U.S. BUSINESS ACTION TO

END HIV

A HEALTH ACTION ALLIANCE INITIATIVE

Ending the HIV Epidemic

A GUIDE FOR EMPLOYERS



HAA HEALTH ACTION ALLIANCE

POWERED BY Meteorite

APRIL 2024

U.S. BUSINESS ACTION TO END HIV

A HEALTH ACTION ALLIANCE INITIATIVE

U.S. Business Action to End HIV was founded in 2022 by the Health Action Alliance, with support from ViiV Healthcare, to mobilize a growing coalition of private sector partners committed to filling gaps and accelerating progress to help end HIV in the U.S. by 2030.

The Health Action Alliance is a unique collaboration between leading business, communications and public health organizations to help employers navigate evolving health challenges, improve the health of workers and engage with public health partners to build stronger, healthier communities. Learn more at healthaction.org.

THIS GUIDE WAS DEVELOPED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

nglcc National LGBT Chamber of Commerce

The National LGBT Chamber of Commerce (NGLCC) is the largest advocacy organization dedicated to expanding economic opportunities and advancements for LGBTQ people, and the exclusive certifying body for LGBTQ-owned businesses. Learn more at nglcc.org.

PRESENTED BY

GILEAD Creating Possible

ViiV Healthcare

WITH ADDITIONAL SUPPORT FROM

ada

mistr

EDITORIAL NOTE

The Health Action Alliance is solely responsible for the content of this guide and maintains full editorial control of its resources.

Table of Contents

Introduction	03
10 Things to Know about HIV	04
The Business Case	05
Improving Access to HIV Testing, Prevention, Treatment and Care	06
Ending Discrimination and Fighting Stigma in the Workplace	12
Managing an Employee with HIV	14
Engaging and Educating Your Workforce	15
Frequently Asked Questions	20
Join the Movement	23
Additional Resources	25

Executive Summary

We've reached a moment that many once thought impossible. Ending the HIV epidemic in the United States is finally within our reach. But getting there will require that all sectors of society, including employers, work together to help make sure the most powerful HIV prevention and treatment tools in history reach the people who need them most.

The federal government has a bold vision to end HIV in the U.S. by 2030, and has called on the private sector to step up efforts to accelerate the country's progress toward that goal. Employers can:

1. Improve access to HIV testing, prevention, treatment and care. This includes offering comprehensive health insurance coverage and benefits for workers with HIV and those at risk for infection.
2. Protect employees and fight stigma by strengthening HIV-related workplace non-discrimination policies.
3. Engage employees in HIV education and outreach to create a supportive, inclusive environment for everyone.
4. Collaborate with local public health departments, community organizations or other private sector partners to fill gaps in HIV service delivery.

These actions will also help your organization:

- Improve employee health and reduce long-term healthcare costs
- Minimize work disruptions
- Increase trust between employers, employees and customers
- Improve loyalty to the company among employees
- Comply with applicable laws and regulations

The Bottom Line

Times have changed. HIV is no longer the death sentence it once was. Thanks to continuing medical advances, HIV can be controlled like other chronic health conditions and people with HIV can live full, healthy lives. And, new prevention medications, called PrEP, can help protect people from getting HIV.

Accessing these life-saving tools, however, is still limited by ongoing barriers, stigma and gaps in care. As an employer, you can support workers affected by HIV and accelerate an end to HIV in America by providing comprehensive insurance coverage and benefits, making it easier for workers to access HIV services, engaging your workforce in HIV education, and taking steps to fight stigma and eliminate discrimination.

This guide is designed to help you get started.

10 THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT HIV IN THE UNITED STATES TODAY

1. Today there are more than 1.2 million people with HIV in the U.S. and about 35,000 new infections each year. Ninety-one percent of people with HIV are of working age.

2. People with HIV in ongoing care and treatment can live long, healthy lives and prevent the spread of the virus to others.

3. Getting tested for HIV and making it part of your healthcare routine is an important step in protecting yourself and others. Testing is quick, easy and confidential. There are many resources available for people who need support with HIV testing and care.

4. One in eight people with HIV in the U.S. are unaware they are infected, and 80% of new infections are transmitted by people who are not aware they have HIV or are not receiving any HIV care.

5. Medicines for people without HIV, called PrEP and PEP, can reduce a person's chance of getting HIV when taken as prescribed, and can reduce long-term health costs. Yet, only 36% of the people who could benefit from taking PrEP are actually using it.

6. HIV can impact anyone, regardless of sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, gender or age. Racism, HIV stigma, homophobia, poverty and barriers to health care continue to drive disparities among some groups more than others – including Black and Hispanic communities; gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men; and transgender women.

7. Fear and misinformation about HIV contributes to stigma, affecting the mental and physical well-being of people with HIV, and prevents some people from getting tested and accessing PrEP and other prevention services.

8. HIV has been diagnosed in all 50 U.S. states, D.C. and Puerto Rico. Nine of the 10 U.S. states with the highest rates of HIV infection are located in the South.

