

## AIDS POLICY\*

### \*Guidelines for La Salle University's Response to AIDS

AIDS Policy Brochures can be found in the Student Health Center, Student Counseling Center, Dean of Students' office, Connelly Library, Department of Human Resources, and on the La Salle University Web site.



## INTRODUCTION

In response to the complex medical, educational, and procedural issues raised by the Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS), a Task Force on AIDS was convened by the former Vice President for Student Affairs in January, 1988. The committee was charged with developing guidelines to assist the University community in dealing effectively with the AIDS crisis. The task force consisted of representatives from the Student Health Center, the former Resident Life Office, and the Student Counseling Center, as well as the faculty and student body. Important in the task force's deliberations and decisions were the commitments to:

- acquire the most current available information for developing guidelines;
- apply existing University policies and federal and state laws to any case of AIDS;
- develop effective systems for the education and protection of all University students and personnel; and,
- demonstrate sensitivity and informed direction in dealing with the many human relations concerns which may arise in response to efforts to increase awareness and to provide preventive education.

This report, updated in 2006, is based on recommendations and medical information obtained from the American College Health Association (ACHA) and the Center for Disease Control (CDC).

## EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

The primary response of La Salle University to the epidemic of Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) infection must be educational. The American College Health Association recommends that the organization and implementation of effective educational programs about AIDS and HIV infection be an activity of the highest priority for all institutions of higher learning. In designing the format and content of educational programs, it is important to recognize and address the rich diversity of people in the campus community and to provide opportunities for effective learning by people of any age, ability, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or religious commitment.

Because there is neither a vaccine to prevent HIV infection nor curative therapy for persons infected with HIV, the most

pressing need for institutions is to implement programs which increase awareness and provide education to prevent further spread of the virus. Comprehensive educational programs must address undergraduate and graduate students and should reach not only residential students, but also commuters and non-traditional students. Furthermore, La Salle should offer similar educational opportunities for all University personnel.

The epidemic of HIV infection also raises issues of liability. The most effective means of addressing these issues at present is to educate students and employees about HIV infection and AIDS and to take such reasonable precautions as suggested herein.

Educational programs also are of paramount importance in the institution's responsibility to protect the student body and staff from the transmission of HIV. As medical evidence consistently indicates that no actual safety risks are created in the usual workplace or academic setting, La Salle University can best render enrollment or employment safe and healthful through effective education and training programs.

The programs of education by La Salle University should emphasize the following:

1. Abstinence from sexual activity as well as avoidance of intravenous drug use are the surest ways to prevent the spread of HIV infection.
2. Among people who choose to be sexually active, the consistent and conscientious use of latex condoms reduces the chance of transmission of HIV through sexual intercourse.
3. Intoxication by alcohol or other drugs has been shown to lower inhibitions and cloud judgment in making decisions about sexual risk-taking and sharing needles during illicit drug use. This leaves persons open to exposure to the HIV virus.
4. Even though they may not have symptoms, persons with HIV infection may transmit the virus to others through intimate sexual contact or exposure to blood.
5. The sharing of needles used in the injection of illicit drugs is extremely high-risk behavior for transmitting the HIV virus. Shared needles used to inject steroids may transmit HIV as well.
6. Persons with documented HIV infection should not donate blood plasma, sperm, or other body organs or tissues.
7. People with HIV infection pose no risk of transmitting the virus to others through ordinary, casual interpersonal contact.
8. It is possible that certain interventions and therapies may help limit the consequences of HIV infection among people already infected. People who know they have been infected may thus benefit from regular medical follow-up and immunologic evaluation.

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## GENERAL GUIDELINES

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In order to provide the maximum support to the person with AIDS and protection for the welfare of the La Salle University community, a case-by-case approach will be used. The authority for case considerations rests with the President, Provost, Dean of Students, Associate Dean of Students for Counseling and Health Services, and the Director of the Student Health Center in consultation with the Health Advisory Committee or the Affirmative Action Officer.

La Salle University's Health Advisory Committee will have the following responsibilities regarding AIDS:

1. **Develop and monitor educational programs intended to increase awareness of AIDS and HIV infection within the University community and to prevent the transmission of AIDS.**
2. **Serve in a consultative capacity when requested regarding individual cases of HIV infection in light of stated guidelines, various federal, state, and local regulations, and other institutional policies regarding employment and student status. In cases involving students, recommendations will be made to the Dean of Students. For faculty and staff, recommendations will be made to the Provost or the Affirmative Action Officer. The confidentiality and anonymity of affected person(s) is an absolute priority and such discussions are to be conducted without knowledge of individual names.**
3. **Serve in an advisory capacity to University administrators regarding the institutional response to AIDS.**
4. **Review and update the University's AIDS guidelines and protocols by considering changes in the available knowledge regarding AIDS, in national and state policies, and in University policies.**

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## SPECIFIC GUIDELINES

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### 1. Admission and Employment

Consideration of the existence of AIDS or a positive HIV test will not be part of the initial decision for admission or employment.

