



# Abilene Police Department Operating Procedures

Subject:

*Communicable Diseases*

Issued:

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## **Communicable Disease Prevention**

It is the responsibility of the Department to ensure its members are able to perform their duties in a safe and effective manner. The Department has developed procedures to prevent or substantially reduce the possibility of employee exposure to a communicable or infectious disease through contact during the normal course of duty. The Department will also comply with the comprehensive City of Abilene policy concerning pathogens.

## **Communicable Disease Education**

The Department will periodically provide education for all employees and distribute up to date information materials to all employees concerning communicable diseases including HIV/AIDS.

## **Communicable Disease Definitions**

- A. AIDS – Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome, a disease caused by the Human Immune Deficiency Virus (HIV).
- B. Body fluids – Liquid secretions including blood, semen and vaginal or other secretions that might contain these fluids such as saliva, vomit, urine or feces.
- C. Other Potentially Infectious Material (OPIM) - All body fluids, other than blood, with the potential to transmit HIV, HBV, or any other disease. Includes contaminated items.
- D. HBV – An acronym for Hepatitis B Virus which is a viral infection that affects the liver. HBV has a greater potential for transmission than HIV.
- E. High risk subject – Any person who is suspected of carrying an infectious disease.
- F. Universal precautions – An approach to infection control in which all human blood and certain human body fluids are treated as if known to be infectious for HIV, HBV and other blood borne pathogens.
- G. ICO-The designated Infection Control Officer for the Abilene Police Department.

## **Procedures for Communicable Diseases**

Procedures for field personnel to minimize potential exposure to communicable diseases:

- A. Employees shall use universal precautions in any contact with body fluids.
- B. Employees should always wash their hands thoroughly with soap after contact with any high-risk subject. This is the most important measure in preventing the spread of infectious diseases including HIV/AIDS. Hand washing is recommended even if gloves have been worn.
- C. Disposable gloves should be worn when handling any articles with body fluids on them.
- D. Bodily substance barriers should be worn whenever practical when body fluids may be splashed on the employee.



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- E. Employees should make it a practice to bandage open wounds or cuts to avoid any direct contact with contaminated body fluids. If the bandage becomes wet or soiled, the wound should be washed immediately with soap and warm water. New bandages should then be applied.
- F. All sharp instruments such as knives, scalpels and needles should be handled with extraordinary care and should be considered contaminated items.
  - 1. Employees should use extreme caution when placing their hands where sharp instruments might be hidden. An initial visual search of the area should be conducted using a flashlight where necessary. The person may also be asked to remove such objects from their person.
  - 2. Needles shall not be recapped, bent, broken, removed from a disposable syringe or otherwise manipulated by hand. Most accidental needle stick injuries occur while recapping the needle.
  - 3. Needles shall be placed in a puncture-resistant container when being collected for evidentiary or disposal purposes.
  - 4. If searching a purse, carefully empty contents directly from purse by turning it upside down over a table.
- G. Syringes and needles suspected of containing controlled substances should not be seized as evidence in dangerous or controlled substance cases. In order to reduce their risk of contracting a communicable disease, DPS laboratory chemists will no longer accept these items for testing. Officers seizing disposable syringes, needles and other sharp objects should place them in a puncture or cut-proof container and place them in a Property and Evidence locker clearly labeled "DESTROY". If doubt exists concerning the seizure of these items, contact the Special Operations Division of the Department.
- H. Employees should exercise extra caution when investigating crime scenes involving high-risk subjects.
- I. Anytime an employee is bitten, scratched, stuck with a needle or cut with a sharp object, he/she shall wash the affected area immediately with soap and water and seek medical attention if necessary.

### **Procedures for Transport and Custody**

Where appropriate protective equipment is available, no officer shall refuse to arrest or otherwise physically handle a person who may have a communicable disease.

- A. Individuals with body fluids on their persons shall be transported in separate vehicles from other individuals.
- B. Officers have an obligation to notify all other involved or exposed personnel during a transfer of custody when a person has body fluids present on his/her person and has stated that he/she has a communicable disease.



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## Collecting Contaminated Evidence

Officers and crime scene technicians may confront unusual hazards, especially when the crime scene involves violent behavior where large amounts of blood are present. The following procedures for crime scene collection and preservation of physical evidence should be followed. These procedures shall compliment the current Property and Evidence Manual procedure.

- A. Caution should be used when handling contaminated evidence. Disposable plastic or rubber gloves will be worn.
- B. Employees who contact blood or other body fluids should wash their hands with soap and water immediately or as soon as possible after making contact.
- C. To avoid an accidental puncture of skin or the tearing of gloves, use tape instead of metal staples to seal evidence.
- D. Evidence contaminated with body fluids must be properly dried in the designated basement evidence area at the Law Enforcement Center. These items must then be double bagged and marked "CONTAMINATED WITH BODY FLUIDS" to alert all persons subsequently handling it to the need for protection.
- E. Airborne particles of dried blood may be generated when a stain is scraped. It is recommended that protective mask and eyewear or face shields be worn when removing bloodstains for laboratory analysis.
- F. Do not enter a crime scene when there are exposed body fluids present or have any contact with persons diagnosed as having a communicable disease if you are taking any medications which suppress your immune system.