9. Teens and young adults continue to be at risk, with those under 35 accounting for more than half of new HIV diagnoses.

10. Workers with HIV are protected by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in the United States. The ADA prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities, including HIV, in all aspects of employment, including hiring, firing, promotion and compensation.

THE BUSINESS CASE

Here's why HIV matters to your business:



Legal Obligations:
Employers have a legal obligation to protect the health and safety of their employees. Discriminating against employees with HIV is illegal in the United States, and employers can face legal consequences if they do not comply with anti-discrimination laws.



Worker Productivity & Retention:
HIV can affect an employee's health, which can impact their productivity and ability to work. Addressing those health, safety and quality of life issues can attract and retain talented employees, and boost productivity through increased internal morale and employee engagement.



Healthcare Costs:
HIV can impact employer healthcare spending by increasing healthcare costs. Estimates suggest that lifetime medical costs for HIV range from the mid-$300,000s to almost $500,000. Employers can take steps to lower costs over time by promoting HIV prevention and treatment adherence.



Employee Well-being:
Employees with HIV may experience stigma and discrimination, affecting their mental health and overall well-being. Employers can promote a supportive and inclusive workplace culture with a sense of belonging and acceptance for all employees.



Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging:
Given the disproportionate impact of HIV on Black, Latino, and LGBTQ+ communities, taking action on HIV can strengthen a company's commitments to combating racism by investing in historically under-resourced communities.

Improving Access to HIV Testing, Prevention, Treatment and Care

One of the most important ways employers can help end HIV is by reducing barriers to HIV testing, prevention, treatment and care. Below are strategies that can make it easier for people to get the care and support they need.

☐ Provide comprehensive health insurance and benefits coverage. Companies can ensure that health insurance coverage supports HIV detection, prevention, treatment, and care.

Insurance coverage provided with little or no cost-sharing enables employees and their dependents to have the means to prevent HIV and other sexually transmitted infections.

At a minimum, most insurance plans must cover HIV testing, pre-exposure prophylactic treatments (PrEP), and antiretroviral therapy (ART) to help people with HIV stay healthy and prevent transmission of HIV to others. But depending on the health insurance plan, people may need to pay certain out-of-pocket expenses, including co-pays, coinsurance and deductibles.

- For companies that are fully-insured, contact your health insurance provider to make sure they offer robust coverage for workers. Companies with self-funded plans should be clear with their plan administrator that they have prioritized robust coverage and ensure the coverage offered to workers has little or no cost-sharing.

- In either case, employers should direct employees to local providers offering HIV prevention and care services, and examine any limitations that may exist within a carrier's medication formulary. Make sure your employees know how to find culturally and linguistically competent providers.



- Make it clear that your company will support workers in accessing care. Consider providing flexible work and paid leave policies to enable employees to attend medical appointments.
  - Examples of options for flexible work are:
    - Allowing remote work some or all of the time.
    - Allowing work outside of standard business hours.
    - Allowing people to compress their work schedule.
    - Providing a private space for telehealth appointments at your location.
  - Examples of options for flexible leave policies are:
    - Flexible time off, which allows employees to take time off whenever needed.
- If your company has a website for employees with more information about health benefits, consider creating a dedicated HIV section or page that includes benefit coverage, information about free HIV testing (locations and/or at home testing) and all the other types of assistance available.

☐ Make it easier for employees to be tested for HIV.

All people ages 13-65 years old should be tested for HIV at least once. CDC guidelines suggest that people with certain risk factors should get tested more often.

- Encourage your workers to get tested. Search gettested.cdc.gov to find locations near you and promote HIV testing among your employees.
- Cover out-of-pocket expenses associated with testing through your wellness incentive programs. This could include offering a gift card for transportation.
- Offer internet access or language support services to help workers schedule testing appointments.
- For workers who prefer to self-test at home, Together TakeMeHome (TTMH) provides up to two free HIV self-tests every 90 days to anyone in the U.S. ages 17 or older. Encourage employees to request a test for themselves and a friend.
- Partner with a local public health department or other local providers to offer on-site HIV testing as part of routine health screenings. Pairing HIV testing with other routine health screenings like flu shots and COVID-19 testing helps fight stigma by normalizing testing as part of overall healthcare. If your company is going to offer on-site HIV testing, it's important you have a strong HIV non-discrimination policy and employee confidentiality in place.
- Consider providing small prizes, rewards or other modest incentives (i.e. gift cards, coupons, tokens, etc.) to workers who get tested. Make sure incentives are aligned with your employee confidentiality policies as well.



☐ Make it easier for workers to access PrEP.

PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis) is a prescription medication for people who do not have HIV that can reduce the chance of getting HIV. When taken as prescribed, PrEP is highly effective for preventing HIV. PrEP is available either as a daily pill or a long-acting injectable given by a healthcare provider every eight weeks. In most states, PrEP requires a prescription.

