

Communicable Diseases – Reporting and Services (October 2018)

Physicians play a critical role in the prompt reporting of communicable diseases and can make the difference between an outbreak being prevented or occurring. A number of outbreaks or situations, such as the West Nile Virus, recent pertussis outbreaks, some enteric outbreaks, or meningococcal meningitis, were initially identified as the result of reporting by astute clinicians to public health authorities.

Diseases or situations such as meningococcal meningitis or sepsis, invasive Group A Streptococcal infections with Toxic Shock Syndrome, hepatitis A or enteric infections in food handlers or childcare workers, tuberculosis, or diseases that are a possible indicator of bioterrorism, can require immediate public health responses by the Westchester County Department of Health. Time sensitive or special specimen collection or testing also can be required for these situations. Timely reporting of communicable diseases by clinicians also permits public health agencies to identify newly emerging infections, detect outbreaks, stop the spread of infections, and evaluate the efficacy of control measures. For some diseases, every hour can make a difference in preventing illness and death. A physician's report of such diseases is thus critical since laboratory results may be not available or non-diagnostic initially, even in the presence of disease. A physician's report of suspected/confirmed cases may be the only notification the health department receives.

What is required and how to report?

Reporting of suspected or confirmed communicable diseases is mandated under the New York Sanitary Code (10NYCRR 2.10) and Westchester County Sanitary Code Article IV, Section 873.402. The primary responsibility for reporting rests with the physician; however, laboratories (PHL 2102), school nurses (10NYCRR 2.12), day care center directors, nursing homes/hospitals (10NYCRR 405.3d) and state institutions (10NYCRR 2.10a) or other locations providing health services (10NYCRR 2.12) are also required to report the certain diseases. Reporting is required to the county health department in which the patient resides; in Westchester County these are posted on the health department website at: http://health.westchestergov.com/images/stories/corner/WCDH_Reporting_Requirements_Apr2014.pdf

Reporting of communicable diseases, as required by law, to local or state health departments is permitted under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). Providers are not required to obtain patient consent before providing this information to health departments.

Certain reportable diseases require **immediate reporting by phone** to WCDH due to the severity of the disease, the need for an immediate public health response such as the need to immediately isolate the infected individual, exclude the individual from work, school, childcare, etc., the need for immediate post exposure prophylaxis with antibiotics or vaccination of exposed contacts, or due to the disease as a marker of potential bioterrorism. Any **suspected or confirmed** cases of these high priority diseases should immediately be reported to WCDH at **914-813-5159** during office hours or **914-813-5000 24 hrs/day, 7 days/week**. **Reporting of these priority diseases or situations should NOT await laboratory confirmation.**

The remaining diseases on the list must be reported by phone, fax, or electronic means to WCDH **within 1 working day** of diagnosis or suspected diagnosis. Reporting requirements for HIV and AIDS vary from other communicable diseases reporting and can be found at <https://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/aids/providers/regulations/>

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Westchester County Department of Health (WCDH) provides the following services for these communicable diseases:

- **Appropriate control measures** – identification and implementation of measures to prevent the spread of reportable diseases. These include vaccinations, food recalls, removal of contaminated blood or pharmaceutical products, closure of potential sources of infections such as food service establishments and pools, and excluding infectious individuals from school, childcare, or work.
- **Case Management** – WCDH assures that patients with reportable communicable diseases:
 - receive, are compliant with, and complete appropriate treatment,
 - are appropriately isolated/quarantined, or otherwise prevented from having contact with others until non-infectious,
 - receive diagnostic testing, including making arrangements for testing that is not commercially available,
 - receive medications and medical monitoring,
 - receive hospital visits by health department nursing staff for TB cases, or home visits for certain types of infectious enteric infections, hepatitis, vaccine preventable diseases (e.g. mumps, chickenpox)
 - receive one on one education regarding their illness and prevention of such illness
- **Case/Contact Investigation & Testing**- WCDH identifies individuals who have been exposed to contagious diseases and who are at risk of becoming infected/ill, offers on-site testing for TB, vaccination of individuals exposed to a vaccine preventable disease, medical evaluation and treatment, or referrals to such, and education.
- **Post Exposure Prophylaxis** – For many diseases, including meningococcal meningitis, hepatitis, measles, pertussis, and rabies, timely treatment with antibiotics, or vaccination following exposure can prevent illness. WCDH routinely provides or arranges for post exposure treatment for exposed individuals to prevent additional infections in these individuals. With some diseases, such as TB or sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), timely treatment of contacts can prevent illness even following infection.
- **Physician consultation** – WCDH routinely provides consultation to physicians by infectious diseases specialists and access to state and other public health resources. Infectious Disease or Pulmonary physician consultation is routinely provided for all active TB cases, and a significant number of STD, and other communicable disease cases.
- **Medical Services** – WCDH Clinics in Yonkers and White Plains, provide comprehensive TB and STD evaluation, testing and treatment, HIV testing, and Immunizations for some individuals without any out of pocket costs to patients. WCDH provides the TB medical care to about 75% of active TB cases in Westchester County and STD medical care to approximately 5-10% of individuals in Westchester County with reportable STD's. No appointment is required for STD Clinics. A schedule of WCDH clinic services is available at: <https://health.westchestergov.com/images/stories/pdfs/ClinicSchedule2018.pdf>
- **Directly Observed Therapy (DOT)** – To ensure complete and appropriate treatment, a WCDH staff observes each patient with active TB and each patient who was exposed to TB that is at high risk of developing active TB (latent TB), either in person or by video, take every dose of every TB medication for the duration of treatment in the home, workplace or wherever it is convenient for a patient. In 2017, WCDH conducted over 5000 DOT or video DOT encounters for individuals with active and latent TB. For sexually transmitted diseases (STD) patients DOT is provided at STD walk in clinics.
- **Surveillance/Epidemiology** - WCDH collects, analyzes, and monitors population based data for Westchester County residents, including risk factors and sources of infection and develops measures specific to Westchester County for preventing such infections
- **Prevention Education/Outreach** - In addition to the one on one education described above under case management services, WCDH provides education to patients, the medical community, high risk populations and community institutions.

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During 2017, WCDH received over 26,000 case reports of reportable communicable diseases. Monthly morbidity data for reportable communicable diseases is available at:

<http://health.westchestergov.com/2017-03-10-16-09/monthly-morbidity-reports>

The most current available data regarding specific communicable diseases in Westchester County is available at: [https://health.westchestergov.com/images/stories/Data-Stats/CHA-](https://health.westchestergov.com/images/stories/Data-Stats/CHA-CommunicableDiseases20162.pdf)

[CommunicableDiseases20162.pdf](https://health.westchestergov.com/images/stories/Data-Stats/CHA-CommunicableDiseases20162.pdf)

Additional information regarding clinic services, appointments, physician medical consultation, DOT services, infection control and contact investigation is available at:

<http://health.westchestergov.com/guidelines-and-forms> or

914-995-5800 for TB and all TB, STD, and Immunization Clinical Services

914-813-5159 for all other Communicable Diseases, and all HIV and STD Services except Clinics