## Procedures for Disinfection

It is the responsibility of the employee to follow all appropriate guidelines in the disinfecting of themselves and any affected equipment. These procedures shall be initiated whenever body fluids are spilled or an individual with body fluids on their person is transported in a departmental vehicle.

- A. Unprotected skin surfaces that come into contact with body fluids shall be immediately and thoroughly washed with hot running water and soap for at least 15 seconds before rinsing and drying.
  1. Alcohol or antiseptic towelettes may be used where soap and water are not available.
  2. Disposable gloves should be rinsed before removal. The hands and forearms should then be washed.
- B. Employees should remove clothing contaminated with body fluids as soon as practical. Any contacted skin area should then be cleansed in the prescribed fashion. Contaminated clothing should be handled carefully. Wash first with cold water to remove gross contamination then in hot water.



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- C. Using appropriate protective equipment, the employee shall remove any excess body fluids from a vehicle with paper towels, paying special attention to any cracks, crevices or seams that may be holding excess fluids.
- D. The affected area should be disinfected by using soap and hot water or common industrial disinfectants, ethanol or sodium peroxide. A 1 to 10 dilution of household bleach with water is an effective disinfectant. The dilution should be poured onto the spill and allowed to soak for at least 30 seconds. Never add sodium hydrochloride from the bottle directly into biological spills as toxic chlorine and nitrous oxide gases may be liberated at dangerous levels.
- E. All disposable equipment, cleaning material or evidence contaminated with body fluids shall be bagged and properly disposed of.

### **Department Safety Officer Responsibilities**

The Department Safety officer will be responsible for maintaining and storing, in a convenient location, an adequate amount of communicable disease control supplies and for the dissemination of supplies for infectious disease control.

### **Procedures for Possible Exposure**

In the event of an exposure to a communicable disease, the following steps from the City of Abilene policy on blood borne pathogens are to be taken:

- A. Any employee whose duty assignment has potential risks of exposure to blood and/or other body fluids shall be offered, at no cost, the Hepatitis B Vaccine (HBV) series and any future vaccines for HBV that are deemed necessary.
- B. The vaccine shall be offered at the time of initial training or after an exposure incident, if the employee elected not to be vaccinated at the time of hire.
- C. The vaccine protocol offered shall be in accordance with the latest recommendation of the Center for Disease Control (CDC).
- D. Employees may decline the vaccination. The employee must fill out a declination form.
- E. Vaccinated employees shall be tested to verify antibodies have developed. If antibodies have not developed, another complete series of vaccines is recommended. This process will be done at no expense to the employee.
- F. If an exposure incident occurs (contact with potentially infectious fluid either through non-intact skin, eyes, mouth, mucous membrane or needle stick), these procedures shall be followed:
  - 1. Refer to the Exposure Decision Grid of Abilene Police Department's Exposure Packet to determine what action should be taken.
  - 2. The employee shall report the incident to his/her supervisor immediately. Appropriate first aid should be provided as necessary. The supervisor shall notify Police Administration.



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3. Once the incident has been reported to the supervisor, the exposed employee should immediately report to the trauma center at which the source patient is being treated for a confidential medical evaluation.
4. The supervisor and/or employee must complete Part 1 of the City of Abilene's Exposure to Pathogens Incident Report and be prepared to supply medical personnel with the following information:
  - a. How the exposure occurred,
  - b. Employees HBV vaccination status (if known),
  - c. Results of previous baseline blood tests (if available).
5. The APD Exposure Packet must be forwarded to Police Administration within 24 hours.
6. If possible, an attempt should be made to have the source individual's blood tested to determine the presence of HBV or HIV.
7. If the employee desires, testing of his/her blood may be conducted at no cost to the employee.
  - a. Samples may not be held for more than 90 days.
  - b. If the employee declines testing or, after a sample has been collected, the employee does not want the sample analyzed, this shall be documented and filed in the employee's medical record.
8. The employee will have access to counseling, including the potential for illness, medical evaluation, and information about the current recommended medical treatment. The City of Abilene's Health Department will provide these services.
9. A representative of the Health Department will review each incident and, at their discretion, call a meeting with the employee's department director (or a designated representative) and Risk Management. The purpose of the meeting will be to determine what, if any, failures or work control practices may have occurred and make recommendations to correct any deficiencies identified.

## **Testing the Carrier**

Employees are reminded a person may test negatively for many diseases and still be a carrier that allows him/her to infect others. Therefore, a negative result of a person to whom the employee was exposed, should not affect the employee's decision to seek treatment or testing. The exposed employee is required to seek testing of the person to whom they were exposed.

