

# BULLETIN

A PUBLICATION OF THE COUNTY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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## HEALTH OFFICER NOTES

*Penny Borenstein, M.D., M.P.H.*



## IMPROVING HEALTH ACROSS OUR COMMUNITY

As clinicians, we know that much of a patient’s health happens outside our office. We provide care, we treat illness and injuries when needed, and we counsel patients on how to best care for themselves. Sometimes we coordinate with each other and with other service providers to deliver follow-up care.

Then we must trust that our patients, with their families, will be able to tap into an unseen structure of support that allows them to stay well.

Will they be able to fill their prescriptions and get follow-up appointments? Are they able to eat in a way that helps them stay healthy? Do they have a safe place to rest and to go for a walk? If their life gets overwhelming, where will they turn?

Building and fostering this often-invisible system of support—a community that makes healthy choices attainable—is at the heart of our work at Public Health. I am honored to announce that together with partners across our community, we are taking an important step in this effort with the 2024-2029 SLO County Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP).

This plan addresses the unique needs and strengths of SLO County today.

It is based on analysis of the Community Health Assessment released in August 2023, which brings together information from primary local sources (such as disease reports and death certificates), multiple state-level data sets and the results of a countywide survey with more than 3,700 responses from residents.

The plan was developed by SLO Health Counts, a collaborative of community members, nonprofits, government agencies, cities, schools, and leaders in SLO County working together toward the shared goal of a healthy, thriving community. Our Public Health Department convenes and provides staff support to this community-led collaborative. The plan acts as a roadmap for how the Public Health Department and community partners will work together to counter preventable health hazards and improve community well-being over the long term. The plan builds on three pillars:

**Access to Care:** Meaningful access to care that allows residents to get healthcare and services in a way that is affordable, culturally and linguistically appropriate, and available to all. I know this issue is near and dear to many of you, who may be reading this with awareness of the limitations of our health care system. This CHIP plan builds on and connects with that of the SLO Healthcare Workforce Partnership (discussed in last Bulletin) and includes a focus on recruiting and retaining healthcare providers on the Central Coast.

**Mental Health and Substance Use:** Thriving communities include opportunities for people to get socio-emotional support and, when needed, treatment for mental health challenges and substance use.

Objectives in this area include reducing drug-related deaths and suicide deaths, as well as connecting more teens and more parents with mental health supports.

**Healthy Neighborhoods:** Socially cohesive, vibrant neighborhoods allow people to connect with each other, safely walk and bike, access healthy food, and enjoy parks and open space. Objectives in this part of the plan focus on access to housing, resilience and preparation for climate change, investment in bike and pedestrian improvements, enhanced food access, and safe community spaces such as parks.

This plan is ambitious. It has aspirational goals that we plan to CHIP away at in the coming years. It reflects a great deal of thoughtful strategy and deep understanding of local health data on the part of the community leaders and Public Health staff who contributed to its development.

I thank everyone who has played a part in developing this community health improvement plan and all those who will now do the tough and important work of putting it into action.

If this conversation piques your interest, I encourage you to take a look at the full plan and let me know if you or your organization would like to be part of making it a reality.

Thank you for your attention,



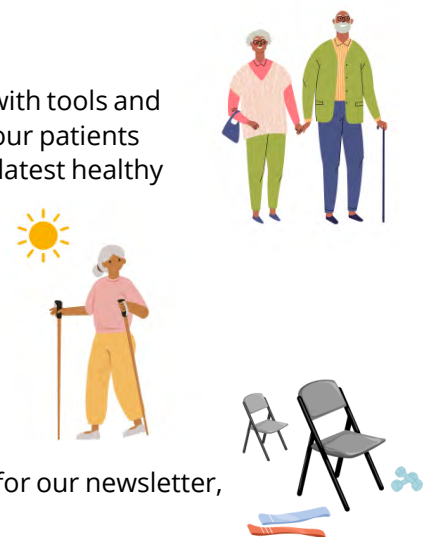
## PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT: HEALTHY AGING

Our Healthy Aging Services empower older adults and their families and caregivers with tools and knowledge to support their health, independence, and overall wellbeing. Whether your patients are seeking ways to stay active, maintain mental sharpness, or stay informed on the latest healthy aging news and resources, we're here to assist on the journey.

