

POLICY ON INFECTIOUS DISEASES, IMMUNIZATIONS, POLICE CHECKS
School of Social Work, McMaster University

In the course of day-to-day social work practice, workers and students may be exposed to a range of infectious diseases. With rare exception, there is no reason to believe that Social Workers are at any extraordinary risk of contracting infectious diseases.

Students in the School of Social Work should be made aware of any extraordinary risks which they may encounter in field placements. Both the faculty liaison and the field instructor share a responsibility ensuring that students are made aware of high risk situations and of any policies and procedures established within agencies to deal with high risk encounters. It is the obligation of the agency to identify high risk situations in its practice and the policies which agency staff and students are to follow in the event of exposure (e.g. to Hep B) as a condition of student placement in the agency.

It is the obligation of the student to inform the faculty liaison, who in turn must inform the Director of the School, of any special circumstances or considerations in selecting field placements which would increase the risk of infection to themselves or to others.

With regard to HIV infection, it remains the best medical opinion that HIV infection cannot be contracted through casual contact. Casual contact, in this situation would include all types of social work contact. The same factors are true for Hep B infection.

Should a student be in the extraordinary situation of contact with the bodily fluids of client (e.g. being bitten), the student must report the incident immediately to his/her field instructor and faculty liaison. Agency procedures for dealing with this type of encounter must be followed.

Students with concerns about infection exposure should consult their own family physicians or Student Health Service and should make their concerns known to the appropriate faculty instructor.

For further reference see: President's Executive Committee Policy on A.I.D.S. - McMaster University.

Immunizations; Police Checks:

Prior to entering third (SW3DD6) or fourth level (SW4DD6) field instruction courses, you need to be aware that:

- 1) As in all human services, there is some increased risk of exposure to contagious diseases including tuberculosis, childhood diseases such as measles and mumps. You are advised to review your immunization record and, in consultation with a physician, ensure that you have been adequately protected. Normally, an up-to-date tetanus immunization is also recommended. McMaster Campus Health Centre, located in MUSC, B101, immunizes students and administers 2 step T.B. skin tests; call 525-9140 ext. 27700 for an appointment.
- 2) The Ontario Government requires that individuals (professionals, volunteers and students) working with "vulnerable populations" undergo a police check. Therefore you may be required to obtain a current police check prior to beginning placement. Placement agencies make the decision to accept or deny a student placement based on the results of a police check.