### 2. Compliance with Applicable Anti-Discrimination Laws

It is clear that a person with AIDS or HIV infection itself (possibly, those with other manifestations of HIV infection) will be considered as having a disability; in making decisions, University officers are advised to guarantee the legal rights of these individuals under various federal, state, and local regulations.

### 3. Attendance

Students who have HIV infection, whether they are symptomatic or not, will be allowed regular classroom attendance in an unrestricted manner as long as they are physically and mentally able to attend class.

### 4. Access to Facilities

The access of students or staff with HIV infections to student unions, theaters, restaurants, snack bars, gymnasiums, swimming pools, saunas, recreational facilities, or other common areas should not be restricted.

### 5. Residential Housing

The best medical information currently available does not support the existence of a risk to those sharing housing with or around infected persons since HIV is not transmitted by any form of casual or household contact. There is no general justification for excluding infected persons from University housing to protect others from casual transmission.

The individual evaluation of each case should dictate the response by the University and the Community Development staff. The following options to protect healthy individuals, those with AIDS or a positive test for HIV, and the University should be enacted:

A. **Early Identification, Medical Care, and Education:** Encourage individuals who are HIV infected to inform the Student Health Center about their condition so arrangements can be made for competent and frequent medical follow-up and detailed education regarding the

transmission of the virus and the steps necessary to prevent transmission.

B. **Policies and Procedures:** All policies and procedures must conform with applicable federal, state, and local regulations.

C. **Confidentiality:** It must be protected. Only those University officials providing direct medical or psychological services to an affected person need to know any information concerning the individual situation.

D. **Public Relations:** A single individual will be the designated respondent to public inquiries. Policy should be stated forthrightly and clearly, but he or she should refuse to provide specific information about individuals or residence halls.

### 6. Medical Care

A. Students are encouraged to inform the Student Health Center if they are HIV infected to enable the University to provide appropriate medical care, support, counsel, and education. As with other medical information, this information will be handled confidentially subject to the procedures and policies in effect.

B. The Student Health Center will make referrals to appropriate sources for medical, psychological, and related support services for people with HIV infection and those concerned about AIDS. The Counseling Center and University Ministry and Service also will provide counseling or referral to those infected with HIV and/or those concerned with AIDS.

C. Special precautions to protect the health of immunologically compromised individuals will be considered during periods of prevalence of such contagious diseases as measles and chicken pox.

D. Those who are known to be immunologically compromised will be excused from institutional requirements for certain vaccinations, especially measles and rubella vaccines since these vaccinations may lead to serious consequences in those with an altered immune system.

### 7. HIV Antibody Testing

The Student Health Center staff will be familiar with sources of testing for HIV antibodies and will respond to those requesting such testing. Referrals will be made only to testing sites that are anonymous and confidential, confirm positive results, and provide pre- and post-testing counseling.

### 8. Confidentiality

The standards of confidentiality at La Salle University regarding people known or suspected to have HIV infection will be those developed by the American College Health Association's *Guidelines for a College Health Program* (Sixth Edition, 1999).

In general, it is recommended that no specific or detailed information concerning complaints or diagnosis be provided to faculty, administrators, or even parents, without the express written consent of the patient. In addition, no information concerning a patient will be given to any person, group, agency, insurer, employer, or institution without the prior written consent of the patient. This position with respect to records is supported by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974. Confidential medical information is protected by statutes and any unauthorized disclosure of it may create legal liability. The University, however, is obligated to conform to public health reporting requirements mandated by law.

### 9. Safety Precautions

The University has adopted the OSHA Bloodborne Pathogens guidelines for handling blood and body fluids of all persons, not just those known previously to have HIV infection. These universal precautions are necessary because many people with HIV infection are not identified in advance. The same procedure should be followed for handling the blood or body fluids of any person.

Surfaces contaminated by blood or other body fluids should be disinfected with commercial disinfectant solutions or with household bleach, freshly diluted in a 1:10 solution.

Laboratory courses requiring exposure to blood obtained by a finger prick for typing and examination must use disposable equipment. No lancets or other blood-letting devices should be reused or shared. Students in these laboratories should examine their own blood only. Faculty in these laboratories should develop and supervise specific protocols for rapid disposal of used needles and lancets.

### 10. Harassment

As a result of the fear, anxiety, and anger that many people feel in reactions to AIDS, some students or employees who are known to be or suspected of being infected with HIV may be subjected to emotional and/or physical abuse. Consistent with La Salle University's respect for the dignity of the individual, all such occurrences will be condemned as intolerable and be responded to quickly and effectively.