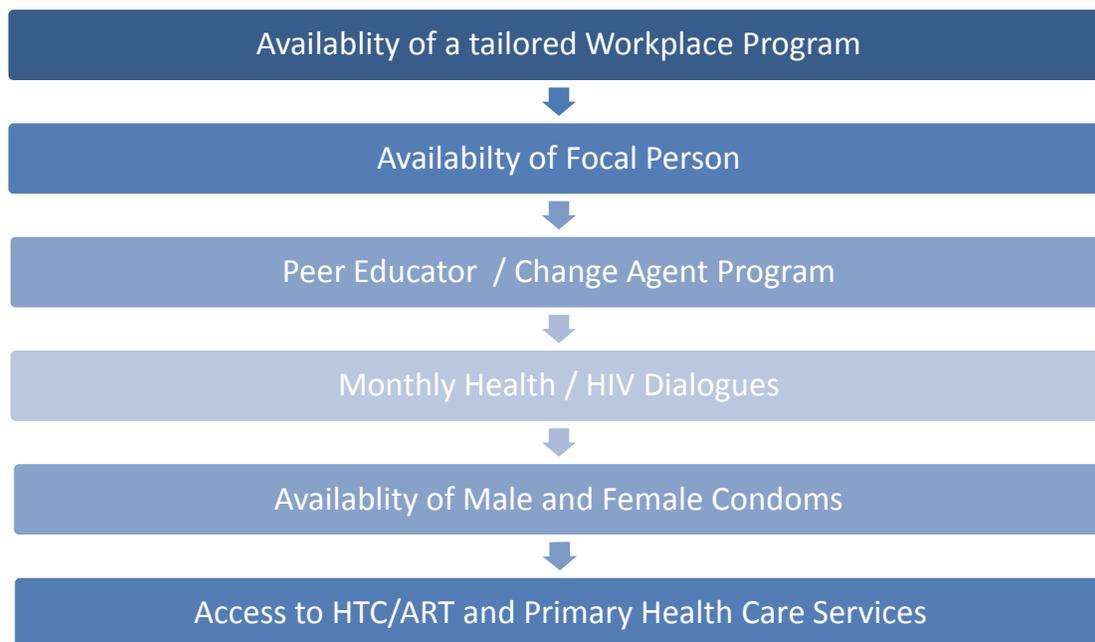


The SWABCHA Minimum Workplace Package

The SWABCHA Minimum Workplace Package (below) outlines the components of an optimal workplace wellness program.



What does each component entail? And why is it important?

Read on to find out the answers to these questions as we unpack the Minimum Workplace Package

Availability of a tailored Workplace Program

A Workplace Wellness Policy is a plan of action and a statement of ideas adopted by the business that defines the position and practise for preventing the transmission of HIV-TB; and managing workers who are infected and affected by HIV, AIDS and/or TB.

Since it's a wellness policy, not only a HIV/AIDS and TB policy the document also guides a company to address additional health and social issues that affect employee's wellness in the place of work (e.g. Stress, Non Communicable Diseases, Nutrition & Substance Abuse to name only a few).

A Policy must also outline how the business is working to create an environment that promotes overall health and reduces stigma surrounding illnesses.

When developing a Policy, international and national laws, policies and agreements must always be considered, including but not limited to:

- Employment Act of 1930 as amended
- Workmen's compensation Act of 1983
- Industrial relations Act of 2000
- Occupational Health & Safety Act of 2001
- The Multi-Sectoral HIV-AIDS Policy 2006
- SWASA Standards on HIV-AIDS 2010
- And whatsoever new legislation & policies developed for the workplace

To achieve its intention, a Policy must have these components; Management Strategies; two pillars of focus Prevention and Care, Treatment and Support: and an Outreach (or external) programme.

