



Public Health Department

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Health Advisory

To: Healthcare Providers

From: Linda Lewis, DVM, MPVM (signed original on file)

Date: September 30, 2021

Re: Important Communicable Disease Guidance for Evacuees arriving from Afghanistan

Butte County Department of Public Health (BCPH) would like to remind providers to be diligent when caring for individuals who have recently evacuated from Afghanistan. Clinicians should maintain a high index of suspicion for the possibility of tuberculosis, malaria, leishmaniasis, gastrointestinal illnesses, lice, scabies and vaccine preventable diseases such as measles, varicella, COVID-19, diphtheria, pertussis and Hepatitis A. More information on health conditions of Afghan evacuees can be found [here](#).

Background

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is actively supporting the arrival of Afghan evacuees in [Operation Allies Welcome](#). Evacuees from Afghanistan (except US Citizens and lawful permanent residents) were encouraged to travel to a designated Safe Haven location such as a military base in the U.S. At these Safe Havens, Afghan evacuees will receive vaccinations and medical screening, and be placed with local refugee resettlement agencies across the United States.

Some Afghan evacuees may not have gone to a Safe Haven before arriving at their final destination. In addition, evacuees who arrived early in the resettlement process were transported to other locations for temporary housing. For those who were not processed through a military base, clinicians should remain vigilant for signs and symptoms of communicable diseases.

Current Screening and Vaccinations at Safe Haven Locations

Currently all Afghan evacuees arriving through Safe Haven locations are being screened and vaccinated according to the [Technical Instructions for Civil Surgeons](#) with some modifications:

- Due to circulating measles and poliovirus in Afghanistan, one dose of each of the following vaccines will be offered as soon as possible after arrival at the bases, unless documentation of prior vaccination is available, or vaccination is medically contraindicated:
 - Measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR), for *all arrivals ≥6 months to 64 years of age* (born in or after 1957)
 - Inactivated polio virus vaccine (IPV), for *all arrivals aged 6 weeks and above*
- COVID-19 vaccine for age-eligible arrivals unless they have documentation of being fully vaccinated with a vaccine authorized for emergency use or approved by the US Food and Drug Administration or listed for emergency use by the World Health Organization

Tuberculosis (TB) screening is performed as per the [Technical Instructions for Civil Surgeons](#).

- Interferon-Gamma release assay (IGRA) test for arrivals 2 years of age and older, Some bases may use chest X-rays for arrivals 15 years of age and older, instead of IGRA.
 - Those with signs or symptoms of tuberculosis or history of HIV infection will be evaluated for TB infection/disease regardless of initial IGRA results

Guidance for Clinicians Evaluating Afghans NOT Processed at a Safe Haven Including Important Vaccination Guidance

All arrivals through a Safe Haven will be reminded to carry their medical records to future appointments, including their final destinations in the United States. Providers should request this information when evaluating patients arriving from Afghanistan.

If clinicians encounter arrivals from Afghanistan who do not have documentation of vaccination, it is imperative to provide the first dose of age-appropriate vaccines as defined by [Table 1 of the Vaccination Technical Instructions for Civil Surgeons](#), with broader age limits for MMR and polio vaccines, as well as COVID-19 vaccine, as soon as possible to protect the individual and the receiving community and meet the requirements to remain in the US.

Reporting

The health department works strategically to prevent and respond to disease outbreaks. Healthcare providers and laboratories are required by California State Law to report specific communicable diseases to the local public health department to aid in the monitoring of disease trends and outbreaks. Some diseases must be reported IMMEDIATELY or WITHIN ONE WORKING DAY. All others must be reported within 7 calendar days. For a complete list of reportable diseases and the reporting timeline requirements see the [Confidential Morbidity Report \(CMR\)](#).

For any questions regarding this Health Advisory or questions regarding communicable disease reporting, please call the Butte County Department of Public Health Communicable Disease Program at (530) 552-3929.

Resources

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: [Guidance for Clinicians Caring for Individuals Recently Evacuated from Afghanistan](#); [Immigrant, Refugee, and Migrant Health Vaccination](#); [Immigrant, Refugee, and Migrant Health Technical Instructions for Civil Surgeons](#)

U.S. Department of Homeland Security: [Operation Allies Welcome](#)

Butte County Department of Public Health: [Report a Disease/Outbreak](#)

Under Title 17, California Code of Regulations (CCR), failure to report is a misdemeanor (Health and Safety Code § 120295) and is a citable offense under the Medical Board of California's Citation and Fine Program (Title 16, CCR, § 1364).

Categories of urgency levels:

Health Alert: conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention

Health Advisory: provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action

Health Update: provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action