We provide education in English and Spanish, including:

- Brain health classes addressing dementia prevention, including Alzheimer's
- Fall prevention classes and home safety assessments
- Community fitness classes for older adults
- ... and more!

Visit [slocounty.gov/healthyaging](https://slocounty.gov/healthyaging) or call us at **805-781-4897** to learn more, sign up for our newsletter, and connect with us for clinician-specific resources and advice.



# TREATING LATENT TUBERCULOSIS AS A COMMUNITY

The World Health Organization (WHO) recently announced that Tuberculosis (TB) has “returned to being the world’s leading cause of death from a single infectious agent,” following three years in which COVID-19 held that unfortunate position. WHO added that TB is also the leading killer of people with HIV worldwide and a major cause of deaths related to antimicrobial resistance.

While the United States is considered a low-incidence country for TB, the CDC estimates that up to 13 million people in the United States have latent TB infection.

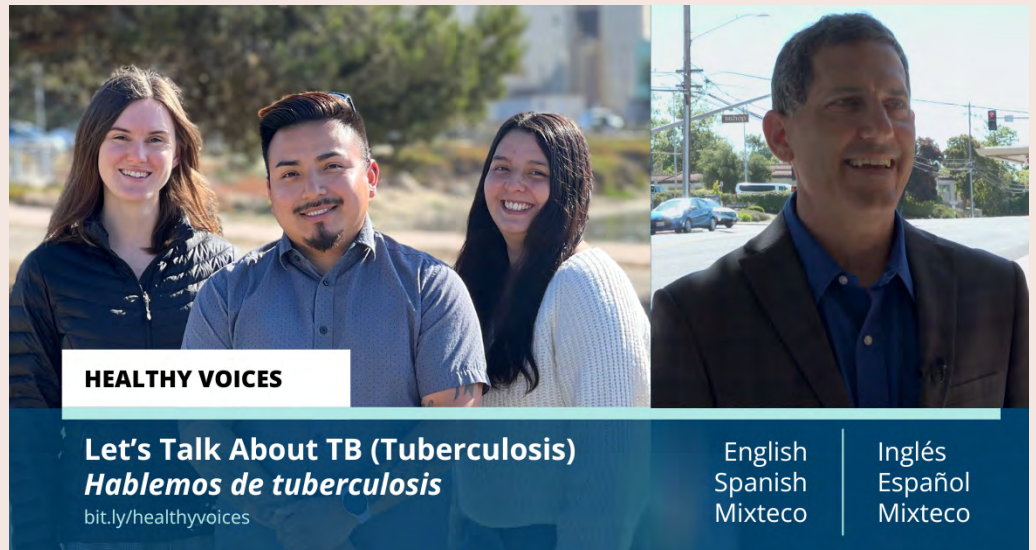
Here in California, TB is much more common than in the U.S. as a whole: the rate in California is 5.4 per 100,000 people, about twice the national rate. It’s estimated that about 6% of Californians have latent TB, including many children. 83% of people diagnosed with TB in California were born outside the U.S. The largest number of patients were born in Mexico, followed by the Philippines, Vietnam, and China.

Without treatment, about 5%–10% of infected people will develop TB disease over their lifetimes. These cases in which untreated latent TB develops into active TB disease account for about 80% of TB cases in the U.S.

To prevent growing numbers of active TB disease, the Public Health Department has increased efforts to connect those with latent tuberculosis infection to treatment. Identifying and treating community members who have latent TB infection is essential for controlling and ultimately eliminating TB disease in the United States.

The Public Health Department has increased active efforts to identify and treat latent TB through:

**Outreach to large employers where staff and volunteers are routinely tested to emphasize linkage to treatment when latent TB is diagnosed.** Individuals with latent TB may receive treatment through their primary care providers, or through the Public Health Department when treatment for latent TB through primary care is not possible. We wish to thank Adventist Health, Dignity Health, and our local school districts for their diligence in this area.