- Educate employees about PrEP and how to access it. Share the Let's Talk About PrEP! campaign for more information about PrEP, how to get it and how to pay for it.

- PrEP and associated monitoring services to maintain PrEP medications are free under almost all health insurance plans. That means covered workers should not be charged for PrEP medication or the clinic visits and laboratory tests needed to maintain a prescription. Contact your health insurance provider to make sure available plans align with these ACA requirements and ensure benefit design is proactive in letting members know about these services.

- Check with your health plans regarding their PrEP provider network adequacy and how PrEP providers are identified in the provider directory.

- As part of ongoing PrEP care, workers will need to see a healthcare provider every few months for routine screenings and health checks. Taking time to see a provider can be challenging for employees. Employers can help by providing paid time off and other supportive services like vouchers for transportation or child care.

☐ Make it easier for workers with HIV to access and adhere to treatment, and provide reasonable accommodations to enable workers with HIV to enjoy equal employment opportunity.

For people with HIV, treatment adherence is key to staying healthy and preventing the spread of HIV. This includes starting antiretroviral therapy (ART) as soon as possible after diagnosis, keeping all medical appointments, and taking ART every day as prescribed.

- Educate workers about the lifesaving benefits of treatment for people with HIV. HIV medicines help people with HIV live longer, healthier lives. People with HIV who take ART as prescribed and who achieve and then maintain an undetectable viral load have effectively no risk of sexually transmitting the virus to an HIV-negative partner.

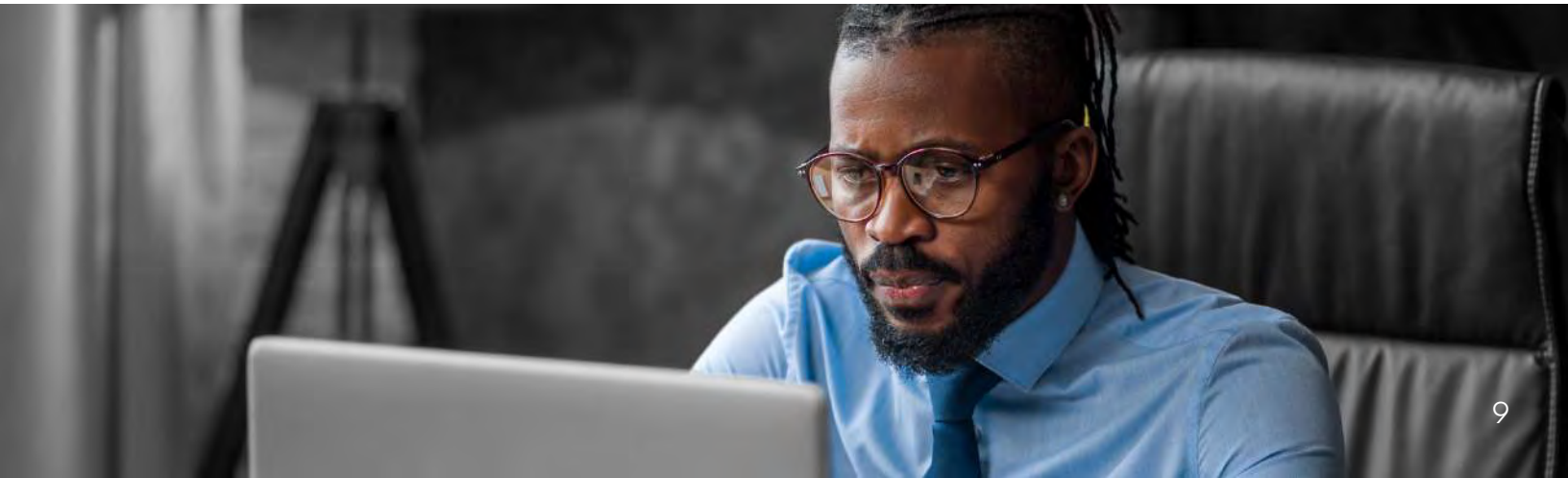
- The first step after testing positive for HIV is to see a health care provider, even if the individual does not feel sick. Prompt medical care and treatment with HIV medicines as soon as possible is the best way to stay healthy.

- Workers taking ART may require more frequent medical appointments, lab tests and other support. Consider offering paid sick leave or flexible time off to allow workers to attend appointments and take care of their health. And, if there's an employee benefit fund for discretionary needs, make sure a non-disclosed diagnosis qualifies for financial support.

- Employers may also consider financial incentives or flexible work schedules that encourage workers to maintain treatment adherence.

- In some cases, a person's job performance could be affected by HIV, the side effects of HIV medication and/or aging with HIV, or another medical condition that has developed because of HIV. In these situations, qualified individuals may be entitled to reasonable accommodations that will help them do their jobs. The Job Accommodation Network offers suggestions for reasonable accommodations for people with HIV and free consultation for employers.

- Be mindful that older workers with HIV who may have been treated earlier in the epidemic with AZT or older drugs may be living with long-term complications that could require accommodation.