## **Carrier Agrees to Testing**

If the subject agrees to testing, the following procedures will be applicable:

- A. In the event of exposure and if the employee desires to pursue voluntary testing of the person by whom they were exposed, they should contact a supervisor, explain the situation and seek supervisory approval to request voluntary testing. The supervisor will



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immediately review the incident and, if they agree that an exposure occurred, the supervisor is to approve the employee seeking voluntary testing of the person who exposed the employee. The employee or supervisor should ask the person if they would agree to voluntary testing at no cost to them. If the person verbally agrees to testing, they should be transported to the appropriate medical facility for testing. If the person is under arrest, it is not necessary to book the person into jail prior to transportation to a medical facility.

- B. Upon arrival, the employee should request the person be tested for Hepatitis B, HIV and any other communicable disease the medical staff believes is appropriate. The medical staff will review the incident. Normally, they will not test the person unless they agree an exposure occurred. The facility will have the appropriate request forms.
- C. The person can withdraw their agreement to testing at any time. If at any point, the person withdraws consent, employees should contact their supervisor.
- D. Even with consent, the test results cannot be directly released to the employee. The test results of reportable disease (Hepatitis B, HIV, etc.) from Abilene hospitals are available through the APD ICO. To obtain these results, employees should contact the ICO

## **Carrier Refuses Testing**

If the carrier refuses to be tested for communicable diseases, they cannot be forced to submit to immediate testing. Texas State Law allows law enforcement officers (and therefore excludes other civilian employees) who may have been exposed to a reportable disease in the course of their employment or volunteer service to request the person who exposed them be tested for reportable diseases.

- A. The Texas Department of Health or local health authority will review the request and, if they believe the minimum criteria for exposure have been met, they will order (subject to appeal) the person to submit to testing. Both parties will be notified of the test results.
- B. If the person refuses to be tested, the Texas Department of Health may request the district attorney petition for a court hearing. The district court will determine whether or not to order testing. If the court determines there was not reasonable cause for the officer to have requested the testing, the court may assess court costs against the requesting party.
- C. Any law enforcement officer seeking court-ordered testing or another person should submit a typed, sworn, detailed description of the incident and the reason for the testing. The request should be forwarded, along with a copy of any police reports related to the incident (including all jail paperwork), through the chain of command to Police Administration who will coordinate the actual findings of the request.



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## **Carrier Refuses Testing; Gets Medical Treatment**

If the person who exposed the employee refuses testing and is transported to a medical facility for treatment, another law allows the exposed employees (officers and civilian employees) to learn the communicable disease status of the person in question.

- A. As soon as possible, the exposed employee should go to the medical facility where the person is being treated. Though there are no specific time guidelines, an unreasonable delay could impair the employee's ability to obtain test results. If the exposed employee is unable to report to the medical facility (for example, the employee is receiving treatment at a different medical facility), the investigating supervisor will assign another employee to respond to the medical facility and complete the appropriate form for the exposed employee.
- B. The medical facility is not required to test the person for communicable diseases but frequently does so as part of routine patient assessment.
- C. The medical facility cannot release the testing results directly to the employee. The results from Abilene hospitals are released to the ICO. The ICO then contacts the employee and the Abilene/Taylor County Health Department with the test results.

## **Confidentiality**


All medical information, including information about HIV/AIDS infection must be treated confidentially as provided by law. The appropriate physician as designated by the City of Abilene shall determine who has a need to know this information and shall document its release and the reason for its release in the medical record. HIV status shall not be released to non-medical personnel unless written consent, specifying certain individuals or certain classes of persons is obtained from the subject or a person or entity legally authorized to consent on behalf of the subject. Non-medical personnel receiving such information shall keep this information confidential.

## **Administration Responsibilities**

When a supervisor or administrative personnel receives information an employee has or is suspected of having HIV or an HIV related condition, the Director of Administrative Services for the City of Abilene should immediately be contacted for consultation.

The identity of the AIDS infected employee will be disclosed by the Chief's office to managers and supervisors on a need to know basis only if consent is given in writing by the affected employee.

With the AIDS infected employee's consent, a list will be kept by the Chief's office of job categories and personnel informed in the event of injury to the affected employee.

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Individuals advised of an employee's AIDS condition are not to reveal the information or make statements which may impact the employee's acceptance by co-workers or the community.

Any employee diagnosed with an AIDS condition is entitled, as is any other employee, to confidentiality of the medical records.

- A. The physical and emotional health and well-being of all employees must be protected and reasonable accommodation for the medically impaired employee with an AIDS virus-related condition will be provided as long as the employee is able to meet acceptable performance standards.
- B. Employees with AIDS will be allowed to work if physically able to meet performance standards. The infected employee desiring or requiring accommodation shall notify the Chief of Police and provide a written medical opinion pertaining to the employee's ability to work and/or what restrictions, if any, should apply.
- C. The Chief of Police may transfer or reassign an affected employee based on physical impairment or excessive exposure of the victim to other types of contagion (virus, colds, etc.)
- D. If a healthy employee refuses to work with an employee who is diagnosed with an AIDS condition and is medically approved as able to work, job transfer or other work accommodation for the healthy employee will occur when medically indicated by written order of his/her physician. The medical order must be a signed medical order requesting this change. In the absence of a medical order, normal transfer procedures will be followed.