



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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TB testing finds two additional patients in Perry County, treatment underway

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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As part of the Marion, Perry County, tuberculosis (TB) screening effort, the Alabama Department of Public Health announces that it has found two additional patients in Marion with TB disease. One patient is an adult and one patient is a child less than 15 years of age.

The child was diagnosed very early through the Health Department's screening program before having symptoms of TB disease. The child had been in very close contact with an adult who had TB disease. Both of the new patients and another adult patient whose TB disease was confirmed earlier are on TB medication and doing well.

Dr. Karen Landers, pediatrician and medical consultant for ADPH, states, "Our two goals are to find patients infected with the TB germ and patients who have TB disease. We can now treat the patients to prevent additional cases of TB disease and the spread of the TB germ to others."

Pediatric TB disease is uncommon with Alabama; there were a total of three patients with pediatric disease in Alabama in 2015. Dr. Landers states, "Children get TB disease from adults. Because it is difficult for children to cough up many TB germs, children generally do not spread TB disease to others."

As of Feb. 2, 2016, the Health Department had screened 2,023 patients in Marion, Perry County. A total of 394 children were tested as part of the screening process and 7 children were identified as having the TB germ. Altogether, a total of 151 patients have tested positive for the TB germ. Patients with the TB germ are not contagious and cannot transmit the TB germ to other people. Most of these patients have received chest X-rays and are starting on medicine to prevent them from getting TB disease. The remaining patients have appointments to have chest X-rays within the next week.

The Health Department will offer an additional day for screening children at Francis Marion High School on Wednesday, Feb. 10. This screening will be for Francis Marion students only and will be free to students. All testing results will be confidential and will be given only to parents/guardians.

John H. Heard, III, Superintendent of the Perry County School System, stated, "We believe the science of how TB is transmitted and treated is sound. Children, especially younger children,

generally do not spread TB. Our schools remain safe for students and staff. However, we want to ensure that our students, staff, parents and community know that every effort is being taken to prevent the spread of this disease and maintain a safe school environment. Therefore, we fully support offering testing to students and staff at Francis Marion School that have not been tested previously.”

The Board of Education has been working with the Health Department since the screening effort began. Dr. Landers states, “The Perry County Board of Education has been very engaged in protecting the health of the children of Perry County and attended a special program about TB which I presented. We feel it is important to offer an additional voluntary opportunity for testing so that parents who were unable to have their children screened in the first round of testing can choose to do so if they wish. We are trying to make this as convenient as possible without parents having to worry about transportation or missed classes.”

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