

State of Alaska Tuberculosis School Screening Protocols for High and Low TB Risk Districts, Schools and Communities

Screening school students for Tuberculosis (TB) is required in Alaska. The Division of Public Health's Tuberculosis Program works collaboratively to establish a comprehensive program for the control of TB in the state, and through 7 AAC 27.213 requires that each public and nonpublic school assess the TB status of each child. It is the responsibility of the school to perform the assessment and to exclude children who are not in compliance.

Targeted TB testing of high-risk children has been recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for over 20 years. While the vast majority of other state and local jurisdictions moved away from broad-based school testing years ago, broader TB school screening in Alaska has continued in part due to historically high rates of TB in the state, and the assumption that childhood TB cases were being prevented. Careful analysis of both recent TB rates and more than 10 years of TB school screening data have demonstrated that this broader approach has been an ineffective method of detecting or preventing cases of childhood TB, and should no longer be supported. Testing for TB should only be conducted in a risk factor for TB infection is identified. National best practices for school TB screening were reviewed and regulations were updated to reflect new methodologies and include a targeted or risk-based approach to screening. Revised regulations that reference "Tuberculosis screening of school children" (7 ACC 27.213) were adopted 12/29/13. Changes to the regulations include the recommended use of health surveys and alternative laboratory-approved methods for assessing tuberculosis status in addition to PPD or tuberculin skin tests (TSTs).

Protocols for high and low TB risk school districts are found below, reflecting recent changes to TB school screening in Alaska. Non-public and private schools should follow TB screening recommendations for the respective *communities* where their schools are located. These categories are based on the evidence of current or historical increased risks for TB in the community served and are reviewed annually.

More information, including Frequently Asked Questions, can be found on our website at: <http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/Epi/id/Pages/tb.aspx>

High TB risk school districts and boarding schools:

- All students in all grades Kindergarten and higher are screened annually with TST or IGRA.

Low TB risk school districts:

- TB Risk Assessment Questionnaire for all students NEW TO DISTRICT in any grade.
- TST or IGRA required for any students with a "YES" response on the Risk Assessment.
- Discontinue routine TSTs in 7th grade students.