☐ Respect the confidentiality of employees who disclose their HIV status.

In most situations, workers with HIV can keep their condition private. Generally, employers cannot ask workers whether they are HIV-positive, or whether they have any other medical condition, before making a job offer.

Employers are allowed to ask medical questions when workers with disabilities, including HIV, ask for reasonable accommodations. Workers with HIV may also need to discuss their condition to establish eligibility for benefits under other laws, such as the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA).

Additionally, although health insurance providers cannot legally tell an employer about an employee's HIV status, it is possible that an employer could find out if the insurance company provides detailed information about the benefits it pays or the costs of insurance.

Remember: Certain disability-related medical information, including HIV status, is confidential under the ADA and must be stored separately from an employee's personnel file.

In most situations, disclosing an employee's HIV status is not allowed. Such information may be disclosed only to individuals specifically outlined in the regulations, such as supervisors and managers who need to know about necessary work restrictions or accommodations; first aid and safety personnel, if a disability might require emergency treatment; and government officials investigating compliance with the ADA or a complaint with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

☐ Improve access to counseling and mental health treatment.

It is important your business offer comprehensive mental health services for all workers. HIV is not solely a physical disease; it can significantly impact a person's mental health too.

- Check with your employee assistance program (EAP) provider to identify specific HIV counseling resources. If your EAP doesn't offer robust HIV mental health services, consider reaching out to local HIV/AIDS service organizations or your local public health department to help you identify providers in your area.
- You can find more wide-ranging mental health solutions to benefit your entire workforce in our Workplace Mental Health Playbook.

☐ Help workers who are not covered by your insurance plan (e.g. contract or part-time workers) find affordable HIV testing, prevention and treatment.

- The Affordable Care Act, or ACA, allows people who do not have coverage through an employer or other source to buy their own health insurance. Individuals cannot be denied health coverage or charged more because they have HIV or any other preexisting condition.

- The Health Insurance Marketplace, available at Healthcare.gov, helps uninsured people find and apply for quality, affordable health coverage. Most private plans in the Marketplace are required to cover a set of essential health benefits, including HIV screening, prevention counseling, and PrEP.

- Depending on their income, workers not covered under your employer-sponsored plan may be eligible for different types of financial assistance to help them with monthly premiums, deductibles or other out-of-pocket costs.

- Depending on their income, workers may be eligible to get PrEP at no cost as part of programs offered by its manufacturers – Gilead's Advancing Access Program (1-800-226-2056) and ViiV Connect (1-844-588-3288). Programs may cover out-of-pocket expenses for PrEP, including copays, coinsurance, and deductibles[1].

- Ready, Set, PrEP is a program run by the federal government that makes PrEP in pill form available at no cost for people without insurance. To receive PrEP through this program, you must test negative for HIV, have a PrEP prescription and not have prescription drug insurance coverage. If you receive PrEP through Ready, Set, PrEP, you will not have to pay for the medicine. The costs of clinic visits and lab test costs may vary depending on your income. To apply for the program, visit GetYourPrEP.com or call (855) 447-8410.

- The Ryan White HIV/AIDS Care Program covers HIV medical care and offers support services for people with HIV living on lower and moderate incomes, including HIV care and treatment, mental health care, housing assistance, and more. The program serves people with HIV who have no insurance, need services that their insurance doesn't cover or need help with insurance costs. The AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP), part of the Ryan White Program, helps individuals with financial need pay for their HIV medications and in some cases, expenses associated with insurance. This interactive tool can help workers with HIV identify local Ryan White HIV/AIDS Care Program providers.

1 Gilead Sciences and ViiV Healthcare are corporate sponsors of the Health Action Alliance and provided financial support for the development of this Guide. In accordance with HAA's Corporate Sponsor Policy, HAA has maintained complete editorial control over this resource and has independently elected to include information about PrEP and these manufacturer programs for the benefit of HAA members and their workers.

Ending Discrimination and Fighting Stigma in the Workplace

Due to stigma, homophobia, racism, discrimination and other structural factors, Black, Latino and LGBTQ+ communities continue to face barriers to accessing HIV prevention and treatment services. Stigma can also lead to discrimination against people with HIV and communities disproportionately affected by HIV. Examples in the workplace include:

- An employee refusing to share workspaces, bathrooms, equipment or utensils with a coworker with HIV.
- An employee treating a coworker negatively because they believe the coworker has HIV based on the coworker's demographic characteristics or lifestyle.

When we support people with HIV, we make it easier for them to lead healthy lives. By establishing a no-tolerance policy for discrimination, employers can create a welcoming workplace for employees with HIV and make it easier for everyone to access testing, prevention, treatment and care.

☐ Reinforce your commitment to ending HIV with a written Workplace HIV Policy.

A comprehensive workplace HIV policy articulates your company's commitment to improving access to HIV testing, prevention, treatment and care; protecting employees and fighting stigma; and engaging your workforce in HIV education and outreach. It's an important way to communicate your values, establish company norms, break stigma and prioritize transparency in benefits, care and support options.

