

In recognition of World Aids Day



THE Equal Opportunity Commission joins United Nations (UN) members to commemorate World Aids Day 2022. Every year on December 1, the world celebrates the extraordinary progress in the fight against HIV and Aids and shows support to the millions of persons living with HIV or Aids globally.

This year, the theme is "Equalize," emphasising the elimination of the inequalities that have slowed the fight against the disease. Inequalities, such as gender inequality, limit women's access to HIV care and other forms of sexual and reproductive health care.

It also stresses the importance of law reform, policies and practices to tackle the stigma and exclusion faced by persons living with HIV or Aids and the distribution of technology to enable equal access to the best HIV science among nations.

While the world has come a long way since 1983 when HIV was discovered, data from UNAids on the global HIV response reveals that during the last two years of covid19, the progress made against the HIV pandemic has faltered, resources have shrunk, and

millions of lives are at risk as a result. The World Health Organization (WHO) is calling on global leaders and citizens to boldly recognise and address the inequalities which stall the progress in ending Aids; and equalise access to essential HIV services, particularly those that cater to children and key vulnerable populations.

The Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC) endorses this call by the WHO and encourages its stakeholders to do their part to stop the stigma and discrimination associated with HIV and Aids by being intentional and thoughtful when choosing their words. We strongly recommend the use of supportive rather than stigmatising language when

having a discourse about HIV and Aids. In its efforts to do its part to combat stigma associated with HIV and Aids, the EOC has renewed its Memorandum of Understanding with the National HIV and Aids Workplace Advocacy Unit, (HWAU) of the Ministry of Labour.

The aim of this partnership is to help prevent the transmission of HIV among workers, to mitigate the impact of the epidemic on workplace productivity and to eliminate the stigma and discrimination related to HIV and Aids.

Further, the EOC has established an internal HIV/Aids Committee, which spearheaded the workplace policy on HIV and Aids; this has been implemented at the commis-

sion. The policy document is in keeping with the vision and mission of the EOC and acknowledges the significant impact HIV has within the workplace.

The commission is committed to its responsibility as an employer to provide a safe system of work and a healthy work climate. This provides an enabling and productive environment for all employees to lead a normal life within the workplace, which may include continuous employment by the organisation.

In commemoration of World Aids day, the EOC will join the Ministry of Labour's World Aids Day Walk on Charlotte Street to show its support for persons living with HIV and Aids.

The EOC will join the HWAU to engage business owners and vendors by distributing educational material about the mandate of the EOC, the services we offer and an instructional on how to lodge a complaint.

If you have been discriminated against based on your HIV status, you can lodge a complaint at the EOC via email at complaints@eoc.gov.tt or via our website www.equalopportunity.gov.tt.