*Check out our recent patient education videos on treating latent TB in SLO County, available in English, Spanish, and Mixteco at <https://bit.ly/healthyvoices>.*

**Outreach to patients with a positive Quantiferon test** to help connect patients with further evaluation and, if a diagnosis of latent tuberculosis results, with treatment through their primary care provider or through the Public Health Department.

This collaboration and outreach has increased treatment of latent TB, helping protect residents and their families as well as our community as a whole from future cases of active TB. In 2024, Public Health Department teams were able to identify 76 community members with latent TB and connect more than 50 of them with treatment, with more than 10 currently in process. This is up from 21 cases noted in 2023, in part because of broader outreach to those who had a positive Quantiferon test.

All healthcare providers in our community can play a role in reducing our community’s risk of TB by encouraging appropriate testing, and treatment for latent TB. Detailed information regarding the diagnosis and treatment of latent TB can be found in the California Tuberculosis Controllers Association guidance at [ctca.org/guidelines/guidelines-latent-tuberculosis-infection-guideline](https://ctca.org/guidelines/guidelines-latent-tuberculosis-infection-guideline). If your practice does not treat latent TB, please refer patients to Public Health to complete their treatment. (You can learn about our treatment process at [slocounty.gov/tbtreatment](https://slocounty.gov/tbtreatment).)

If you would like to learn more or access resources regarding TB screening, testing, and treatment, please reach out to us at 805-781-5500 or [publichealth.contact@co.slo.ca.us](mailto:publichealth.contact@co.slo.ca.us). ■



## California Child and Adolescent Mental Health Access Portal

# Cal-MAP

*Licensed clinicians delivering primary care or school-based health care to children and youth under age 25 now have a new place to turn for immediate no-cost consultation addressing mental and behavioral health. Since launching statewide in 2024, Cal-MAP has provided more than 4,000 consultations to California clinicians.*



[www.cal-map.org](http://www.cal-map.org)



1-800-253-2103

### What is Cal-MAP:

The California Child and Adolescent Mental Health Access Portal (Cal-MAP) is a CalHOPE pediatric mental health care access program. Cal-MAP's team of psychiatrists, psychologists and social workers are available to clinicians for on-the-spot patient assistance or by appointment. Cal-MAP also provides education, CME events, care coordination, and more.

### Who can use these services:

Cal-MAP is available to all licensed clinicians delivering primary care or school-based health care to youth ages 0-25. This includes doctors, nurses, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, and others.

### To register:

Registration is required as an individual or as a group. The process takes 10-15 minutes.

Register at:

[cal-map.org](http://cal-map.org)

### To request a consultation:

Clinicians may request a consultation online or by calling for immediate support:

[cal-map.org](http://cal-map.org) (Any time)

800-253-2103 (M-F, 8:30-4:30)

# BEHIND THE NUMBERS: SYPHILIS

Syphilis has trended upward nationally, statewide, and locally in recent years. Left untreated, syphilis can cause serious health complications and for pregnant mothers it can pose a significant risk for the mother and child. San Luis Obispo County has seen increases in syphilis (all stages), with 100 cases in 2022, 81 in 2023 and more than 90 in 2024 so far; this is a strong deviation from the pre-pandemic 5-year average of 56 cases (2015 to 2019). While syphilis (all stages) has rebounded to pre-pandemic levels or higher, primary/secondary syphilis numbers have reached a 10-year high and latent syphilis numbers have nearly doubled compared to pre-pandemic years.

**What is the Public Health Department doing?** Public Health monitors syphilis incidence closely and performs investigations on all syphilis cases regardless of stage. Additionally, Public Health staff remain up to date on national and statewide trends, including increases in congenital syphilis, and best practices for combatting this trend.