To inform the development of your Workplace HIV Policy, you may consider organizing listening sessions with Employee Resource Groups and employees affected by HIV to make sure all interests are heard, and develop plans that meet the communities' needs.

Be sure to consult legal counsel before finalizing any policy, and remember that your policy must comply with all local, state and federal guidelines including the Americans with Disabilities Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Occupational Safety and Health Administration's (OSHA) guidelines, and the Affordable Care Act. Under the ADA, employers cannot discriminate based on a person's HIV status or perceived or assumed HIV status at any point, including in hiring, firing, promoting, and assigning work.

Employers can use our Sample Workplace HIV Policy as a template. And be sure to build in timelines to revisit the policy as members of your workforce and their needs shift over time.

☐ Consider requiring your vendors to have an HIV non-discrimination policy and programs to educate their workers.

Responsible business isn't just ensuring you have internal processes in place to avoid discrimination, but actively seeking to work with vendors and companies that align with your values. Inserting contractual requirements for vendors to adhere to HIV non-discrimination policies can help encourage more companies to follow your lead.

☐ Consider joining networks to further inclusion and non-discrimination in the workplace.

- U.S. Business Action to End HIV, the organization who created this resource, is bringing new expertise and momentum to an effort we once thought impossible – the end of the HIV epidemic in the U.S. By joining the coalition, your company will receive free communication tools, employer/worker resources, educational events, training/coaching and technical support for building local public-private partnerships in communities most affected by HIV.
- Business Responds to AIDS is a partnership between CDC and businesses of all sizes devoted to ending HIV-related discrimination in the workplace.
- Disability:IN is a network of corporations who are committed to improving the inclusion and advancement of people with disabilities in the workplace.
- The National LGBT Chamber of Commerce (NGLCC) is the largest advocacy organization dedicated to expanding economic opportunities and advancements for LGBTQ people and works with an extended network of local affiliate chambers across the country.

☐ Train managers to sensitively manage workers with HIV.

Even the best managers may have questions about how to ensure they are creating a safe and inclusive workplace for workers with HIV. Ensuring your managers are aware of your company's non-discrimination policies, and how best to support workers with HIV, will not only help you stay on the right side of the ADA and other laws, it will ensure your workplace is seen as somewhere people with HIV feel welcome. Click here to read more about how to provide a positive and productive work environment for employees with HIV.

Managing an Employee with HIV

When employees disclose that they have HIV, everyone—including management—has responsibilities to those staff. Those responsibilities start with leadership. Building a workplace environment that supports workers with HIV and other illnesses is crucial.

According to CDC, behaviors that are discriminatory and possibly illegal include:

- Staff shunning, refusing to work with or harassing workers with HIV.
- Negative behaviors, such as refusing to hire, failing to promote or firing a person who has HIV.
- Disclosing trusted personal health information regarding someone's HIV status to other co-workers or customers.

HIV is an emotional as well as physical disease. The stress and anxiety that can come with an HIV diagnosis can weigh on the mind and impact job performance. Managers can help foster a positive work environment by educating themselves about HIV and taking steps to reduce stigma and prevent discrimination. Managers should also know about your company's Workplace HIV Policy, including educational programs and support services to help employees access HIV testing, prevention, treatment and care.



Engaging and Educating Your Workforce

Educating your workforce about HIV can help workers with HIV get treatment and care, and can also make it easier for everyone to get tested and prevent HIV transmission. Open conversations about HIV also create a more inclusive working environment, helping reduce stigma and discrimination in the workplace.

Below are key messages you can use to communicate your company's values and share information about HIV, along with recommended actions to help educate and engage your team.

Key Messages

- Our workplace is committed to supporting workers affected by HIV.
- When we support people affected by HIV, we make it easier for everyone to lead healthy lives.
    - Current HIV prevention and treatment tools mean it's easier than ever to stay healthy and prevent the spread of the virus.
    - Rapid, non-intrusive HIV tests can be done without needles, and you can get results within 20 minutes or less. We will support you in accessing confidential HIV testing.
    - The use of PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis) can prevent people without HIV from contracting the disease through sex. It's available as a daily pill or a shot taken every eight weeks. Our health coverage can help.
    - A range of new antiretroviral treatments mean someone on HIV treatment today can live a long, healthy life. In addition to maintaining health, people who take their ARTs (antiretroviral therapy) as prescribed and who achieve and then maintain an undetectable viral load have effectively no risk of sexually transmitting the virus to an HIV-negative partner. Let us help you get treatment and stay in care.
- We are committed to an inclusive environment, free from discrimination and HIV stigma. It is everyone's responsibility to create a safe and inclusive workplace. Speak up if you encounter discrimination, and tell us how we can do better.





