

# Linking immigration status adjusters to preventive TB treatment

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## BACKGROUND

- Each year, 100,000 Californians are medically evaluated by civil surgeons for TB while adjusting their immigration status to permanent resident
- Opportunity for treatment to prevent future TB disease
- CDC-sponsored project: California Department of Public Health, Tuberculosis Control Branch collaborating with Orange County Health Care Agency, Pulmonary Disease Services and a local civil surgeon's practice
- Aims of this project: strengthen civil surgeons' capacity to improve LTBI surveillance and care outcomes among immigration status adjusters

## METHODS

1. Established an advisory group of national, state, and local partners
2. A gap analysis was performed to identify existing gaps and specific areas of possible improvement for linking status adjusters with LTBI to care for preventative TB treatment
3. Interventions to address gaps in the care cascade were developed, prioritized, and implemented

# New LTBI materials available for civil surgeons and status adjusters

Patient education – poster

**ARE YOU GOING THROUGH THE IMMIGRATION PROCESS?**  
Learn more about your required tuberculosis (TB) test!

**YOUR BLOOD WILL BE DRAWN**

- A tuberculosis (or TB) test is required
- TB is spread through the air. Most people do not know they are infected
- Having a prior TB vaccine (BCG) will not affect the blood test

**IF YOUR BLOOD TEST IS POSITIVE**

- You have TB in your body
- There are two stages:
  - Latent TB infection (LTBI), or hidden/sleeping TB
  - Active TB
- You need a chest x-ray to decide which stage you have
- Let your doctor know if you have: cough, coughing up blood, fever, loss of appetite, unexplained weight loss, or night sweats

**TB IS TREATABLE**

- There are antibiotics that can kill the TB bacteria and prevent illness
- Taking antibiotics now can protect you and your family from getting sick with TB in the future

Patient education - brochure

**I had the TB vaccine (BCG) in my home country. Can I still get TB?**

People who had the TB vaccine can still get TB

**Will having LTBI delay my immigration application?**

Taking medicine for LTBI will NOT slow down your immigration application

Your immigration doctor will let your local health department know that you have LTBI

The local health department may reach out to you to provide support

**What does having latent tuberculosis infection (LTBI) mean for me?**

You can treat LTBI and stop you and your loved ones from getting sick

For more information, visit the TB program website at [tinyurl.com/OrangeTB](http://tinyurl.com/OrangeTB) or use this QR code to access the site

Your health department's info here

Linkage to care – clinic list for LTBI services

Health Center Name	Address	Appointment Phone	Other Languages Spoken	Evening/ Sat/Sun	Child	Adult
<b>ANAHEIM</b>						
Altamed Medical & Dental Group	1820 W. Lincoln Ave.	888-499-9330	Chinese, Spanish, Tagalog, Vietnamese	•	•	•
UCI POC Anaheim	300 W. Carl Gardner Way	957-323-6336	Spanish, Tagalog, Vietnamese	•	•	•
Central City Community Health Center	2227 W. Ball Road	714-480-2750	Spanish	•	•	•
Family Health Matters	1102 N. Euclid	714-442-0411	Spanish, Tagalog	•	•	•
Lettenac Free Clinic	1280W Crescent Ave. St. B	714-433-4600	Spanish	•	•	•
<b>COSTA MESA</b>						
800 Community Health Center & Dental	1700 Superior Ave.	949-442-3451	Spanish	•	•	•
<b>FULLERTON</b>						
Sierra Health Center	501 S. Brookhurst	714-670-0717	Spanish, Tagalog	•	•	•
<b>GARDEN GROVE</b>						
Altamed Medical Group	12751 Harbor Blvd.	888-499-9330	Spanish, Vietnamese, Chinese, Tagalog, Portuguese, Arabic	•	•	•
Lettenac Free Clinic	10861 Aradac Pkwy	714-433-4600	Spanish	•	•	•
Shan Hoa Comprehensive Health Center	7761 Garden Grove Blvd.	714-699-8888	Spanish, Vietnamese, Chinese	•	•	•
VNCCC Southland Health Center	3642 Chapman Ave., Suite B	714-412-0240	Vietnamese, Spanish	•	•	•
<b>HUNTINGTON BEACH</b>						
Altamed Medical & Dental Group	5041 Newman Ave.	888-499-9330	Spanish, Vietnamese	•	•	•
<b>LA HABRA</b>						
Friends of Family Health Center	301 S. Olive St., Suite 270	949-490-0400	French, Spanish, Arabic, Korean	•	•	•
Vista Community Clinic: The Bery Center	201 S. Harbor Blvd.	949-264-6000	French, Korean, Spanish	•	•	•
<b>LAGUNA BEACH</b>						
Laguna Beach Community Clinic	342 Third St.	949-494-0761	Spanish	•	•	•
<b>LAKE FOREST</b>						
Centiva Health Center	22481 Aspen St., Suite A	949-240-2272	Spanish, French, Tagalog	•	•	•

