



Recommended Health Screening Guidelines for Physicians who Serve Asylees in California

Summary

The California Department of Public Health's Office of Refugee Health recommends the following screening for asylee populations. These guidelines follow CDC recommendations for the U.S. Domestic Medical Examination for Newly Arriving Refugees. Although asylees in California each year are included under the umbrella of Office of Refugee Resettlement Programs, the majority enter the U.S. individually and may be unaware of the services for which they are eligible. In addition, many asylees may reside in counties outside of one of impacted local health jurisdictions with a contracted Office of Refugee Health Assessment Program. This tool attempts to bridge any resulting disparities in care. These same standards are also applicable to asylum seekers as well as migrant populations in general.

Asylee Health Screening Guidelines

Patient/Family Medical History

Asylum seekers have exposures that affect physical and mental health in the premigration, migration, and postmigration stages of their journey. It is important to consider the migration journey may include several countries and environmental exposures other than the country of origin (e.g. Chagas' disease for African people migrating through South and Central America).

Medical History and Physical Exam

Physicians should inquire about prior medical records; current or recent medications or use of curative remedies such as herbs, balms, or pills; history of trauma, abuse, torture, human trafficking; past surgeries; blood transfusions; tattoos, other traditional cutting or scarification; female genital cutting; past and current substance use; sexual history (consensual/non-consensual); family structure noting current caregiver for children; social support; educational assessment; dental, vision and hearing screening.

Mental Health Assessment for Adults and Children

The following link contains tools used for refugee populations of differing ages:

<https://www.cdc.gov/immigrantrefugeehealth/guidelines/domestic/mental-health-screening-guidelines.html#mental-health-screening>

Laboratory Tests Recommended for Adult Patients	Recommended for children under 18
Complete Blood Count with differential to look for eosinophilia	Yes
Urinalysis	No
Serologic testing for hepatitis A,B, and C	Yes
Lipid Panel*	No
HIV testing, unless asylee has known HIV+ status from overseas	Yes
Blood Lead Levels (pregnant women only)	Children = < 16
Soil Transmitted Helminth Infections (stool examination for ova and parasites)*	Yes
Malaria (thick and thin blood smears)*	Yes
Serum Strongyloides IgG*	Yes
Serum Schistosoma IgG	Yes
Stool antigen or breath test for Helicobacter pylori	Yes
Tuberculosis IGRA. Consider TB IGRA re-testing after 8-12 weeks to capture exposure during migration or in detention. If positive, chest x-ray to rule out active infection. ‡	Children PPD <2
STI Screening: syphilis, chlamydia, and gonorrhea for individuals = > age 15 ‡	Children < 15 if concerns of trafficking or sex abuse

* Additional guidance appears on Page 3 for all laboratory tests/conditions and vaccines.

‡ Required for asylee adjustment of immigration status to Lawful Permanent Resident/Green Card

Treatment and Reporting Requirements for Communicable Diseases

Medical professionals should follow treatment and reporting guidelines for communicable diseases, including treatment for latent TB infection.

Immunizations

Update all adult and childhood immunizations following CDC immunization schedules (see notes under Additional Guidance section)

Adult Vaccines Required to Adjust Status to Lawful Permanent Resident
Measles, Mumps, Rubella dose # 1 and # 2
Tetanus and Diphtheria Toxoids dose # 1 and # 2
Pertussis single dose (can be administered as part of Tdap)
Hepatitis B
Varicella dose # 1 and # 2
Covid-19 dose # 1 and # 2
Seasonal Influenza Vaccine
Child Vaccines Required to Adjust Status to Lawful Permanent Resident
All children must be up-to-date on all vaccines, including seasonal influenza. Covid-19 vaccine(s) are required- as deemed age appropriate. Titers to test for disease serology are of limited utility in pediatric patients and should be avoided.

