the exposed individual. [Note: an individual who knows he/she is HIV positive and seeks care at PUHS does not have his or her HIV status reported to the New Jersey State Department of Health. Only when an HIV antibody test is performed at McCosh Health Center, and the result is positive, is that result reported.]

An employee can make an appointment through the Office of Employee Health, where appropriate information and procedures for testing will be explained. If testing is desirable, a sample of blood will be drawn and sent to the lab for analysis. All precautions for assuring confidentiality are followed.

Personal HIV Testing

HIV antibody testing at all sites funded through the New Jersey State Department of Health "Alternative Testing Sites" is free of charge. Information about the sites in New Jersey that provide confidential and anonymous (if requested) testing can be obtained through the New Jersey Department of Health, Division of AIDS (18006242377), the Office of Employee Health (2585035) or Office of Health Education (2585036) at Princeton University Health Services.

Testing may also be obtained through other public and private health care facilities, doctors' offices, or area hospitals. An individual seeking testing should inquire about confidential vs. anonymous testing, availability of pre/post test counseling, how and where blood samples are analyzed (laboratories), and how results (positive or negative) are recorded and documented in a record.

There are two forms of HIV antibody testing available in New Jersey:

Anonymous testing allows the individual to remain anonymous by making up a name as well as providing a random number for identifying the test results. Should the individual test be HIV positive, the testing facility gives the positive results to the individual and also reports it to the State Department of Health, but without any identifying information about the individual. Anonymous testing is sponsored through the State Department of Health at selected sites in New Jersey. It is the only test to guarantee complete anonymity.

Confidential testing requires an individual with a positive HIV test result to provide her/his name and other identifying information (social security number). As required by New Jersey Administrative Code 2, if an individual's test result is positive, it must be reported to the State Department of Health, which maintains the information in a permanent, confidential file. Negative results are not reported. Disclosure of the test result to anyone else cannot be

made without the consent of the individual. Confidential testing can be conducted at any licensed health care facility or office, public or private.

General Testing Procedures. Following the scheduling of an appointment, an individual goes to the test site and receives pretest counseling. This counseling provides information on HIV infection and the test itself. Depending upon the site, the counselor may also discuss the implications of a positive test result with a patient. Following pretest counseling, blood is drawn for testing and the individual is asked to return in 24 weeks for the result. The individual also receives posttest counseling, as part of receiving the test result.

Conclusion

Princeton University encourages all members of the community to prevent the further transmission of HIV by:

- (1) educating themselves and others about HIV infection,
- (2) becoming actively involved in supporting and participating in prevention education activities,
- (3) joining together in support and care for members of our community who are living with HIV.

Footnote

HIV infection is a chronic, progressive, immune deficiency disease. The most severe phase is AIDS. Richard Keeling, "HIV Disease: Current Concepts," *Journal of Counseling and Development*, January/February, 1993, p. 261.