



# TB FACT SHEET 2013

## Tuberculosis and Homelessness in Los Angeles County

### Homelessness is an important risk factor for Tuberculosis

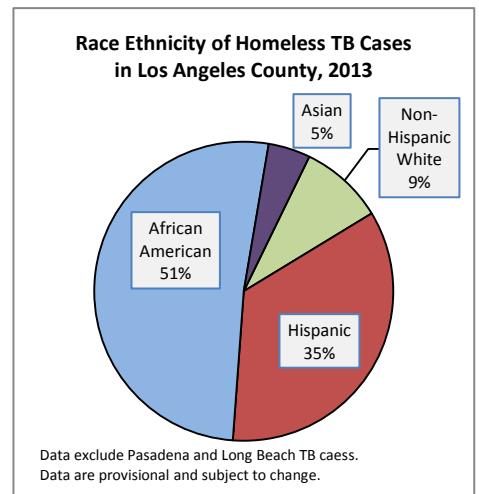
- Compared to other populations in the U.S., tuberculosis (TB) disease rates are **10 times higher** among people experiencing homelessness<sup>1</sup>, including people living in shelters or transitional housing facilities, people in unstable housing situations, and people living in places not meant for human habitation (e.g. cars, abandoned buildings, parks)
- TB prevention activities tailored to these populations are critical because:
  - A person with infectious TB staying in shelters and other congregate settings can expose a large number of people to TB germs
  - Social and behavioral risk factors often associated with homelessness, such as substance abuse, unemployment, and mental health issues create special challenges for ensuring treatment adherence and for finding other people who have recently been exposed to infectious TB patients

#### Risk factors contributing to TB in the homeless<sup>2</sup>:

- Crowded living situations
- Limited access to health care
- Comorbidities, e.g. HIV

### TB among people with a recent history of homelessness in Los Angeles County, 2013

- From 2009-2013, between 5-10% of TB cases in LA County each year reported a recent history of homelessness, including 66 TB cases in year 2013, with most living in Service Planning Areas 4 (Metro) and 6 (South)
- Among TB cases with recent history of homelessness, approximately half were African-American, and one-third were Hispanic
- Among homeless TB cases with a known HIV status, the prevalence of HIV infection is 13%, much higher than in TB cases who are not homeless (3%)



### TB Control Program Activities aimed at preventing and controlling TB among people experiencing homelessness

- Working closely with and supporting shelter operators to implement the LA County guidelines for Preventing TB in Homeless Shelters (<http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/tb/docs/LATBGuidelinesforShelters.pdf>), including TB Clearance requirements, and referrals for sick clients to seek medical care
- Providing health education resources and support to organizations and medical providers serving the homeless, including the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA), the UCLA School of Nursing at Union Rescue Mission, LA Christian Health Center, John Wesley Community Health, and Central City Community Health Clinic
- Collaborating with the Community Health Services program to conduct TB screening and treat patients infected with TB before they are symptomatic, to prevent these people from developing infectious TB disease – an important strategy in stopping TB
- Providing housing, transportation, and/or food support (e.g. bus tokens, grocery vouchers) to promote compliance with medication regimens for TB

All Los Angeles County TB statistics exclude Pasadena and Long Beach TB cases. Data are provisional and subject to change.

**Suggested Citation:** TB Fact Sheet 2013: Tuberculosis and Homelessness in Los Angeles County. Los Angeles County Department of Public Health Tuberculosis Control Program, Los Angeles, CA. March 2015.

#### References

1. Bamrah S, et al. Tuberculosis among the homeless, United States, 1994-2010. *Int J Tuberc Lung Dis* 2013;17(11): 1414-1419.

2. LA County DPH. The LA County Dept of Public Health Response to Community Concerns About Active Tuberculosis (TB) Disease Among the Homeless. 2013 Mar 4.

For more information contact us at:

Los Angeles County Department of Public Health  
Tuberculosis Control Program

Phone: (213) 745-0800; Email: [tbc@ph.lacounty.gov](mailto:tbc@ph.lacounty.gov)

Website: <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/tb/index.htm>