Recommended Actions

1. Make a commitment.

- **Tell your employees you care about HIV.** A letter from your company's CEO or other senior leader can help frame your organization's commitment to ending HIV and outline the steps you're taking to support workers. Knowing that your company cares and supports workers with HIV will help them feel less alone. You can adapt our sample CEO letter for your specific workplace.

- **Leverage existing campaigns.** There are a number of existing HIV education campaigns that you can use to raise awareness about HIV and educate your workers. Each of these campaigns have existing informational materials, downloadable videos and posters, and other materials to help with your outreach.

    - KFF's Greater Than HIV is a leading public information response that provides HIV testing resources in English and Spanish, including FAQs, free downloadable resources, and a video library with specific content about testing, treatment, disclosure and family support.

    - Let's Stop HIV Together is a campaign developed by CDC that educates people at risk of HIV about how to avoid contracting the disease.

    - "I am a Work of ART" is a national viral suppression campaign from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) that encourages people with HIV to seek care, stay in care, and achieve viral suppression by taking antiretroviral therapy (ART).

    - My Body My Health is a national campaign from the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) centered around reaching communities disproportionately impacted by HIV – Black and Latinx gay and bisexual men and transgender women of color. This campaign is also available in Spanish.







- Undetectable = Untransmittable is a campaign to decrease HIV stigma and promotes the fact that people living with HIV on effective treatments do not sexually transmit HIV.

- **Target communications around** National HIV Awareness Days. Here are some of the moments throughout the year to focus your outreach around specific messages and workforce populations.
  - February 7: **National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day** is a day devoted to spreading understanding of HIV among the Black population.
  - February 28: **HIV is Not a Crime Awareness Day** is an opportunity to spread awareness about outdated HIV-specific laws and end HIV criminalization.
  - March 10: **National Women & Girls HIV/AIDS Awareness Day** is a day to raise awareness about the impact of HIV on women and show support for women and girls with HIV.
  - June 27: **National HIV Testing Day** is a day to encourage people to get tested for HIV, know their status, and get linked to care and treatment.
  - September 27: **National Gay Men's HIV/AIDS Awareness Day** is an observance day to recognize the disproportionate impact of the epidemic on gay men.
  - October 15: **National Latinx AIDS Awareness Day** is an opportunity to address the disproportionate impact of HIV on Hispanic/Latinx communities, promote HIV testing, and stop HIV stigma.
  - December 1: **World AIDS Day** is a global movement to unite to end HIV and remember those lost to AIDS-related illnesses.



2. Engage leaders and champions across your organization.

- If your company offers an on-site health clinic for workers, consider identifying someone within the clinic to help lead your programming on HIV and answer sexual health-related questions from employees. Workers may feel more comfortable talking openly about HIV if there's someone in the health clinic who's identified as an ally.
- Consider making a leadership pledge to stand up against HIV stigma. Proudly declaring a zero-tolerance approach to discrimination doesn't just instill best practices among workers. It also signals to workers with HIV that they are welcome, safe and supported within your business.
- Consider how to build HIV into your company's commitments to diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging. Companies have made huge strides in making people from historically underrepresented communities feel more welcome. Workers with HIV are equally prone to feeling stigmatized. Committing publicly to embracing people with HIV as part of your workforce will promote an inclusive workplace.
- Consider engaging with local or national public health policy or service organizations for a company-wide awareness campaign (i.e. during World AIDS Day).



3. Engage Employee Resource Groups to support education and outreach.

Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) help build a sense of community and provide a safe space to discuss sensitive topics—which makes them valuable allies in HIV education to tackle stigma and discrimination.

- Incorporate HIV education into ERG programming. Use this time to connect members with reliable information on HIV testing, prevention and treatment.
- Identify a local public health official or HIV/AIDS service organization that can help provide culturally responsive information about HIV to your members.
- Help foster a safe, supportive work environment by discussing HIV stigma in the workplace and ways to encourage inclusion and acceptance.
- Openly engage in discussions on the myths, racism, and anti-LGBTQ+ attitudes that lead to HIV stigma and consider how to apply these learnings to your company's policies and practices. It's only by learning that certain myths are myths that you can change perceptions.



4. Engage employees directly to combat stigma.

In addition to employee education, consider the following actions to engage your workforce:

- Introduce employees to real people with HIV, including local leaders in the fight against HIV. Too often people with HIV are "othered" when they are just like everyone else.
- Introduce employee HIV training that includes role playing stigma scenarios. Only when you've walked in someone else's shoes can you see the impact of your actions.
- Encourage employees to take the CDC's Stop HIV Stigma pledge.
- Share the I Am a Work of ART Campaign by placing posters and other materials in common areas. Specially-designed programs are good, but immersion and osmosis are the best way to ensure any message cuts through.
- Connect employees with HIV prevention, testing, treatment or mental health resources from organizations based in their own communities. Change begins at home.



