Date: August 15, 2014

To: Alameda County School Superintendents, School Nurses and Health Care Providers

From: Muntu Davis, MD, MPH, Health Officer, Alameda County
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Subject: Tuberculosis (TB) Screening Policy for Students Entering K-12 in Alameda County Schools

All California students entering first grade are required by Health & Safety Code 124085 to have received the appropriate health screening and evaluation services specified in Section 124040 within the prior 18 months. This health assessment includes screening for tuberculosis (TB) by means of a TB risk assessment and, for children determined to be at risk for TB infection, or at increased risk for developing active TB disease if infected, a TB test.

Effective August 2014, Alameda County Public Health Department no longer has an additional requirement for TB screening (TB risk assessment and, if indicated, TB testing) for:

- Any child entering school for the first time in grades 2-12, including children who recently emigrated from a TB endemic area.
- Children returning to an Alameda County School after visiting a TB-endemic area

This policy statement supersedes any prior statement or policy issued by Alameda County Public Health Department related to TB screening in schools. School districts may choose to be more conservative than these guidelines, but there are no additional requirements by the Alameda County Health Officer or Health Department for tuberculosis screening or testing for school entry.
As TB rates have declined overall in California and Alameda County, TB affects some groups disproportionately, but school-age children overall constitute a low-risk population for TB disease. Universal TB testing is not cost-effective or useful and may lead to unnecessary treatment. Health care providers should assess children for risk factors for TB and target testing in accordance current guidelines issued by Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), and the California Tuberculosis Controller’s Association (CTCA). The burden of pediatric cases is not high enough in Alameda County to justify that schools be the point of assessment for TB, nor that children should be excluded from school based on not having this assessment. Pediatric cases are better detected by alternate methods that are more effective, comprehensive, and evidence based than school screening, such as rigorous case and contact investigation and targeted testing of high-risk groups.

If you have any questions about these recommendations, please contact our TB Control Unit at 510-383-1731. (Please note that this number will change in September 2014, the forwarding contact information will be recorded at this number).

References & Resources:

California Health and Safety Code Section 121485, 121515, 124085

CTCA Position on TB Testing of School-Age Children, June 28, 2012

http://www.ctca.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=page&page_id=5008

Sample Pediatric TB Risk Assessment Questionnaire

www.etcha.org/fileLibrary/file_386.docx