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Screening Available for Those Who May Have Been Exposed to Tuberculosis
Press Conference Scheduled for Noon to Discuss Outbreak

Cincinnati (May 4, 2007) Seven active cases of tuberculosis have been reported since January among people connected to the Drop Inn Center homeless shelter and Hamilton County Tuberculosis Control wants everyone who spent at least four hours there between October 12 and Feb. 7 to be screened for the disease.

Hamilton County Tuberculosis Control has been working with the Drop Inn Center and more than 20 Over-the-Rhine social service agencies to screen residents, employees, volunteers and others who may have been exposed, but there is concern not everyone is aware they were at risk. Approximately 800 people spent the night at the shelter during that time, and only 200 have been screened so far. In addition, Hamilton County Tuberculosis Control would like to screen anyone who spent four hours or more at the center as a volunteer or for other activities.

A press conference to discuss the outbreak has been scheduled for noon at the county's Tuberculosis Control Center, 184 East McMillan St., at the intersection of McMillan and Highland streets.

Hamilton County has about 25 to 30 cases of active tuberculosis a year. Tuberculosis is caused by a germ that is passed to others through the air when a person with an active case of the disease coughs, talks, laughs or breathes. Generally, frequent prolonged contact is needed to become infected with tuberculosis germs.

The seven active cases all share the same DNA and were all connected to people who stayed at the shelter from October to February. Those people also used other social services in Over-the-Rhine.

“There’s certainly no reason to over react here, but, if you or any of your clients from Over-the-Rhine’s social service agencies think you might have been exposed to the disease during this time, the best thing to do is call,” said Dr. Lisa Haglund, medical director for Tuberculosis Control, which is overseen by Hamilton County’s Department of Job and Family Services. “Someone could have been infected and not necessarily feel sick. It is best to clear up the matter as soon as possible. If we determine you need a test, it is a simple procedure.”

The signs and symptoms of active pulmonary TB are: fever, cough, chills, night sweats, weight loss, fatigue, shortness of breath, chest pain and coughing up blood. A person with active TB disease generally has two or more symptoms and has had those symptoms for more than three weeks.

Anyone who is at risk of exposure should have a TB screening. A positive skin test does not mean the person has active TB. Those who test positive must have a chest x-ray to determine if they have an active case of the disease.

“Anyone with an active case of TB must be treated with a long course of antibiotics to cure the disease and prevent further transmission,” Haglund said. “Anyone who is found to be infected with TB as a result of screening will be offered preventive therapy.”

Those experiencing symptoms or those who think they may have been exposed should call Tuberculosis Control at 946-7618 or 946-7604.

About Hamilton County’s Department of Job and Family Services

The Department of Job and Family Services administers federal, state and local programs for those in need. The Department helps with local child protection, adult protection, child care, tuberculosis control, child support enforcement, workforce development, cash assistance, food stamp disbursement and Medicaid disbursement. Servicing Hamilton County since 1947, the Department helps hundreds of thousands of residents each year. The Department of Job and Family Services is accredited by the Council on Accreditation, an international, independent, not-for-profit child and family service accrediting organization.