There are steps to follow when establishing a policy:

- 1) Establish a multidisciplinary task team or a Focal Person depending on the size of the business, who are provided with training/capacity building on the process if required
- 2) Draft the Policy, calling on technical inputs as necessary, while gathering information to inform Policy allowing for the identification of the Policy goal, objectives, principles and key responses
- 3) Present the Policy to all constituencies, i.e. management and a cross section of staff to allow for consultation, with all issues addressed in the redraft
- 4) Finalise the Policy with development of the implementation strategy and monitoring and evaluation framework
- 5) Finally implement the Policy beginning with a launch, where the Policy is explained to all employees as this encourages utilisation of program services.

Note:

For a Policy to remain effective it must receive ongoing attention, with the performance indicators tracked and reported on regularly.

In addition the Policy must be reviewed periodically to ensure it meets the demands of the ever-changing workplace environment.

Availability of Focal Person

A program Focal Person plays a crucial role in ensuring the success of workplace wellness initiatives; in fact the program is only as effective as its coordinator is passionate.

Responsibilities of the Focal Person include:

- 1) Representing employees through developing a needs-based and context specific program, having considered the concerns and requirements of the employees themselves
- 2) Coordinating and overseeing the implementation of program activities following the development of the program
- 3) Undertaking monitoring and evaluation of the progress and effectiveness of activities conducted.
- 4) Internal reporting of Monitoring and Evaluation findings to create institutional memory and encourage continuation of the program
- 5) Report all HIV related activities on a National level through the use of the SHAPMoS reporting tool developed by NERCHA, which provides the statistics necessary for HIV programming and decision-making at country level.

Peer Educator / Change Agent Program

A Peer Educator/Change Agent (PE/CA) Program is an essential component of any effective workplace wellness program, as it is proven effective way to reach employees with health messages needed to influence positive behavior change.

PE/CA programs work because individuals receive a lot of information from their peers and with the people now delivering the information being culturally similar to the target audience, the language and messages used are easy to understand and relevant, hence they are taken in.

A program involves nominated employees receiving special training empowering them to become Change Agents and Educators in their workplace.

Peer Educators /Change Agents are:

- The heart of the Social Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC) approach to health promotion at the workplace
- Guarantors of local ownership of the project through establishing the identity of the local project, its core values and its vision for change
- Promoters of this identity using every channel of communication at their disposal including but not limited to face-to-face dialogue, drama and song, radio, murals and billboards, sports and cultural events etc

- A constant presence at the workplace and in the community being: a source of inspiration; accurate and appropriate information; a link to services and resources
- Through empowerment, support and acknowledgment, CA/PE are leaders and role models to their peers
- Promoters and supporters of social cohesion through their actions, energy, skills and commitment

Responsibilities once trained for the Peer Educator/Change Agent include:

- Freely accepts the role of representing her/his peers within the workplace
- Has the primary role of engaging in dialogue with her/his peers in line with the communication programme and plan, and aimed at promoting social change
- Enables peers voices to be heard (through dialogue with, and feedback)
- Is a voice of the program in the workplace/community (through face to face communication)
- Participates regularly and systematically in the structures and processes of the program (e.g. Dialogue with the program coordinators and peers, monthly update meetings and actions to address issues raised)
- Participates in the development and projection of the program's identity
- Participates fully in the development of the communication programme, including:
 - identifying barriers to change and opportunities for development and communication
 - developing messages for communication
 - designing, producing and delivering tools and activities for communication
- Helps enable the program to connect peers to resources and services needed
- Participates in gathering evidence for monitoring, evaluation and reporting.

To be successful in the role, in addition to the skills and knowledge developed in the training PE/CA must possess certain qualities/characteristics including: Empathy, Servitude, Leadership, Resourcefulness, Humility and Respect.

As is seen the list of qualities required is extensive, and the role intensive, therefore it is recommended that in selecting employees to become PE/CA there should be a combination of: management identifying employees in possession of these qualities; fellow staff should be consulted on who they believe to be suitable for the role; a call for volunteers to become PE/CA from the workgroup.

It is suggested that there be a ratio of one PE/CA for every fifty employees in a workplace.

