

NEW SHOREHAM SCHOOL DISTRICT
BLOCK ISLAND SCHOOL

1. **PURPOSE:** The purpose for establishing a school policy concerning Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) infected employees and/or students in school is to:
 - A. Protect against the transmission of HIV from infected employees and/or students to other employees or students;
 - B. Protect the health and well being of the infected person as well as to enable that person to take part in normal school activities with a minimum of disruption;
 - C. Inform students, parents, teachers, school employees, and members of the community about safe practices regarding HIV transmission and the school's HIV policy; and
 - D. Provide a basis for the school committee, superintendent, facilitator/principal, teachers, nurses and physicians, school employees, and students to establish necessary preventive health measures, and to inform the public about these measures while still maintaining the rights of confidentiality of an infected individual, should any exist in the school district.

2. **DEFINITION OF HIV INFECTION:** HIV is an acronym for the Human Immunodeficiency Virus. HIV is the virus that causes AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome). An individual is HIV infected if he/she tests positive on an ELISA test for the presence of HIV antibodies in the blood and is confirmed by a Western Blot (or other medically recognized) test, performed in a qualified medical laboratory. Infected people are described as being HIV positive.

A person may be infected but show no symptoms of illness. People at this early stage of the disease are described as "asymptomatic." Asymptomatic people feel well and are able to work or attend school without limitation.

At a later stage of the disease, the person may exhibit symptoms of AIDS. Persons with symptoms are described as "symptomatic." Symptomatic people may have health limitation, not unlike any other disease, which periodically affect one's ability to work or to attend school.

Both asymptomatic and symptomatic persons carry the virus; however, they cannot transmit HIV through classroom or workplace contact with other students or employees. (See Section 3 for routes of transmission.)

3. **ROUTES OF TRANSMISSION:** HIV is transmitted from an HIV infected person to a non-HIV infected person in the following ways:
 - A. Sexual activity;
 - B. Needle sharing for tattooing, ear or body piercing, or to inject drugs, including steroids;
 - C. Direct infusion from blood or blood products; or

D. During pregnancy, in the birth process, or after birth from breast milk.

HIV cannot be spread by casual contact, e.g. sitting together, sneezing or coughing on each other, or eating together. Both Rhode Island law (G.L. 23-6-22) and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (P.L. 101-336) expressly prohibit discrimination against individuals who are infected with, or who are perceived to be infected with HIV. Being HIV positive is not grounds for dismissal from employment or enrollment in school. However, if an HIV infected person demonstrates behavior which puts another at risk of becoming infected with HIV (see routes of transmission listed above) then that behavior might lead to an alternative educational placement outside of the school setting. In the case of an employee, behaviors that pose a risk to others would be handled through the regular disciplinary process. The school physician shall participate in this risk assistance.

4. **REPORTING HIV STATUS:** When an employee or student has tested HIV positive, it is optional for that person to notify the superintendent of schools. Notification of an individual's positive HIV status alone does not justify limiting that person's involvement in the school. Informed individuals will be subject to the requirements of the Rhode Island General Laws 23-6-17 and 5-37.3-7 in the Confidentiality of Health Care Information Act, as well as any and all other relevant federal and state laws and regulations relating to the confidentiality of Health Care Information Act, as well as any and all other relevant federal and state laws and regulations relating to the confidentiality of health care information. HIV related information cannot be transferred or released except as allowed by Rhode Island General Laws (23-6-17).
5. **CONFIDENTIALITY OF EMPLOYEE AND/OR STUDENT HIV STATUS:** Information concerning the identity of HIV positive employees/students must be kept confidential in accordance with Rhode Island General Laws 23-6-17 and 23-6-18. Any written or electronic records containing this information should be kept in a locked file in the superintendent's office and accessible only to those who have received written permission from the infected person. All school department employees and/or students who receive this information are bound by state and federal confidentiality laws.
6. **PERSONS WHO MAY NEED TO KNOW:** Persons in the school system who may need to know the identity of an HIV positive employee or student may include:
 - A. The certified school nurse teacher and school physician, especially as liaison with the infected person's personal physician (in order to monitor the employee's/student's health status and to help coordinate medical care);
 - B. Certain other employees of the school department; and
 - C. The supervisor(s)/facilitator/principal of the employee/student.

