



Minnesota Department of Health
121 East Seventh Place
P.O. Box 64975
St. Paul, MN 55164-0975

May 13, 1997

Mr. Dennis L. Falenschek
Program Manager, Inspection and
Enforcement Unit
Department of Corrections
1450 Energy Park Drive
St. Paul, Minnesota 55108

Dear Mr. Falenschek:

I am writing this letter in response to a recent conversation that you had with Dr. Kristine MacDonald regarding routine tuberculosis (TB) skin testing among residents and employees of juvenile detention facilities as specified in Minnesota Statutes Section 144.445, Tuberculosis Screening in Correctional Institutions and Facilities. We believe that persons working in or residing in juvenile detention facilities are not necessarily at higher risk for developing TB than their community counterparts. This is partly due to the relatively young age of residents and the fact that such facilities tend to house small numbers of persons where the risk of TB exposure is lower. In addition, it is our understanding that residents usually remain in such facilities for less than 7 days. Therefore, we believe that routine screening of employees or residents is not warranted at this time. According to the current statute "the Commissioner may waive any portion of the requirements of subdivisions 1-4 if the Commissioner of Health determines that it is not necessary to protect the public health or if the screening may have a detrimental effect on a person's health status." Because the risk of TB in this setting is low, I am writing to provide a "blanket" waiver to juvenile detention facilities indicating that screening of employees or residents of such facilities is not necessary from a public health perspective. However, facilities may wish to consider screening of persons who would otherwise be at high risk of TB or for whom TB screening may be medically indicated.

In writing this letter I am fulfilling the requirements for a waiver as specified in Minnesota Statutes Section 144.445. If you have any further questions on this issue, please don't hesitate to contact Dr. MacDonald at 612/623-5414.

Sincerely,



Anne M. Barry
Commissioner