The Family Health International (FHI) a Global Health and Development Organization lists additional benefits of PE/CA program as being:

- Through allowing direct involvement of a target audience in programming, effectiveness is increased
- The reach of a program is often seen to extend further than the peer group to the family and communities
- Peer Educator Programs are found to be extremely cost effective as they utilize human resources already available within an organization.

Monthly Health / HIV Dialogues

Fundamental in Workplace Wellness Programming, HIV/AIDS/Health Dialogues provide information on risk awareness to build a positive platform for health-related decision-making, in addition to facilitating dialogue that makes participants active in the behavior change process.

Furthermore discussions build a sense of ownership and responsibility regarding a healthy lifestyle and HIV prevention, as the combination of information dissemination and experience sharing enables participants to reflect on the social and health issues affecting our society today and explore the root of adverse behaviours and generate ideas on alternative behavior.

In addition to supporting and encouraging positive health behaviours, dialogues aid in creating a non-discriminatory work environment by addressing stigmatising beliefs and myths.

SWABCHA recommends monthly workplace forums that promote open discussions not only about HIV/AIDS but other pertinent health and social issues of concern among employees. Requesting Employee suggestions for health topics to dialogue is great way to sense need of certain information and which areas are most relevant for your work group. Note that inviting experts in various fields to facilitate the discussions will heighten the effectiveness of these health forums.

See SWABCHA Resource Centre for Fact Sheets that may be used to inform discussions.

Availability of Male and Female Condoms

Male and Female condoms are to be readily available for all employees, as easy (yet discreet) access reduces the financial, logistical and social barriers that may deter sexually active individuals from using condoms.

To ensure condom levels remain high at the distribution points monitoring systems must be put in place that feed information into the Focal Person or HIV Steering Committee.

Furthermore demonstration/education sessions on correct condom use need to be facilitated.

A study by John Stover, who is the founder and president of Futures Institute South Africa, claims that for every 500 Condoms distributed, at least one new infection was averted

Indicating that Condoms are highly effective in protecting individuals against contracting HIV and sexually transmitted infections (STI's)

Access to HTC/ART and Primary Health Care

HIV Screening in the workplace is an entry point to HIV Prevention among employees as it is evidenced that once people know their HIV status and receive appropriate counseling, they are more empowered to make the behavioural changes necessary to keep themselves safe or lessen the risk of transmitting the virus to their partners. HTC is also a gateway to treatment for those employees who were before unaware that they were HIV Positive.

As with HTC, Primary Health Screening in the workplace (blood pressure, cholesterol level, body mass index, TB screening etc.) and the subsequent dissemination of relevant information after the assessment is an intervention that works towards preventing chronic diseases in employees. Whilst also allowing those most in need of treatment, to recognize that they must seek it.

Additionally access to HTC and Primary Health Care Services in the workplace is a strategy for reduction of stigma and discrimination frequently associated with HIV and other diseases (Modes of Transmission Analysis NERCHA, 2009).

Employers can maintain the healthy and productive status of employees living with HIV and those suffering from other diseases by offering treatment and support services – either in house or partnering with health care service providers (private or public). When considering treatment options to include in package for HIV/AIDS, in addition to ART's the service must also cover opportunistic infections, TB, other STI's, counseling, home based and palliative care.

Where a company is unable to provide treatment services, employers must at the very minimum understand employee needs to visit medical institutions and allow them the time to do so.

Find more information on setting up a Workplace Wellness Program from these sites:

ILO: Recommendations concerning HIV/AIDS and the World of Work:
http://www.ilo.org/aids/WCMS_142706/lang--en/index.htm

Centre for Disease Control and Prevention: Healthy Choices Toolkits
<http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpao/hwi/toolkits/healthychoices.htm>

SME Toolkit South Africa: <http://southafrica.smetoolkit.org/sa/en/category/4681/HIV-AIDS>

World Economic Forum: <http://www.weforum.org/>

Global Business Coalition on Health: <http://www.gbchealth.org>