

# Positive

Aids and HIV in trade unions

 **GR** Speldatabas

[www.grspeldatabas.se](http://www.grspeldatabas.se)

## Introduction

Aids and HIV are trade union issues. Many members have misconceptions about Aids and HIV which needs to be corrected through education. At the same time the rights of members who succumb to the infection need to be safeguarded. This role play simulation highlights some of the issues concerning HIV and Aids at the workplace. It concerns the reaction of various people at work to the news that a co-worker at the factory making pine furniture has tested HIV positive. It raises issues of rights at work and the role of trade unions in protecting members' rights.

## Time required

45-60 min.

## Number of participants

8-32

## Purpose

- To improve students' understanding of HIV and Aids.
- To encourage students to re-consider their attitudes towards people with HIV/Aids.
- To make students aware of the employment rights of people with HIV/Aids.
- To make students aware of the role of trade unions in relation to people with HIV/Aids.

## Om spelet version 1.1

### Konstruktion

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### Layout

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Läs mer på [www.pedagogisktcentrum.se](http://www.pedagogisktcentrum.se)

## GR Speldatabas

I Pedagogiskt Centrums speldatabas finns ett stort antal kostnadsfria spel och metoder för undervisning. Du kan ladda hem materialen utan att logga in och det är kostnadsfritt. Våra spel och metoder innehåller allt du behöver i en pdf: handledning, bilagor och övrig information som är relevant för temat och ämnet som spelet behandlar.

Du hittar speldatabasen på [www.grspeldatabas.se](http://www.grspeldatabas.se)

## Materials needed

- Sets of the role cards
- Copies of the briefing sheet
- A trade union visitor with knowledge of HIV/Aids

## Procedure

Put the students into groups of four. Explain the scenario:

- You are all employed by a small business making pine furniture. In all 50 people are employed in the factory of whom 25 are members of the General Worker's Union.
- A shop steward elected by union members represents their interests to the management of the company.
- A rumour has started that one of the employees and a trade union member, James Wilson, a lathe operator, has been diagnosed as HIV positive'

Explain that there are four roles in the role play; the manager, the supervisor, a worker and the shop steward.

Ask each group to decide among themselves who will take on which role. Give out the role cards.

If you have a visiting trade unionist you may want them to brief the shop stewards separately on their role in the role play. If not you can use the briefing sheet to give the shop stewards more information which they can bring to their discussions.

Explain that there will be three short role plays, each lasting about five minutes. You will manage the time and introduce each new pair of situations. The situations are explained at the foot of each role card. The paired role plays are as follows:

- **Situation 1**  
Manager meets Supervisor/  
Worker meets Shop Steward
- **Situation 2**  
Manager meets Worker  
Supervisor meets Shop Steward
- **Situation 3**  
Manager meets Shop Steward  
Supervisor meets Worker.

## Debriefing

Begin the debriefing by asking the managers in each group what action they have decided to take in the James Wilson case.

Ask the workers in each group what their own attitude was and how they expressed their views in the meetings they had.

Next ask the supervisors whether they were fair and well-informed in what they said at their meetings.

Last ask the shop stewards how successful they were in convincing other people of the lack of danger and the rights which James Wilson ought to have.

Summarise by re-stating some of the main points listed on the information sheet.

Ask the trade union visitor to comment on the issues raised by the role play.

## Useful reading

NUPE 'Aids - A Trade Union Issue' (£1 for non-members).

GMB 'Living with Aids' (£1.50 for non-members)

Worker's Educational Association 'Aids and Trade Unions' (£1.25)

TGWU 'Information and Action about Aids'

Employment Department and the Health and Safety Executive (1987) 'Aids and Employment'.

# BRIEFING SHEET

Why are trade unions interested in HIV and Aids?

Many members have fears and misconceptions about Aids which often come from the tabloid press. Trade unions have a role in providing factual information to members about Aids and the workplace.

Some members may work in situations which carry exposure to blood. Trade unions are concerned to promote good health and safety practice at work. This means that there should be special training for people with a health and safety responsibility. Clear procedures for cleaning up blood should be displayed. Protective gloves and disinfectants should be provided.

Some members may be HIV positive and others may go on to develop Aids - such people will need the support of trade union colleagues. There is no danger from social or work contact with HIV, and employment rights of those affected need to be protected. Government guidance on Aids at work states the following:

*"Employees have statutory rights against unfair dismissal which are not reduced in any way just because an individual is infected."*

*"If employees refuse to work normally with an infected individual an employer would need to respond as he would to other forms of industrial action and seek a resolution through normal proceedings."*

It is the role of the trade union to try and explain these things to both management and fellow workers. In this way the rights of infected people can be protected.

## **POSITIVE - ROLE CARDS**

### **MANAGER**

You are the manager of Pine World, a company manufacturing a range of household pine furniture. There are fifty employees - forty of whom are employed in the construction, finishing, packaging and despatch of the products. You have a personnel role and are responsible for hiring and firing. You have been told confidentially by an employee of ten years' standing, James Wilson, that he has tested HIV positive. He is not ill at the moment and he is keen to continue working for the company. Although you are sympathetic, you are concerned about the possible impact on the other workers even though their fears may be ungrounded. Dismissal is an option you are prepared to consider.

#### Situation 1

You are in your office when the supervisor walks in.

#### Situation 2

You call in one of James Wilson's co-workers to sound out her/his opinion.

#### Situation 3

The shop steward comes to meet with you about the James Wilson case.

## **POSITIVE - ROLE CARDS**

### **SUPERVISOR**

You are responsible for supervising the work of 20 production workers at Pine World. James Wilson works for you as a lathe operator. You are worried that there are often cuts through working with wood and through the use of power tools and machinery. This brings with it the risk of infection being passed on. As the first aid officer this affects you directly. You pride yourself that industrial relations at the factory are good. You are also aware that James Wilson is in the General Workers' Union and that he has been a good worker over the past ten years.

#### Situation 1

You go to see the manager in his/her office to discuss the rumour and what should be done about the James Wilson situation.

#### Situation 2

You have just clocked on in the morning when the shop steward for the General Workers' Union approaches you.

#### Situation 3

You are walking across the factory floor when a co-worker of James Wilson's comes up to you.

## **POSITIVE - ROLE CARDS**

### **WORKER**

You work on the assembly of chairs and tables at the Pine World factory. You are a member of the General Workers' Union along with 24 other people employed at the factory. You have been told that there is a rumour that one of your co-workers, James Wilson, has been diagnosed as HIV positive. You are very worried about the risks of working alongside James. There are often cuts and abrasions during the normal working day. There is a factory tea room where mugs and cutlery are shared.

#### Situation 1

While on a tea break you talk to the shop steward about your worries.

#### Situation 2

The manager calls you into her/his office.

#### Situation 3

You approach the supervisor on the factory floor to discuss what action, if any, the company intends to take over James Wilson.

## **POSITIVE - ROLE CARDS**

### **SHOP STEWARD**

You are the elected representative of the General Workers' Union at Pine World. Most of your 25 members are employed in semi-skilled and unskilled manual work. Your own work involves the spray finishing of the pine products. You are keen that members who are diagnosed as HIV are supported rather than discriminated against by fellow employees and employers. The union has produced an information sheet to help you educate members and managers alike.

#### Situation 1

While on a tea break you are approached by a union member who works closely with James Wilson.

#### Situation 2

At clocking on time in the morning you approach the supervisor to discuss the James Wilson case.

#### Situation 3

You go to the manager's office for a formal meeting to discuss the James Wilson situation.