

Do volunteers and students working in a long-term care facility need to be screened for TB?

It depends on the amount of time these individuals spend in the nursing home.

The Section for Long-Term Care Regulation (SLCR) views students in clinical rotations as volunteers. If these students, or any volunteers, work more than 10 hours per week, these individuals must have the appropriate tuberculosis (TB) screening test, in accordance with the specific state regulations listed below, depending upon the licensed level of care provided.

SLCR regulates licensed facilities, rather than educational institutions or individual health care providers, and consequently the responsibility falls to facility leadership to ensure regulatory compliance of the individuals allowed to work in their homes.

Facilities are always permitted to adopt internal policies that are more restrictive than the state regulations, if they so choose. (Example: requiring all students and volunteers to have TB tests, regardless of the amount of time spent at the facility).

As a reminder and helpful guidance for all facilities, please refer to the following article published in the *LTC Bulletin – Volume 8, Issue 3, Summer 2010:*

All long-term care facilities must perform a tuberculosis screening on all new residents, employees, and volunteers who work ten or more hours per week. Facilities should use the Mantoux PPD two-step tuberculin skin test. Facilities must also test employees and volunteers annually for TB and evaluate residents annually. The process can get confusing because there are different requirements for employees, residents and those who test positive. TB is a contagious disease that can spread easily in residential populations such as those in long-term care facilities. TB is spread through the air when an infected person coughs or sneezes. Those near that person may become infected. Most people who become infected are able to fight off the disease. The TB bacteria may still be in their bodies and can become active later in life. This is called latent TB infection (LTBI).

People with weak immune systems, such as elderly people in long-term care, are at risk of the latent bacteria becoming active and causing TB. The good news is that medicine can prevent them from developing the full-fledged disease. For that reason, we have regulations to identify people at high risk.

Most people have no harmful side effects from a Tuberculin Skin Test (TST). But it should not be administered to those who have experienced a severe reaction in the past such as necrosis, blistering, anaphylactic shock, or ulceration. A physician's statement verifying a resident's, employee's or volunteer's previous, severe reaction to the test should be included in their record. In lieu of the test, those individuals should be evaluated upon admission or employment for coughing, bloody sputum, weight loss or other signs of TB.

The evaluations must be documented and must also occur annually. The TST test is safe for infants, children, pregnant women, HIV-infected people, or those who have been vaccinated with the TB vaccine bacilli Calmette-Guerin (BCG).

Flowcharts to help long-term care facilities determine the steps to take to comply with the TB regulations are available at: <http://health.mo.gov/seniors/nursinghomes/providerinfo.php>

The flowcharts are located just below the *LTC Bulletin – Volume 8, Issue 3, Summer 2010.*

The Department strongly encourages you to read the following regulations:

19 CSR 30-85.042 (27) for Skilled Nursing and Intermediate Care Facilities;

19 CSR 30-86.042 (17) and (18) for Residential Care I Facilities;

19 CSR 30-86.043 (4) and (17) for Residential Care II Facilities; and

19 CSR 30-86.047 (18) and (19) for Assisted Living Facilities

All these regulations, other than 19 CSR 30-86.043 for Residential Care Facilities II, make specific reference to:

Division 20—Division of Community and Public Health, Chapter 20—Communicable Diseases

Title 19 CSR 20-20.100 Tuberculosis Testing for Residents and Workers in Long-Term Care Facilities and

State Correctional Centers

19 CSR 20-20.100 (3) Long-Term Care Employees and Volunteers. All new long-term care facility employees and volunteers who work ten (10) or more hours per week are required to obtain a Mantoux PPD two (2)-step tuberculin test within one (1) month prior to starting employment in the facility. If the initial test is zero to nine millimeters (0–9 mm), the second test should be given as soon as possible within three (3) weeks after employment begins, unless documentation is provided indicating a Mantoux PPD test in the past and at least one (1) subsequent annual test within the past two (2) years. It is the responsibility of each facility to maintain a documentation of each employee's and volunteer's tuberculin status.

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LTC Information Update - April 20, 2012 (ltcr-info-update@lphamo.org)