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**GUIDELINES FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A WORKPLACE
POLICY AND PROGRAM ON HEPATITIS B**

Hepatitis B continues to be a major public health concern in the Philippines. Because it is transmitted through blood and body fluids, Hepatitis B is not spread through usual workplace activities. The job of most workers does not confer a risk for transmission of Hepatitis B. However, there are certain occupations which pose a higher risk of transmission of Hepatitis B because it involves exposure to potentially contaminated blood and body fluids. These would include occupations in the healthcare setting and other workers whose occupation involves the potential for exchange of bodily fluids.

Currently, many job applicants who are Hepatitis B surface antigen (HBsAg) positive are declared unfit to work without appropriate medical evaluation and counseling. These individuals are otherwise healthy and can be gainfully employed. Because the workplace is part of the larger community of Filipinos fighting the Hepatitis B epidemic, strategies need to be implemented to reduce the risk of transmission of Hepatitis B in the workplace and eliminate discrimination against Hepatitis B positive workers.

I. COVERAGE

The guideline shall apply to all workplaces in the private sector including their supply chain.

II. FORMULATION OF WORKPLACE POLICY AND PROGRAM

A. It is mandatory for all private workplaces to have a policy on Hepatitis B and to implement a workplace program.

B. The Hepatitis B workplace policy and program may be separate from or integrated into existing occupational safety and health policy and program of the establishment, such as the Family Welfare Program, Labor Management Cooperation Program or other related programs.

C. The policy should be rights-based, incorporating human rights standards and principles. D. There shall be collaborative efforts from management and worker representatives in the development and implementation of the policy and program.

E. In organized workplaces, the policy and program shall be included as provisions of the Collective Bargaining Agreements.

F. The DOLE in coordination with DOH and/or partners, shall assist the workplace in the formulation and implementation of Hepatitis B Workplace Policy and Program.

III. COMPONENTS OF THE HEPATITIS B WORKPLACE POLICY AND PROGRAM

The workplace policy and program on Hepatitis B shall cover all workers regardless of their employment status and shall include among others, the following:

A. Advocacy, Information, Education and Training

1. All workers shall be provided with basic information and education on Hepatitis B. Employers shall be responsible for providing appropriate, accurate and updated information. Standardized basic information package shall be developed by DOLE and its partners.

Topics for information and education activities shall include:

- a. Magnitude of Hepatitis B Epidemic
 - i. Hepatitis B as a disease
 - ii. Transmission
 - iii. Diagnosis
 - iv. Treatment and Referral
- b. Prevention of Hepatitis B infection
- c. Information on basic human rights and rights of workers
- d. Impact of illness on individual, family, community and workplace
- e. Workplace policy and program on Hepatitis B
- f. Salient features of national laws and policies related to Hepatitis B and blood-borne pathogens

2. Employers shall extend advocacy, information, education and training activities to their contractors and supply chain, workers' families, the community and other establishments, as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and to strengthen multi-sectoral partnerships in the prevention and control of Hepatitis B.

B. Preventive Strategies

Prevention of Hepatitis B infection in the workplace shall be achieved through the implementation of the following strategies:

- 1. All establishments are encouraged to provide Hepatitis B immunization for all its workers.

For those occupations with a conceivable risk of Hepatitis B transmission in the workplace such as health care workers and other workers whose occupation involves the potential for exchange of bodily fluids, Hepatitis B vaccination is required.

2. Measures to improve working conditions, such as adequate hygiene facilities, containment and proper disposal of infectious and potentially contaminated materials shall be provided.

3. Personal Protective Equipment shall be made available for all workers in high risk occupations at all times.

4. Workers should be given training and information on adherence to standard or universal precautions in the workplace.

All health care-related establishments and establishments whose workers are exposed to potentially contaminated blood or body fluid while in the workplace shall adhere to protocols developed or endorsed by the DOH.

C. Social Policy

1. Non-discriminatory Policy and Practices

a. There shall be no discrimination of any form against workers on the basis of their Hepatitis B status consistent with international agreements on non-discrimination ratified by the Philippines (ILO C111). Workers shall not be discriminated against, from pre to post-employment, including hiring, promotion or assignment, because of their Hepatitis B status.

b. Individuals found to be Hepatitis B positive shall not be declared unfit to work without appropriate medical evaluation and counseling.

c. Workers shall not be terminated on the basis of the actual, perceived or suspected Hepatitis B status.

d. Workplace management of sick employees shall not differ from that of any other illness. Persons with Hepatitis B-related illnesses should be able to work for as long as medically fit.

2. Confidentiality

Job applicants and workers shall not be compelled to disclose their Hepatitis B status and other related medical information. Co-workers shall not be obliged to reveal any personal information about fellow workers. Access to personal data relating to a worker's Hepatitis B status shall be bound by the rules of confidentiality and shall be strictly limited to medical personnel or if legally required.

3. Work Accommodation and Arrangement

a. Employers shall take measures to reasonably accommodate workers who are Hepatitis B positive or with Hepatitis B - related illnesses.

b. Through agreements made between management and workers'