



County Technical Assistance Service

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Medical Screening

Dear Reader:

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We hope this information will be useful to you; reference to it will assist you with many of the questions that will arise in your tenure with county government. However, the *Tennessee Code Annotated* and other relevant laws or regulations should always be consulted before any action is taken based upon the contents of this document.

Please feel free to contact us if you have questions or comments regarding this information or any other e-Li material.

Sincerely,

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Medical Screening

Reference Number: CTAS-1371

An initial medical screening must be performed on all inmates upon admission to the jail prior to their placement in the general housing area. The findings shall be recorded on a printed screening form. The officer performing this duty shall check for:

1. A serious illness;
2. A comatose state;
3. Obvious wounds;
4. Prescribed medications; and,
5. Suicide risk assessment, including suicidal ideation or history of suicidal behavior or other mental health illness. [Rules of the Tennessee Corrections Institute, Rule 1400-1-.13\(8\)](#)

It is generally recognized that prompt medical screening is a medical necessity in pretrial detention facilities. When an inmate presents with a treatable medical problem, jail officials are required to ensure that the inmate receives proper medical treatment. See *Neal v. Swigert*, 2005 WL 1629779, *3 (S.D. Ohio 2005) (Conducting a rectal examination on an inmate complaining of urological problems during an initial medical screening does not amount to cruel and unusual punishment.); *Aaron v. Finkbinder*, 793 F.Supp. 734, 737 (E.D. Mich. 1992) (Sheriff's deputy who booked insulin-dependent diabetic prisoner was not deliberately indifferent to prisoner's medical needs, even though he failed to record on prisoner's medical screening chart that prisoner needed to be provided with insulin, where he called and advised clinic that prisoner was diabetic and in need of insulin.).

The nonconsensual testing of inmates for tuberculosis is constitutional. *Karlovetz v. Baker*, 872 F.Supp. 465 (N.D. Ohio 1994), citing *Dunn v. White*, 880 F.2d 1188 (10th Cir.1989) (holding that a nonconsensual test for HIV does not violate a prisoner's constitutional rights). It has been held that a prison's failure to test all incoming inmates for tuberculosis and other serious communicable diseases violates noninfected inmates' Eighth Amendment rights. *LaReau v. Manson*, 651 F.2d 96, 109 (2nd Cir.1981); *Gates v. Collier*, 501 F.2d 1291 (5th Cir. 1974) (same). Cf. *Zaire v. Dalsheim*, 698 F.Supp. 57, 60 (S.D. N.Y. 1988) (holding that the forcible administration of inoculations for diphtheria-tetanus administered solely for the protection of the prisoner and other inmates, and not for purposes such as illicit punishment or nonconsensual psychotherapy, did not violate the constitution), *aff'd*, 904 F.2d 33 (2d Cir. 1990); *Ormond v. State*, 599 So.2d 951, 957-958 (Miss. 1992) (holding that the state's interest in eliminating the spread of infectious disease among closely confined jail population outweighed any privacy interest of defendant; accordingly, taking defendant to health department for treatment of his gonorrhea did not violate the inmate's privacy interest).

Pursuant to Tennessee law, the sheriff is authorized to hire a female registered nurse and a male registered nurse who are authorized to make complete physical examinations of all persons committed to the custody of the sheriff for the purpose of preventing the spread of any contagious disease. Such physical examinations may include the taking of blood tests and Pap smear tests and any other tests that are approved and recommended by the county health officer. All females committed to the custody of the sheriff are to be examined only by the female registered nurse hired for that purpose, and all males committed to the custody of the sheriff are to be examined by the male nurse hired for that purpose. T.C.A. § 41-4-138. See *Haywood County v. Hudson*, 740 S.W.2d 718, 719 (Tenn. 1987); *George v. Harlan*, 1998 WL 668637, *4 (Tenn. 1998) ("It appears to this Court that the services of nurses to prevent the spread of disease, and the services of a physician to treat illnesses are separate and distinct functions, the furnishing of the former being a statutory duty of the sheriff, and the furnishing of the latter being a statutory duty of the county legislative body.").

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