



Bulletin No. 11

June 3, 1988

## Alaska Employers Respond to AIDS Survey

Surveys were enclosed in packets of informational materials mailed to 821 Alaska State Chamber of Commerce members in April 1988, using the Chambers mailing list. One hundred fifty (unduplicated) employers responded. Sizes of responding firms ranged from 0 full-time to 9000 employees in 24 cities around the state.

Questions and responses were as follows:

1. Does your firm now have a policy on AIDS or one which would cover AIDS and related illnesses? If not, are you in the process of developing a policy?

**17.3% (26) of employers said they had such a policy in place. Of those who said they did not, 9.7% (12) indicated they were developing a policy.**

2. Are you fully self-insured? Self-insured with stop-loss coverage?

**19.3% (29) of employers were fully self-insured, and an additional 25.3% (38) were self-insured with stop-loss coverage.**

3. Has your insurance company initiated or indicated any changes in your policies due to AIDS?

**Only one employer (0.8% of firms not fully self-insured) indicated its insurance policies had changed due to AIDS.**

4. Have you re-evaluated your health, disability, or life insurance benefits or altered your safety procedures or other programs due to potential impacts of AIDS?

**5.3% (8) of employers had made procedure or program changes due to AIDS.**

5. Has your firm experienced any work disruption or other incidents related to AIDS?

**3.3% (5) of employers had experienced incidents related to AIDS.**

6. Have you provided any information or education to your employees about AIDS? If yes, to whom?

**21.3% (32) of employers had provided employees with AIDS information. Of these, 87.1% (27) had provided this information to all employees.**

The 150 Alaska employers who responded to the survey do not differ substantially from employers nationwide. Two national surveys conducted in 1987 found 10-18% of major corporations had already developed specific written policies for dealing with employees with AIDS, and 5% had such policies under development. Only 15% of firms surveyed had initiated AIDS educational campaigns for employees.

A February 1988 study referenced in AIDS Policy and Law found that 66% of employees surveyed would be concerned about using the same bathroom as a fellow employee with AIDS, 40% about eating in the same cafeteria, and 63% about sharing tools or other work equipment. The study concluded that companies potentially face major disruptions, and that "the costs of treating AIDS pale in comparison with productivity lost."

Surveys of Alaska residents in 1986 and 1987 have identified a number of misconceptions about how AIDS is transmitted. The State AIDS Prevention Program has been designed, in part, to help people correct misinformation and take positive steps to protect their health. The Program offers employers information and materials or direct staff assistance to assess policies and provide education to managers, supervisors, and employees. These services are offered upon request only and at no charge. If you would like further information, please contact the Alaska AIDS Program, Section of Epidemiology, Division of Public Health at 561-4406.

(Reported by Wendy S. Craytor, MBA, MPH; Health Services Specialist; Alaska AIDS Program)