

# Preventive Health and Health Services Block Grant SUCCESS STORY 2017

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## **TB-Free California**

### **A California Initiative Works with Local Partners to Eliminate Tuberculosis**

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**Issue:** Every week, Dr. Julie Low, Orange County's Tuberculosis Controller, consults on new patients with tuberculosis (TB) and strategizes how to treat them. Orange is the county with the third highest number of TB cases in the state.<sup>1</sup>

Although TB has declined, the current rate of decline is too slow to achieve TB elimination in the U.S. during this century<sup>2</sup> - unless we do something differently. Fueling the TB epidemic is a pool of individuals with latent TB infection (LTBI), where TB bacteria hides in the body for years without causing symptoms. Unfortunately, some individuals with LTBI develop infectious TB disease, leading to serious illness and about 200 deaths per year in California.<sup>3</sup>

Fortunately, with preventive treatment, the large proportion of infectious TB cases in California that arise from LTBI can be avoided.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, scaling up diagnosis and treatment of LTBI will enable significant progress towards our goal of TB elimination in California.<sup>5,6</sup>

Increasing diagnosis and treatment relies on community healthcare providers, who are most likely to interact with people at high risk for LTBI. However, LTBI screening is not yet a routine part of primary care. TB Free California is supporting and working in collaboration with county public health departments and community health providers to help them make progress in testing and treating LTBI.

**Intervention:** The TB Free California team is collaborating with Dr. Low and Orange County TB Control and clinicians at the University of California, Irvine's Family Health Clinic (FHC) in Santa Ana to reach out to patients at risk for LTBI, such as people born outside of the US in high TB burden countries. One strategy under development is conducting LTBI patient education during group medical visits for diabetes to encourage patients to get tested for LTBI.

This partnership is training clinicians on LTBI screening and treatment protocols and developing scripts to help them counsel patients. To address patient barriers to screening and treatment, the group is collaborating with local healthcare providers, working with specific cultural groups, to develop culturally and linguistically appropriate patient education materials.

**Impact:** TB Free California is well positioned to bring together and coordinate key collaborators - from community clinicians to health department personnel to state experts - to enable local champions like Dr. Low and the Santa Ana FHC to make headway in preventing TB disease in their community.

With the help of the Preventive Health and Health Services Block Grant, TB Free California project staff members are supporting Orange County's efforts to screen and treat LTBI in high-risk populations by:

- Conducting clinician education sessions to increase their capacity and comfort with LTBI testing and treatment
- Providing LTBI clinical guidelines
- Offering expert consultation for clinicians on LTBI
- Assisting the clinic to develop a work flow to log patient information on LTBI testing and treatment in the electronic health record
- Developing clinician scripts to discuss LTBI with patients and to follow-up with monthly symptom screening calls
- Creating educational tools tailored to the linguistic and cultural needs of each patient to help them understand the risks of LTBI, the benefits of treatment and to reduce barriers to treatment

1. Tuberculosis Control Branch, Report on Tuberculosis in California, 2016. California Department of Public Health, Richmond, CA. August 2017.
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3. Tuberculosis Control Branch, Report on Tuberculosis in California, 2016. California Department of Public Health, Richmond, CA. August 2017.
4. Barry PM, Kay AW, Flood JM et al. Getting to zero: tuberculosis elimination in California. *Current Epidemiologic Reports* 2016;3:136-44. Epub 2016/05/25. doi: 10.1007/s40471-016-0076-6.
5. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Tuberculosis among foreign-born persons diagnosed  $\geq 10$  years after arrival in the United States, 2010-2015. *MMWR* 2017;66(11):295-8. Epub 2017/03/24. doi: 10.15585/mmwr.mm6611a3.
6. Bayer R, Castro KG. Tuberculosis elimination in the United States - the need for renewed action. *New England Journal of Medicine* 2017;377(12):1109-11. Epub 2017/09/21. doi: 10.1056/NEJMp1707387.