

Keys to Successful Treatment

A school nurse can greatly enhance TB treatment. The NJMS National Tuberculosis Center has worked with school nurses to identify helpful solutions to challenging issues. The following solutions can help make school based DOT much easier (Pirog, Bhavaraju, Aguila, McSherry, Mangura & Reichman, 1998).

A. School Absences/Vacations

School absences and vacations may prevent a child from receiving medications.

Therefore, it is important to establish a plan with the clinician and health department outreach staff **prior** to initiation of therapy (Harrigan, 1994).

- Your attendance office is a source of information for absences. However, it would be more efficient if the child's parent or guardian calls you directly about the absence.
- In the case of a child's absence, promptly contact the child's clinician or health department (depending on who can administer DOT outside of school) to make alternative arrangements.
- In the case of your own absence, the medications and DOT log need to be accessible for a substitute nurse. If there is no substitute, contact the clinician for alternative arrangements.

B. "No show" for Medications

- If a child does not report for medications:
- Check to see if the child is absent and follow the absentee procedure that you have instituted
- If the child is present, discretely locate the child, without compromising confidentiality
- Avoid problems by choosing a convenient time for therapy, such as before school begins or at lunchtime

C. Difficulty Swallowing Medications

All the daily medications can be convenient and effective when administered at the same time. Unfortunately, children can have trouble swallowing pills. Most TB medications, with the exception of rifampin, can be crushed and placed in food, making swallowing easier and more palatable (Starke, Jereb & Jacobs, 1992). If food is used, **consult the clinician or a pharmacist** and consider the following tips:

- Mix medications with the smallest amount of food possible, to ensure the child consumes all medications.
- Have the child or the family bring food the child likes to your office.