5. Partner with your local public health department and HIV/AIDS service organizations.

- Reach out to your local public health department to identify a speaker who can participate in an employee town hall. Employees will likely have questions, and an informed expert can help deliver facts and root out myths and misconceptions.
- Collaborate with local community-based organizations to host HIV education events that discuss stigma. Local organizations are often willing partners to help stop discrimination.
- Consider encouraging employees to volunteer with their local health department, HIV/AIDS service organizations or other community groups hosting HIV testing events, and report back on their experiences. It's a great way to normalize conversations about HIV and highlight ways everyone can get involved.
- Collaborate with your Corporate Social Responsibility teams on proposals to engage affected communities outside of the workplace because the concerns people with HIV have don't stop at the end of the work day.

Frequently Asked Questions

Here's a list of common questions you might receive as an employer or HR leader, along with answers to help you respond.

Why is our company taking a stand to help end HIV?

More than 1.2 million people live with HIV in the U.S. and there are more than 35,000 new infections each year. You likely know someone with HIV.

We're taking a stand to support people affected by HIV, while also working to ensure that HIV becomes a thing of the past. New drugs and treatments mean we're winning the battle against HIV, and we think it's important to speak loudly about that.

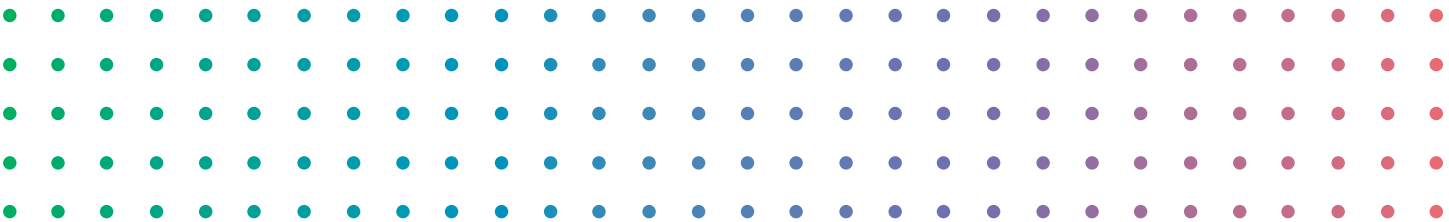
What are my rights as an employee with HIV?

You have the right to remain in the workforce to the fullest extent possible, as well as a right to equal employment opportunities. Laws dictate how employers design workplace programs for employees with HIV.

You are protected from discrimination in employment by law under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). This law stops discrimination against qualified individuals with disabilities across areas like:

- Job application procedures
- Hiring and firing
- Advancement
- Compensation
- Job training

The ADA applies to employers with 15 or more employees for each working day in each of 20 or more calendar weeks. Read more from the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission about HIV and employment discrimination.



How will you support me at work?

Beyond our legal requirements, our organization wants to ensure everyone, regardless of their HIV status, feels welcome and supported. That's why we offer paid time off to get tested and attend medical appointments for prevention and treatment, as well as insurance coverage that covers your entire HIV treatment and prevention, not just part of it. We also offer manager training to help leaders in our organization support workers affected by HIV, and we offer employee education programs to make sure everyone in our organization has the latest information and facts about the disease. Of course, we always want to know how to do better, so please tell us if you encounter any issues, or have suggestions on how we can better support you.

Should I disclose my HIV status at work?

In most cases, your employer will not know your HIV status unless you tell them. But your employer does have a right to ask if you have any health conditions that would affect your ability to do your job or pose a serious risk to others. An employer is also allowed to ask medical questions when a worker with a disability asks for reasonable accommodation or to establish eligibility for benefits under other laws, such as the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA).

You do not have to tell your employer, but you may want to share your status in case you need to take extended leave or alter your schedule. By law, your disclosure is confidential.



Do I get to know if a co-worker I work with has HIV?

As a general rule, an employee's health status, including their HIV status, is considered private information and is protected under various privacy laws. Therefore, your employer is not allowed to disclose an employee's HIV status without their explicit consent. Similarly, co-workers do not have a right to know about their colleague's health status, including HIV.

I've just learned that a co-worker has HIV. What should I do?

When you learn that a coworker has HIV, you may be surprised, and unsure of what to do. Although this may be an initial reaction, CDC reminds us that the best advice is to maintain professionalism and respect. There are many ways to respond when learning a coworker has HIV:

- Be compassionate. Try to empathize with the difficult circumstances and uncertainties that your coworker is experiencing. Be there to listen and help if needed.
- Be supportive. Be the workplace friend and coworker you have always been. Include your coworker in the same work and social activities as always, whenever possible. Extend your support just as you would to other coworkers.
- Protect the right to privacy and confidentiality. If your coworker tells you that they have HIV, it is illegal for you to tell others without their permission.
- If you hear a rumor that a coworker has HIV, don't repeat it. Even if a person has told others that they have HIV, don't tell your other coworkers. Allow your coworker the right to tell others.
- Once a coworker has told you that they have HIV, you may be curious and want to know more. First, ask if they want to talk about it. Don't pressure your coworker with questions. Let your coworker decide how much or how little they want to share.
- Consider reflective listening. Offering a supportive ear or care is often all that's desired in those moments. Know that if someone is telling you their status, it's because they respect you. Give them reasons to keep that trust.