The decision to inform personnel should be made by the superintendent of schools along with the infected employee/student and parent or guardian and, with a signed release of information, in consultation with the infected person's physician.

7. **DISSEMINATION:** This policy should be distributed annually through a minimum of the

following methods:

- A. Dissemination to students and parents at the beginning of each year in connection with scheduled in-service opportunities to provide both groups with relevant information regarding prevention and transmission of HIV/AIDS;
 - B. Posting in a conspicuous place in the school building;
 - C. Inclusion in school committee, parent, and student handbooks;
 - D. Posting in all staff rooms;
 - E. Dissemination to officials of collective bargaining units;
 - F. Dissemination and in-service to meet the needs of those parents whose language is other than English; and
 - G. Inclusion in a staff in-service training program for all members of the school community, including professionals and support staff, coaches, bus personnel, building maintenance, and all others.
8. **RIGHT TO APPEAL:** This policy shall provide a student, parent/guardian, or an employee with the opportunity to seek amendment to any records, written or electronic, regarding his/her own HIV status. This does not foreclose the use of any other remedy such as grievances under a collective bargaining unit.
9. **SCHOOL DECISION AUTHORITY:** The superintendent of schools, as chief personnel officer, is responsible for ensuring that the purposes of this policy are implemented fully within the guidelines provided by both Rhode Island and federal laws.

The superintendent of schools, as the leader of the school district, is expected to demonstrate respect for the infected person and to support that person's regular employment or attendance.

10. **IMPLEMENTATION:** This policy should be implemented in conjunction with an annual review of Universal Precautions and frequent opportunities for students, staff, and parents to participate in HIV/AIDS education.
- A. **UNIVERSAL PRECAUTIONS** and the provision of supplies necessary for implementing them.

Universal Precautions represent a commitment to safety and prevention. This policy can only work if Universal Precautions are taught annually to all staff and the supplies necessary for implementing them are available and current. Adherence to Universal Precautions should be considered for addition to all staff job descriptions and performance evaluations.

The key to understanding and implementing Universal Precautions is to treat all visible blood, from all students and staff, as potentially infected. Six procedures are necessary for the implementation of Universal Precautions.

1. Disposable gloves should be worn whenever you find yourself in a position where you could be touching any other person's blood.
2. Washing hands and skin is the single most effective health precaution for all viral and bacterial exposures.
3. Properly cover all wounds, cuts, oozing sores, or rashes.
4. Use bleach to clean up body fluid spills.
5. Clothes soiled with blood, vomitus, urine, or fecal matter should be handled while wearing gloves, placed in leak-proof bags, and washed in water that is at least 1600 in temperature.
6. Avoid accidental needle sticks. (Nurses who administer injections should not recap needles.)
7. Needles and other sharp items should be thrown away in puncture-resistant containers.

- B. **AIDS EDUCATION:** A comprehensive ongoing AIDS education program should be available to all students, parents, and staff. School nurse teachers and health educators should be involved in the planning and implementation of all components of AIDS education programs for parents and staff.

STUDENTS: All Block Island School students receive, as part of their comprehensive (K-12) health education, AIDS education. Beginning in the early elementary years children are taught to understand such concepts as wellness, sickness, and disease prevention. By the upper elementary and into the middle school years, students are provided with information which addresses their fears and concerns about getting AIDS and in the broader context learn about self care and personal responsibility. Much time is spent at this level on understanding high risk behaviors and methods of transmission. Emphasis is placed on presenting the message that abstinence from sex and drugs is the only appropriate behavior. Universal Precautions are outlined early on in the curriculum. At each level prevention, high risk behaviors, and medical information about the virus is more detailed.

By high school, students are presented with more sophisticated information. Not only does the curriculum discuss the nature of the disease, i.e., how it affects the body, methods of transmission, symptoms, and medical/community resources, but also presents strategies for confronting fears and examples of how to enhance the lives of infected friends and family members.