

WAC 246-170-002 Findings and purpose. (1) The board of health finds that:

(a) Pulmonary tuberculosis is a life-threatening airborne disease that can be casually transmitted without significant interaction with an infectious person. Tuberculosis has reemerged as an epidemic disease nationally, and though Washington state is not in an epidemic yet, the increasing number of cases in Washington state each year clearly demonstrate that absent timely and effective public health intervention in individual cases, the residents of the state of Washington are at risk of being infected by tuberculosis.

(b) In order to limit the spread of tuberculosis, it is essential that individuals who have the disease are diagnosed and treated before they infect others. Diagnosis requires a variety of methodologies including skin tests, X-rays, and laboratory analysis of sputum samples.

(c) A person with infectious tuberculosis who does not voluntarily submit to appropriate testing, treatment, or infection control methods poses an unreasonable risk of spreading the disease to those who come into the infectious person's proximity.

(d) Although the recommended course of treatment for tuberculosis varies somewhat from one individual to another, at a minimum, effective treatment requires a long-term regimen of multiple drug therapy. Some drugs are effective with some individuals but not others. The development of the appropriate course of treatment for any one individual may require trying different combinations of drugs and repeated drug susceptibility testing. The course of treatment may require as long as several years to complete.

(e) A person who begins a course of treatment for tuberculosis and fails to follow the recommended course through to completion is highly likely to relapse at some point into infectious tuberculosis. The person will most likely then be infected with what is known as multiple drug resistant tuberculosis, which is more virulent, more difficult to treat, and more likely to result in fatality. A person who is infectious with multiple drug resistant tuberculosis poses a significant risk of transmitting multiple drug resistant tuberculosis to other persons, unless appropriate treatment and infection control methods are followed.

(f) Multiple drug resistant tuberculosis is a significant element in the epidemic that is being encountered nation-wide, and effective public health interventions are necessary to prevent that epidemic from developing in or spreading to Washington state.

(2) The following rules are adopted for the purpose of establishing standards necessary to protect the public health by:

(a) Assuring the diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of tuberculosis; and

(b) Assuring that the highest priority is given to providing appropriate individualized preventive and curative treatment in the least restrictive setting.

[Statutory Authority: ESB 6158 and chapter 70.28 RCW. WSR 95-04-035, § 246-170-002, filed 1/24/95, effective 1/24/95.]