

## Volkswagen Brazil HIV/AIDS Workplace Programme Overview (2003)

**VOLKSWAGEN:** In 2003 the company will celebrate 50 years of activities in Brazil, where it has been the leader in the automobile market for 40 years, and one of the largest private employers in the country.

**HISTORY OF HIV/AIDS AT VW – 1986-1996:** the first HIV positive case among the 86,000 users of Volkswagen's Health Care Plan (employees and their dependents) took place in 1986. Until the beginning of 1996 there was a total of 115 cases of infected individuals. In spite of the countless efforts of the Company to offer resources, there was a high incidence of opportunistic infections, low compliance to the internal, external and public health care resources and a high cost of care. Benefits were also few, with frequent interruption in treatments and repeated hospital admissions. Patients became sick early, there were high rates of withdrawal from work, and low survival rates.

### **COMPANY POLICY FOR HIV/AIDS:**

Care Policy since 1986; Multisectorial Mobilization; Balance between Prevention & Treatment; Human Rights respected in all strategies and actions;  
HIV serology – not indicated as a routine in periodical medical examinations;  
Detection of HIV+ or AIDS employees does not provide grounds for dismissal; ethical respect of confidentiality; confidentiality ensured by the professionals who work in the area; and  
Reporting to disease surveillance public agencies is mandatory.

**DESCRIPTION OF THE VW AIDS CARE PROGRAM:** In June 1996, VW implemented the Aids Care Program, a proposal of integrated and managed global care. Registration in the Program and specialized care were centralized in São Bernardo do Campo/SP, with a team of experts, focusing mainly on promoting health, preventing diseases, controlling deficits, and rehabilitating HIV/Aids patients. A Technical Protocol was designed with the aim of standardizing care. Professional teams should include infectious disease specialist, social worker, nutritionist, psychologist, and other professionals, depending on the need. There was guaranteed access to the antiretroviral medication "cocktail"; specific laboratory tests (CD4/CD8, Viral Load, Phenotyping and Genotyping, etc.); referral to Specialized Hospitals and Home Care, in addition to intensive preventive measures.

**DEVELOPMENT OF THE PROGRAM:** By 07/31/03, the Program had provided care to 85 HIV patients, with the following results: 58 received outpatient care, 1 received home care, and 27 died (they were already ill when they joined the Program). The number of hospitalizations went down by 95%, and the comparative costs of the Program showed a 70% annual reduction in expenses with HIV/Aids. From an average monthly cost of R\$ 1,500.00 per patient, today these costs have fallen to about R\$ 300.00 per patient per month. One of the factors that contributed to the reduction of total expenses of the Aids Care Program was the fact that as of 08/2000, medication, which used to be bought by Volkswagen, started to be supplied by the Brazilian Ministry of Health. As to qualitative results, the following highlights are worth mentioning: high rate of compliance to the Program, greater clinical control and prevention of the manifestations of the disease, reduction in the periods of absence from work, improved quality of life, reintegration to society and work, and greater level of satisfaction among Company employees.

**PREVENTIVE ACTIONS:** Volkswagen of Brazil is a member of the National Business Board for the Prevention of HIV/Aids – CEN, since its creation in 1998, and has also chaired its Executive Committee since 2001. Since 1986, the Company has been developing educational and preventive actions for HIV/Aids, designed for its employees and their families. However, it was the planning of CEN's internal and external actions that strengthened even further the actions of health promotion and prevention of STD and HIV/Aids in all the Units of Volkswagen in the country. Educational lectures, videos, information in Volkswagen's Intranet, Volkswagen's Newsletter, bulletin board, educational books, panels, installation of condom vending machines and actions on CEN's specific themes and materials on dates such as Carnival, Valentine's Day and on World AIDS Day (December 1<sup>st</sup>) are some examples of the increased attention to the preventive aspects of Volkswagen's Aids Care Program.

**CONCLUSIONS:** For the results accomplished, Volkswagen's Aids Care Program reinforces the benefits of rational organization for offering services within a Global Health Care Policy. The promotion of its structure, operation, and evaluation mechanisms may be an example to be followed by other companies in dealing with HIV/Aids patients in the population of employees and dependents.