

# INFECTION POLICY (AIDS, HIV, AND HEPATITIS, ETC.)

The University of Texas System provides a policy and guidelines on bloodborne pathogens including Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) Hepatitis B Virus (HBV) and Hepatitis C Virus (HCV). The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance in complying with statutes concerning bloodborne pathogens including human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), Hepatitis B virus (HBV), and Hepatitis C virus (HCV). Immunization requirements are based on current regulations, guidelines and recommendations by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. In addition, the medical, educational, legal, administrative and ethical issues related to specific situations involving persons with HIV, HBV or HCV infections in the following areas are addressed:

- Administrative policies;
- Residence life;
- Health education;
- Testing for HIV, HBV, HCV infection;
- Confidentiality of information related to persons with AIDS, HIV, HBV, or HCV infection; and
- Patient care.

This policy is applicable to students, faculty and employees of the health science center and shall be made available to students, faculty, and staff members of the university by its inclusion in the student, faculty, and personnel guides if practicable, or by any other method. More detailed information about bloodborne pathogens can be found in The University of Texas at San Antonio Institutional Handbook of Operating Policies ([https://wp.uthscsa.edu/compliance/wp-content/uploads/sites/174/2021/06/HOP\\_8.1.5.pdf](https://wp.uthscsa.edu/compliance/wp-content/uploads/sites/174/2021/06/HOP_8.1.5.pdf)) (HOP). The policies that follow are published to reflect those policies in the HOP.

## ADMISSION OF HEALTH PROFESSIONS STUDENTS WITH AIDS OR HIV INFECTION

The University of Texas at San Antonio shall not inquire about the HIV status of any applicant for admission to the health science center unless it has been determined that the condition of being infected is grounds for denial of admission. Admission or hiring of an asymptomatic HIV-infected applicant can only be denied on the basis of such infection if the institution concluded, on the basis of sound medical and scientific evidence, that the applicant's infected status would prevent him or her from completing essential degree requirements and that no reasonable accommodation could be made that would enable the applicant to do so.

## SCREENING FOR HIV-1 INFECTION

The University of Texas at San Antonio will not initiate mandatory HIV screening of students, faculty, staff or employees unless justified by evidence of significant risk to patients.

The University of Texas at San Antonio encourages students, faculty, staff and employees who believe they are at risk of HIV infection to seek testing and counseling. The University of Texas at San Antonio shall provide information about the availability of confidential and anonymous testing programs. In addition, The University of Texas at San Antonio shall provide information and/or access to counseling for students,

faculty, staff, employees, and others about the implications of positive or negative testing for career and future health.

## Students, Faculty, Staff, and Employees with Positive Antibody to HIV-1 or Clinically Manifest AIDS or AIDS-Related Complex

It is expected that all students, faculty, staff and employees will be bound to the principle of strict confidentiality in all patient and healthcare-related activities.

As stated in policies 8.1.3 (<https://public.powerdms.com/UTHSA/documents/1590740/>) and 8.1.4 (<https://public.powerdms.com/UTHSA/documents/1590758/>) of the HOP, "Screening for HIV-1 Infection" and "Students, Faculty, Staff and Employees with Positive Antibody to HIV-1 or Clinically Manifest AIDS or AIDS – Related Complex," the health science center encourages students, faculty, staff, and employees who believe they are at risk of HIV-infection to seek testing and counseling. The health science center shall provide counseling on access to confidential and anonymous HIV-antibody testing, implications of results for career and personal health, availability of expert medical care, and prevention of further infection spread.

## Interaction with Patients with Bloodborne Pathogens

Entry into the healthcare professions is a privilege offered to those who are prepared for a lifetime of service to the ill. Students, faculty and healthcare staff have a fundamental responsibility to provide care to all patients assigned to them, regardless of diagnosis. A failure to accept this responsibility violates a basic tenet of the medical profession: to place the patient's interests and welfare first.

Individuals who feel that their activities within the health science center pose a special risk to their health because of exposure to bloodborne pathogen-infected patients, working conditions presenting a risk of exposure to bloodborne pathogens, or the presence of a bloodborne pathogen infection in the individual himself or herself should seek the assistance of their immediate supervisor.

## Infection Policy and Education Committee

The University of Texas at San Antonio has established an Infection Policy and Education Committee that exists as a resource to address issues related to bloodborne pathogen infection on a case-by-case basis in the health science center. The committee serves as an advisory body to the Executive Committee of the health science center and may arbitrate concerns or provide recommendations for the resolution of these infection-related issues.

## EDUCATION OF STUDENTS, FACULTY, STAFF AND EMPLOYEES ABOUT BLOODBORNE PATHOGENS

This section provides information regarding education on bloodborne pathogens to the university community based on the health science center Institutional Handbook of Operating Policies, Policy 8.1.6. (<https://public.powerdms.com/UTHSA/documents/1590654/>)

## Guidance

As stated in the Health Science Center's Exposure Control Plan, the Health Science Center adheres to the Universal or Standard Precautions for the Prevention of Transmission of Human Immunodeficiency Virus, Hepatitis B Virus, and Other Bloodborne Pathogens in Health Care Settings (<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/00000039.htm>)

published by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Consistent with the early education of students, staff, and employees in these and other pertinent data relevant to potential infection, the following approach will be taken.

## **Educational Program**

Each school will provide a program on prevention of exposure to infectious organisms in professional and personal situations early in the student's educational experience and at the beginning of clinical rotations.

Each administrative division of the health science center will provide an educational program for staff and employees to take place early in employment and annually thereafter to focus on prevention of exposure to infectious organisms in the workplace as warranted by occupational risk.

## **Content of Program**

The Infection Policy and Education Committee shall advise and review the development of appropriate educational programs. At the conclusion of health science center educational programs/curriculum on bloodborne pathogens, the participant should be able to:

1. Have a basic understanding of HIV, HBV, and HCV as a viral disease and its natural history.
2. Recognize how viruses are transmitted and contacts that do not transmit the virus.
3. Recognize the symptoms of bloodborne pathogens and the degrees/stages of these illnesses.
4. Identify precautions one must take in one's own area of practice or work regarding the bloodborne pathogens.
5. Familiarize oneself with institutional policies about bloodborne pathogens as described in the Health Science Center's Exposure Control Plan.
6. Recognize one's own role in alleviation of anxiety and misinformation.
7. Be aware of local policies regarding testing and referral information as described in the Institutional Handbook of Operating Policies, policy 8.1.1 (<https://public.powerdms.com/UTHSA/documents/1590707/>), "The University of Texas System Policy and Guidelines."
8. Identify legal and ethical issues that may potentially impact patient care.