Tuberculosis Screening
Updated Requirements for the School-Aged Population

What is Tuberculosis (TB)?

TB is an infection, usually of the lungs, that is caused by bacteria. TB is spread from person to person through the air.

Common myths about TB:

Myth: Being infected with TB means you have an active form of the disease.
Fact: Infection does not necessarily mean you have the disease. Not everyone infected with the TB bacteria gets sick:

TB Infection	Active TB Disease
Does not feel sick	Usually feels sick
Has no symptoms	Has symptoms: • Bad cough for three weeks or more • Chest pain • Coughing up blood • Weakness • Feeling very tired • Weight loss
Cannot spread TB bacteria to others	**May spread TB bacteria to others**
Usually has a positive skin test or blood test	Usually has a positive skin test or blood test
Has a normal chest x-ray	May have an abnormal chest x-ray and will need more testing
Needs treatment for TB infection to prevent developing active TB disease later in life	Needs treatment for active TB disease

Myth: TB testing is the same as TB screening.
Fact: Testing for TB is not the same as screening for TB. With TB screening, a risk assessment (series of questions) is performed by a clinician. If the person is deemed high risk, then a test for TB infection is done. In contrast, TB testing consists of a skin test (TST) or a blood test (QFT or T-Spot). If these tests are positive, then a chest x-ray is done.

What is the current TB School Mandate?

The Los Angeles County (LAC) Department of Public Health (DPH) now requires all children entering kindergarten or attending a California school for the first time to have a test for TB infection and to return the results before starting school. If the skin test is positive, the student must get a chest x-ray.

Los Angeles County Department of Public Health
www.publichealth.lacounty.gov

County of Los Angeles Public Health
Tuberculosis Control Program

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Common myths about the TB School Mandate:

Myth: The School Mandate is used to find and treat children with active TB disease.
Fact: The mandate was designed to determine and track TB infection rates, NOT to find and treat active TB disease cases. The LAC DPH Tuberculosis Control Program (TBCP) uses contact investigations to find active TB cases of all ages.

Myth: Without the TB School Mandate, there will be no monitoring of TB cases in place.

Fact: TBCP will continue to track cases of TB in children to ensure that TB rates continue declining.

Myth: The School Mandate makes sure children with active TB disease are treated.

Fact: Tracking is not in place to guarantee that children who test positive for TB infection complete treatment. Evidence shows that many who do begin treatment do not complete treatment.

Myth: If the mandate is not in place, there will be an increase in cases of TB in children in LA County.

Fact: Other California counties without a TB school mandate, like San Diego and Riverside, have continued to see fewer cases of TB in children.

What is the planned new approach?

- End the current TB School Mandate. Have children screened for TB during their first grade physical.
- Your child will have all of his or her exams in one visit to the doctor.
- Doctors will screen students and only test them for TB if they see an increased risk.
- Your child will be referred to medical offices where he or she can receive a full range of care.

Why change it?

- Instead of seeing a doctor many times, TB screening will now be a part of the physical exam for first graders.
- To prevent children who are not infected with TB from receiving medication that may harm the liver.
- Experts say this process is the best method.
- To focus on better ways to find active TB disease cases and reduce active TB disease rates.
- To make sure children have a family doctor for all of their medical needs.

Which children have a higher risk of being infected with TB?

- Children born outside of the United States and in regions of the world with high rates of TB (generally all countries other than the U.S., Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and the countries of Western Europe).
- Children who have had contact with people with confirmed or suspected TB disease.

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- Children who have traveled to a country with high TB rates for over one week.
- Children who drink raw milk or eat unpasteurized cheese.

Will this change to the school mandate put my child at a greater risk?

No. Your child's risk will not change. You will be able to have your child screened during the same medical visit as the physical exam.

Where can I get a physical exam for my first-grader?

- The physical exam is done by the family's usual source of medical care, including: private doctors, community clinics, health department clinics, prepaid health plans, military facilities, some school districts and other sources.
- The attached document lists options for you to enroll your child in a free or low-cost health plan.

Does this affect nursery schools, school volunteers, or school personnel?

No. This change only affects students in grades K-12.

What if all of my questions weren't answered by this sheet?

- For more information, please visit the Tuberculosis Control Program website: **http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/tb/**