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Case Study – 5 : HIV Positive Employee

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You are a government official. One day you find out that your subordinate is infected with HIV. Before you could stop the news from spreading, it had already become a topic of discussion among other members of the office. Now, they are pressuring you to suspend, sack or transfer him as they fear that his presence in the office might lead to other members getting contaminated with the virus. You try to make them understand that HIV does not spread from touching, but they are so skeptic and scared that they refuse to even listen to your reasoning. They all decide to not work till the HIV positive employee. Your office is already under a lot of work pressure and in the next week you are to finish some work within a deadline. How will you tackle this problem? Elaborate the steps that you will take to handle it.

Solution

This situation deals more with an implementation problem of a decision (already in mind) and not with taking a decision. We must keep in mind that HIV infected people also have the right to life and personal liberty as enumerated in Article 21 of Fundamental Rights. Based on this, they cannot be deprived of a dignified life. It has been established beyond doubt that HIV is not transmitted through air, food or water, and touch. So, the demand of the members of the office is absolutely unreasonable. Besides being unreasonable their demand is also unethical as instead of social ostracisation, the HIV affected must be supported in this time of personal crisis. Hence, any action against the HIV infected person is neither desirable nor legal. However, as a team lead, one has to maintain social cohesion in the team and try best to assuage any suspicion in the minds of the people. Hence the following steps are desirable:

One can start by explaining the employees that a diseased person is to be empathized with and definitely not to be hated. To substantiate one's arguments one can put forward few scientific researches in front of them to make them understand that they are not vulnerable to get infected.

In spite of the above if the employees persist with their stand then one can write to one's seniors apprising of the situation and requesting to arrange an alternative team with similar skill sets so that they can complete the task.

In the mean time one can pass an executive order that the complaining employees have no option but to work with the current setup. Besides strict disciplinary action will be taken against all those who fail to comply with official orders.

In the mean time one can put all efforts to meet the deadline. One can try to organize medical educational camps to raise awareness.

To have a positive demonstrative effect, one can start by making the affected person sit next to oneself.