Am I at risk for getting HIV at work?

The risk of HIV transmission in most workplace settings is extremely low. HIV is not transmitted through casual contact, such as sharing office space, using the same restroom or working in close proximity to someone who is HIV-positive. HIV is primarily transmitted through sexual contact, sharing needles or syringes or contact with infected blood or bodily fluids.



Join The Movement

The private sector is bringing new expertise and momentum to an effort we once thought impossible – the end of the HIV epidemic in the U.S.

No single company can do this alone. It's going to take leaders across industries to help get us there. We believe a coalition of companies working together can change the trajectory of HIV in the U.S. by leveraging their resources and influence.

JOIN U.S. BUSINESS ACTION TO END HIV

Becoming a member of this coalition means joining a community committed to ending our domestic HIV epidemic and making meaningful contributions to address health equity. Together, we'll learn from one another and innovate together, across industries, to achieve the greatest impact.

Learn more: healthaction.org/endhiv

U.S. BUSINESS ACTION TO
END HIV
A HEALTH ACTION ALLIANCE INITIATIVE



Additional Resources

GENERAL INFORMATION ON HIV PREVENTION, TESTING, SYMPTOMS, AND TREATMENT

- HIV.gov
- Let's Stop HIV Together Campaign (CDC)
- HIV Consumer Info Sheets (CDC)
- Greater Than HIV Campaign (KFF)

HIV IN THE U.S.

- HIV Statistics Overview (CDC)
- United States HIV Map (AIDSVu)

HIV TESTING AND PREVENTION

- Testing Locator (CDC)
- Service Locator (Greater Than HIV)
- PrEP Locator (National Prevention Information Network)
- HIV Risk Reduction Tool (CDC)

RESOURCES FOR PEOPLE WITH HIV

- State HIV/AIDS hotlines
- HIV Service Locators (CDC)
- Resources for People with HIV (CDC)
- Clinical Info (HIV.gov)
- Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program
- HUD: HOPWA (Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS)
- The AIDS Healthcare Foundation
- Provider Directory (American Academy of HIV Medicine)
- Undetectable HIV (National Institutes of Health)
- I Am a Work of ART Campaign (HIV.gov)

COMBATING HIV STIGMA

- Let's Stop HIV Together (CDC)
- Stigma Scenarios (CDC)
- Stop HIV Stigma Pledge (CDC)
- The Elton John AIDS Foundation
- Fact sheet on global HIV stigma (UNAIDS)
- Let's Talk About HIV Campaign (Greater Than HIV)
- Positive Spin Campaign (HIV.gov)

HIV EVENTS AND AWARENESS DAYS

- Events List (HIV.gov)
- World AIDS Day

HIV DISCRIMINATION IN THE WORKPLACE

- What You Should Know: HIV/AIDS & Employment Discrimination (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission)
- Evidence for Eliminating HIV-related Stigma and Discrimination (UNAIDS)
- Guide for Protecting the Rights of Persons Living with HIV (U.S. Department of Justice)
- HIV & AIDS and Employment Discrimination (Human Rights Campaign)
- The Affordable Care Act and HIV/AIDS (HIV.gov)

JOB ACCOMMODATIONS FOR PEOPLE WITH HIV

- Helping Patients with HIV Infection Who Need Accommodations at Work (EEOC)
- DisabilityIN
- Guide to Reasonable HIV Accommodations in the Workplace (Job Accommodation Network)

HOW BUSINESSES CAN RESPOND TO HIV

- U.S. Business Action to End HIV (Health Action Alliance)
- Business Responds to AIDS Partnership (CDC)
- HIV/AIDS information (U.S. Department of Labor)
- National HIV/AIDS Strategy for the United States 2022-2025 (White House)

COMMUNITY BASED SUPPORT

- ASO/CBO National Directory (HealthHIV)

DISCLAIMER: This toolkit is not intended to be, and should not be construed as, legal, business, medical, scientific or any other advice for any particular situation. The content included herein is provided for informational purposes only and may not reflect the most current developments as the subject matter is extremely fluid. This toolkit contains links to third-party websites. Such links are only for the convenience of the reader, user or browser; the Health Action Alliance does not recommend or endorse the contents of third-party sites.

Readers of this toolkit should contact their attorney to obtain advice with respect to any particular legal matter. No reader, user, or browser of this material should act or refrain from acting on the basis of information in this toolkit without first seeking legal advice from counsel in the relevant jurisdiction. Only your individual attorney can provide assurances that the information contained herein – and your interpretation of it – is applicable or appropriate to your particular situation.

Financial support for the development of this resource was provided by Gilead Sciences and ViiV Healthcare. The Health Action Alliance is solely responsible for the content of this toolkit and maintains full editorial control of its resources. For more information about how we work with corporate sponsors, please refer to our Corporate Sponsorship Policy.