



February 27, 2017

Re: Clarification document on physical evaluation and Tuberculosis screening prior to admission to Residential Substance Use Disorder Programs

Dear Residential Substance Use Disorder Providers:

It has come to our attention that the current practice of requiring Tuberculosis screening and physical examinations prior to consideration for admission to residential Substance Use Disorder (SUD) programs has been contributing to delays that consumers experience when seeking treatment for SUD. Neither the Division of Behavior Health (DBH) nor the Division of Public Health (DPH) requires a current Tuberculosis (TB) screen or physical examination as a prerequisite for admission to a residential substance use program.

We recommend the following:

- An individual seeking treatment in a substance use program should not be delayed or denied admission based on lack of a current TB screening test or lack of current physical examination documentation.
- An individual arriving at a residential SUD program should, of course, be screened by the program's nursing staff if symptoms of active TB appear present in an admitting client, and nothing precludes a program from referring an individual for medical evaluation prior to admission when active symptoms are present.¹

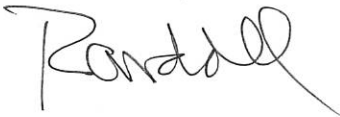
¹ Recognizable symptoms of active TB are listed below. The presence of any one symptom is not in and of itself an indicator of active TB. The overall health of the individual and other causes of symptoms should also be considered.

- Persistent cough
- Coughing or spitting up blood
- Night Sweats
- Loss of appetite
- Shortness of breath
- Loss of energy
- Unexplained weakness
- Unexplained Fever > 2 weeks
- Unexplained weight loss > 10 pounds

- As a matter of routine, and as a public health service, substance use disorder programs that are capable should provide a TB screening test while the individual is participating in their residential program. If not in-house capable, the provider should make an effort to facilitate screening at a local public health clinic.

We continue to be grateful for the commitment of each of your programs to increase every affected Alaskans' access to the appropriate level of SUD treatment. Any questions regarding the above clarification or suggestions for reducing barriers to healthy choices can be directed to your program manager. Thank you!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Randall Burns". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Randall Burns
Director