**What can you do?** Providers should follow the California Department of Public Health’s new Syphilis Screening Recommendations. This includes screening all sexually active persons 15-44 years old, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity, annually after their initial screening; all pregnant persons should be screened at least three times during their pregnancy; and especially at the ER, clinicians should proactively treat patients with signs and symptoms of syphilis rather than waiting for test results, as results may lag and some patients may be lost to follow-up. ■

DISEASE	YEAR 2023					YEAR 2024				
	Jan-Mar	Apr-Jun	Jul-Sep	Oct-Dec	Total Cases	Jan-Mar	Apr-Jun	Jul-Sep	Oct-Dec	Total Cases
AIDS	<5	<5	<5	<5	6	<5	<5	<5		<5
Campylobacteriosis	19	36	36	18	109	22	29	16		67
Chlamydia	264	209	206	212	891	186	146	173		505
Coccidioidomycosis	27	21	32	164	244	105	70	116		291
Cryptosporidiosis	<5	<5	<5	0	8	<5	<5	<5		<5
E. Coli	5	6	7	6	24	<5	<5	13		20
Giardiasis	<5	8	0	<5	14	6	7	<5		13+
Gonorrhea	55	51	42	34	182	37	42	53		132
Hepatitis B	<5	<5	10	6	23	5	11	<5		16+
Hepatitis C (Community)	22	20	20	18	80	13	16	13		42
Hepatitis C (Correctional)	11	13	9	11	44	9	13	<5		22+
HIV	5	<5	6	<5	16	<5	<5	<5		<5
Legionellosis	<5	<5	<5	<5	9	<5	<5	<5		7
Meningitis	<5	7	<5	<5	15	<5	<5	<5		<5
Pertussis	0	0	<5	0	<5	<5	<5	<5		6
Salmonellosis	10	11	15	11	47	6	16	19		41
Shigellosis	<5	<5	5	<5	12	7	<5	<5		11
Syphilis Primary/Secondary	5	<5	<5	<5	16	6	8	8		22
Syphilis Latent	15	12	8	7	42	7	18	15		40
Syphilis (Other)	7	8	6	<5	21+	9	8	<5		17+
Tuberculosis (Active)	<5	<5	<5	<5	10	<5	0	0		<5
Tuberculosis (Latent)	7	5	11	6	29	11	36	24		71
Vibriosis	<5	<5	0	<5	<5	<5	<5	<5		<5

Case counts may change over time as a result of de-duplication efforts, case follow-up ending, and/or as a result of historical tests or retroactive findings. All cases are for San Luis Obispo County residents only. For more information, please visit [slocounty.ca.gov/epidemiology](http://slocounty.ca.gov/epidemiology).



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## WHAT'S NEW AT PUBLIC HEALTH?

**SLO County healthcare leaders and advocates connected recently for the 2024 SLO County Healthcare Workforce Forum**, where they strategized how our community can create more pathways into healthcare careers, increase the number of providers in our area, and capitalize on regional projects and national policy to better support our existing workforce and their patients. After the forum, students and career changers joined employers for a career fair to learn about local healthcare jobs. Learn more about this exciting work to build and support our local healthcare community at [slohealthcareworkforce.org](http://slohealthcareworkforce.org).

**SLO County has a new resource to help protect health with good indoor air quality**, thanks to a bilingual publication from the Public Health Department, *Fizz The Fuzz: An adventure through the seasons to improve indoor air quality (IAQ)*. This children's story integrates practical low-cost steps we can all take to improve air quality indoors throughout the year. Childcare providers and educators can pick up copies of the book at locations throughout SLO County and can request a classroom reading in English or Spanish. Learn more and find resources for protecting indoor air quality at [slocounty.gov/Fizz](http://slocounty.gov/Fizz).



**Updated data is available at SLOHealthCounts.org.**

The latest data highlights trends including a decrease in coronary heart disease and a rise in drug overdose deaths. Rates are shown as 3-year average age-adjusted rates (per 100,000 population) and are displayed across multiple years. Learn more and see the updated data at [SLOHealthCounts.org](http://SLOHealthCounts.org).

**PrEP payment assistance program enrollment is now available at Public Health.**

Patients can now get PrEP at Public Health to help protect against HIV. Our team can also help patients sign up for the California PrEP Assistance Program, which helps pay for the medicine and its related costs. Learn more at [slocounty.gov/prep](http://slocounty.gov/prep). ■