Provider education – talking points/script

**Latent TB Infection (LTBI) Talking Points for Civil Surgeons and Office Staff**

These simplified talking points can be used by civil surgeons and their office staff (e.g., nurses, medical assistants) throughout the process of tuberculosis (TB) testing during immigration medical examinations for those seeking lawful permanent residency. **The goal is to encourage patients diagnosed with LTBI to start and complete treatment.**

**At the time of Interferon-Gamma Release Assay (IGRA) blood test**

- A tuberculosis (or TB) test is required as part of your immigration medical evaluation.
- TB is a disease spread through the air. Most people do not know they are infected.
- There are 2 stages of TB: 1) The latent or sleeping stage, where patients have no symptoms; and 2) The active stage where patients can be sick and spread the germ to others.
- Having a prior TB vaccine (BCG) will not affect the blood test.
- If your blood test comes back positive for TB that means you are infected with the TB germ and we will talk to you about next steps.
- Do you have any questions about TB right now?

**At the time of positive IGRA**

- Your TB blood test is positive. This means that you have TB in your body and are infected with the TB germ. We need to determine which stage of TB you have. There are 2 stages of TB: 1) The latent or sleeping stage, where patients have no symptoms; and 2) The active stage where patients can be sick and spread the germ to others.
- Either way, TB is preventable and curable.
- I am going to ask you about TB symptoms now. Do you have any of the following: cough for more than 2-3 weeks, coughing up blood, fever, loss of appetite, unexplained weight loss, or night sweats? If symptoms are present then recommend chest X-ray and mask precautions. Note that any applicant with signs/symptoms of active TB should be referred to the health department, regardless of IGRA or chest X-ray results.
- The next step is to get a chest X-ray. (Provide chest X-ray instructions)
- We will contact you with the chest X-ray results. Depending on the results, we may need more tests.

**At the time of negative chest X-ray (LTBI diagnosis)**

- Your chest X-ray is normal. This means that you have latent TB infection (or LTBI) and the TB bacteria are sleeping in your body. You are not sick and cannot spread TB to others. We recommend that you take treatment for LTBI now. LTBI is easier to treat than TB disease. Even though you don't feel sick, taking medicine now may protect you and your family from getting sick in the future.
- Having or treating LTBI will NOT affect or delay your immigration application.
- There are antibiotics for TB that can kill the bacteria and help protect you from getting sick. This will also protect others around you from getting sick.
- Location of LTBI treatment and linkage to care differs by county. Here are some example statements that TB programs can offer, depending on the local infrastructure and practice:
  - I recommend that you take TB treatment and can provide this treatment to you (if civil surgeon is able to treat)
  - I am going to refer you to the health department to help with TB treatment.
  - I am going to refer you to your primary care provider (PCP) to help with TB treatment.
  - Since you don't have a primary care provider, I will provide you a list of clinics where you can go to get TB treatment.

**\*If chest X-ray is abnormal, immediately contact your local health department to refer/report suspected active TB. Information about contacting your local health department can be found here: <https://ctca.org/web-content/uspbdx/CTCA-Directory.pdf>**

For more information or resources, please visit the California TB Controllers Association (CTCA) website at: <https://ctca.org/>

## RESULTS

We identified three main gaps: 1) additional LTBI education needed for status adjusters, 2) absence of a concrete referral plan for status adjusters with LTBI to obtain treatment, 3) lack of treatment information collected in CaREDIE. We created and disseminated interventions to address these gaps in July 2023, including:

### Patient Education

- a brochure specific to status adjusters emphasizing the importance of LTBI treatment
- a poster on immigration screening for TB, to display in clinic areas

### Provider Education

- LTBI talking points for civil surgeons and office staff to use throughout status adjusters' clinic visits

### Linkage to Care

- a letter sent to status adjusters who are unreachable after 3 attempts from the health department
- a list of clinics in Orange County offering LTBI treatment
- a referral form with the civil surgeon's recommendation to begin treatment

### Reporting

- begin entering specific referral and treatment information into CaREDIE

## CONCLUSION

We identified important gaps in starting and tracking treatment for status adjusters with LTBI. Interventions are currently being implemented that seek to increase LTBI education, referrals to treatment for status adjusters with LTBI, and LTBI treatment reporting.

## NEXT STEPS

- Assess intervention effectiveness during 2023-2024, and expect findings to inform statewide efforts to optimize LTBI care continuum and prevent TB disease
- Translate materials to other languages
- Make the materials more widely available as part of statewide toolkit

Interested in these materials? Email [tbcbandcdph.ca.gov](mailto:tbcbandcdph.ca.gov)

