



THE STATE
of **ALASKA**
GOVERNOR MICHAEL J. DUNLEAVY

Department of Health and Social Services

DIVISION OF PUBLIC HEALTH
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Dear Superintendent or Principal:

This letter describes changes to school tuberculosis (TB) screening requirements for students for the 2019-2020 school year and the intent to seek repeal of regulation 7 AAC 27.213 "Tuberculosis Screening of Students in School Settings.

For many decades, school-based tuberculosis (TB) screening of students has been required as a tool to identify new active TB cases in Alaska. It is increasingly clear that school based screening does not enhance TB case finding in Alaska.

Alaska continues to have one of the highest rates of TB in the nation. In light of this, Alaska has maintained a more extensive school screening program than what is currently recommended by national guidelines and practiced in other states. Even with progressive refinement of the program over the past 5 years to implement a more risk-stratified approach to school-based screening, the program has not identified new cases of active TB, despite screening more than 10,000 students per year. The resource costs of time for school nurses, administrators, and public health nurses, as well as the cost of supplies (including PPD needed for skin tests), for school-based screening are substantial. These resources can be put to better use elsewhere, such as finding new TB cases through case contact investigations and focused community-based screening in areas of known TB activity, both of which have historically been of much higher yield. [The American Academy of Pediatrics' Bright Futures](#) preventive health guidelines recommends that TB risk assessment be done by healthcare providers at regular intervals in the setting of well-child visits. This more appropriately incorporates TB screening into the context of an overall health assessment in a child's medical home, rather than placing this burden on school districts.

School-based TB screening in Alaska has not proven useful for identifying new cases of active disease. By transferring the responsibility of TB screening from school districts to healthcare providers, as per national guidelines, scarce public health resources can be redirected to help eliminate TB from Alaska. We will therefore seek to repeal the regulation that requires assessment of TB status by school districts.

While the process of repealing the regulation is in progress, **there will be no requirement for school districts to assess the TB status of their students for the 2019-2020 school year.** Note that school screening will still be included as part of community TB screening in response to investigations of active TB cases.

Please forward this information to all schools in your district as soon as possible to ensure that schools are aware of the change to TB screening requirements for the 2019--2020 school year.

Please contact our program at (907) 269-8000 if you have additional questions.

Sincerely,
Michelle Rothoff, MD
State of Alaska TB Controller