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AIDS, HIV, Hepatitis B

Purpose: The College has developed this policy covering acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) because of the dramatic increase in the disease, its life-threatening results, and the emotion connected with this issue.

Definition: AIDS describes an impairment of the body's immune system, the mechanism which helps people fight infection and disease. When this system is not functioning correctly, the individual becomes vulnerable to unusual infections and other illnesses that are life threatening. These include opportunistic infections such as pneumocystic carinii pneumonia, chronic cytomegalovirus (CMV) infection, unusually severe shingles and herpes simplex, and certain bacteria (including one that causes a form of tuberculosis). Kaposi's sarcoma (KS), a skin cancer, has also been associated with AIDS.

Transmission: All available evidence suggests that AIDS is transmitted through bodily fluids such as blood and semen. This exposure to bodily fluids can occur during sexual contact, by sharing intravenous drug needles, and through blood transfusions. No one has contracted the disease from casual or even close daily contact. In fact, family members, other than sexual partners of people with AIDS, have not developed AIDS.

Philosophy: The College shall treat AIDS the same as any other disease that may be contracted by staff members. Victims of AIDS or other diseases will be permitted to work and participate in other College-sponsored activities unless the staff member's personal physician, campus medical officials, or public health officials declare that such participation represents a substantial risk to the health and safety of other members of the campus community. In such instances, appropriate measures will be taken to protect the institution and the individual.

Information: Supervisors and staff members who have questions about AIDS should feel free to call the Campus Nurse to find out more. A qualified physician may be called in to answer questions if the Campus Nurse feels the situation warrants.

Education: Faculty or staff seeking advice regarding AIDS will be referred by the Campus Nurse to their personal physicians or appropriate specialists.

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Confidentiality:

The physician/patient privilege and a patient's right of privacy, which are derived from the United States and the State's constitutions, dictate that information regarding a patient's diagnosis as having AIDS should be maintained in the strictest confidence possible. The duty to report such information is limited only to those situations where there are specific government reporting requirements or a medical justification for the disclosure of that information. In the event that a personal physician or public health official determines that an individual's medical condition represents a public health hazard and warrants limitation of activities, only essential administrative personnel will be informed, on a need-to-know basis. It may be necessary to announce to contacts the identity of an individual who has contracted the disease, in the event of a life-threatening situation. Such information will not be divulged without prior discussions with appropriate medical authorities and the College's legal counsel.

Association: There is no legal justification for a College employee to refuse to work with an AIDS patient or someone he or she believes to be an AIDS patient. An employee who so refuses should be counseled regarding the disease. Each supervisor shall seek the advice of the Human Resources Department with regard to policy, medical advice of the Campus Nurse or of a physician prior to providing such counseling. In view of the fears that many people have concerning AIDS, every effort shall be made to allay the legitimate concerns of an employee. Thereafter, continuing refusal by that employee may be grounds for disciplinary action. Prior to taking such action, the supervisor should seek advice from the Human Resources Department. The HR person should contact the College legal counsel for advice before such a step could be taken.

Special Instructions:

Any health services employees and service personnel such as custodians will follow guidelines issued by the Centers for Disease Control for the prevention of transmission of AIDS and other communicable diseases. Copies of the guidelines are available from the Campus Nurse.

For other employees, there is normally no need for special precautions; however, some staff may be exposed to blood or bodily fluids because of an accident, fire, or similar situation. By observing the following simple rules, these employees can avoid any risk of infection:

- Avoid wounds or punctures from personal items that could be contaminated with blood, such as razors, cuticle scissors, or sharp instruments.

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Special Instructions continued:

- Wear disposable gloves when coming in contact with blood, bodily fluids, mucous membranes, or non-intact skin, in case of injuries.
- Wash hands after exposure to any possible source of infection. Hand washing reduces the chance of spread of infection.
- Call Facilities Management to have a custodian clean up blood spills promptly with fresh, diluted household bleach (one part bleach to 10 parts water).