Subject to local resources and patient preference, documentation of serological immunity to hepatitis B, measles, mumps, and rubella can replace empiric vaccination. This is also acceptable for asylee adjustment of status to lawful permanent resident. Patients who report a history of chicken pox or have positive serology for varicella do not need to be vaccinated for varicella.

Note: Physicians can provide tests and vaccines necessary for adjustment of status/Green Card but only registered civil surgeons are permitted to conduct the I-693 medical exam required for such applications. For more information:

<https://www.uscis.gov/tools/designated-civil-surgeons>.

Refer for Dental and Vision Care

CA Dental Providers who Accept Medi-Cal: https://dental.dhcs.ca.gov/Beneficiaries/Denti-Cal/Find_A_Dentist

1 (800) 322-6384

Vision services for Fee-for-Service (straight) Medi-Cal beneficiaries: <https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/provgovpart/pharmacy/Pages/Vision-Providers.aspx>

All other Medi-Cal beneficiaries must access services from the Medi-Cal managed health care plan

Additional Screening Resources

- To customize recommendations for the clinical assessment of individual refugees/asylees see the CDC funded electronic CareRef Tool: [Link: https://careref.web.health.state.mn.us/](https://careref.web.health.state.mn.us/)
- Link to Comprehensive Adult and Pediatric Mental Health Screening Tools Used in Primary Care Settings: https://www.aap.org/en-us/advocacy-and-policy/aap-health-initiatives/mental-health/documents/mh_screeningchart.pdf

Additional Guidance for Asylee Health Screening

Lipid Panel: All men > 35yrs. and Women > 45yrs. Screen men 20-35yrs. and women 20-45yrs. who are at increased risk for CHD. Risk factors include: diabetes, obesity – BMI \geq 30, personal history of cardiovascular disease, hypertension, tobacco use or familial risk factors.

Soil Transmitted Helminth Infections: Please refer to following CDC website about screening and treatment of intestinal parasites: (<https://www.cdc.gov/immigrantrefugeehealth/guidelines/domestic/intestinal-parasites-domestic.html>). Before treating presumed or proven helminth infections with albendazole it is important to consider whether the patient is also at risk of neurocysticercosis and/or Loa Loa, since adverse reactions can result from anti-helminthic therapy if either condition is also present.

Malaria: Sub-Saharan Africa only, unless an asylee is from an endemic area and presents signs or symptoms of malaria, in which case they should receive diagnostic testing for Plasmodium and treatment for confirmed infections. A detailed migration history is important because many asylees from non-endemic areas have travelled through endemic areas. Please refer to the following CDC websites about malaria screening and treatment:

(<https://www.cdc.gov/immigrantrefugeehealth/guidelines/domestic/malaria-guidelines-domestic.html>)

(<https://www.cdc.gov/immigrantrefugeehealth/guidelines/overseas/malaria-guidelines-overseas.html>).

Serum Strongyloides: Conduct diagnostics for Strongyloides using Strongyloides IgG serology and offer treatment to those with confirmed infection.

Vaccination: If patient has no documentation, assume they are not vaccinated and either test for serological immunity to vaccine preventable illnesses or give age appropriate vaccines following CDC recommendations.

- For children 18 and under see (<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/schedules/hcp/imz/child-adolescent.html>).
- For adults 19 and older, see (<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/schedules/hcp/imz/adult.html>).
- Live vaccines (including MMR, varicella, influenza, and rotavirus) are generally contraindicated in pregnancy and for immunocompromised people.
- Note: Some asylees may have received vaccines prior to entry which may be found in the county immunization registry or the CA Immunization Registry (CAIR2).
- Children who entered as unaccompanied minors have received vaccines with the Office of Refugee Resettlement. These records can be found in their packet of documents on release or can be requested from ORR: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/policy-guidance/unaccompanied-children-program>
- Digital Covid-19 Vaccine Records can be accessed through the following link: <https://myvaccinerecord.cdph.ca.gov/>