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AIDS Policies For Schools, Day-Care, And Foster-Care

The Department of Health and Social Services has adopted the following official policies regarding AIDS in schools, day-care, and foster-care. These policies have been officially endorsed by the Anchorage Medical Society, Alaska Public Health Association, Department of Health and Human Services of the Municipality of Anchorage, Medical Advisory Committee of the Anchorage School District, and the AIDS Task Force appointed by John Pugh, Commissioner of the Department of Health and Social Services. Soon to be released are policies pertaining to AIDS for universities; for EMS personnel, fireman, and policemen; and general policies related to AIDS at the worksite.

Background

Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) is caused by infection with a virus known as human T-cell lymphotropic virus or HTLV-III. There is a wide spectrum of HTLV-III infections, ranging from infection in the absence of signs and symptoms at one end to infection with confirmed AIDS and a high degree of mortality at the other end.

Groups Included

All children known to be infected with HTLV-III.

- children with AIDS,
- children with illness due to HTLV-III infection but who do not meet the AIDS case definition,
- children with no symptoms but who have laboratory evidence of HTLV-III infection.

Scope of Problem (As of August 20, 1985)

- Only 183 of 12,599 reported cases of AIDS in the United States were among children under 18 years of age.
- Only 165 reported cases are in children under 12 years of age.
- Of the 165 cases among children under 12 years of age, 113 have died.
- In the United States, only 15 children with AIDS were not in a high risk group or had incomplete epidemiologic investigations.
- Of the 183 children with AIDS, 168 occurred among children whose parent had AIDS or was a member of a group at increased risk of acquiring HTLV-III infection; or who had received blood or blood products.

Risk of Transmission

- None of the identified cases of HTLV-III infection in the United States are known to have been transmitted in the school, day-care, or foster care setting, or through casual person-to-person contact.
- Other than sexual partners of HTLV-III infected patients and infants born to infected mothers, none of the family members of 12,599 AIDS patients have been reported to have AIDS.
- Based on current evidence, casual person-to-person contact as would occur among school children appears to pose no risk.

Findings

All medical evidence to date finds that there is no risk of transmission of AIDS virus in the kinds of contacts school children and personnel have under normal circumstances.

Recommendations

1. AIDS infected school-aged children should be allowed to attend school and after-school day-care and to be placed in a foster home in an unrestricted setting.
2. AIDS infected preschool-aged children and some neurologically handicapped children who lack control of their body secretions or who display behavior, such as biting, and those who have uncoverable oozing lesions should be placed in a more restricted environment until more is known about transmission in these settings. These decisions are best made using a team approach including the child's physician, public health personnel, the child's parent or guardian, and personnel associated with the proposed care or educational setting.
3. Routine screening for AIDS virus infection for school entry, day-care, or foster-care is not warranted.