



## NEWS RELEASE

### ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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## Alabama makes significant progress in controlling TB

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Did you know that tuberculosis, an airborne infectious disease, remains one of the leading causes of death on our planet? If your answer is “no,” you are not alone.

While we have made significant progress in the control of tuberculosis in the United States, the disease known as TB thrives in populations where hunger and homelessness converge and finds safe haven in poorer countries. In our country, tuberculosis is no longer a death sentence... we can treat and cure this disease.

The TB bacterium was first identified as the causative agent of tuberculosis in 1882. In those days effective treatment was not available, but today we enjoy the blessings of modern medicine, implemented by a dedicated group of physicians, nurses and outreach workers who care for the tuberculosis patient. Today, our communities benefit from public health interventions that halt transmission of this disease, because rapid and appropriate treatment of the individual TB patient prevents further spread.

The number of confirmed TB cases in Alabama has declined in the decades from 1939 to 2009 as follows: 1939, 2,942; 1949, 2,642; 1959, 2,055; 1969, 1,203; 1979, 644; 1989, 464; 1999, 314; 2009, 168.

“While furthering the decline is good,” said Pam Barrett, director of the Division of TB Control for the Alabama Department of Public Health, “we must remain vigilant as more than 70 percent of the counties in Alabama reported at least one case of TB in 2009. Our work is not complete until each and every case of active tuberculosis is found, treated and cured. Your individual and community support for public health has made a difference. Armed with good science, supported by physicians, nurses and outreach workers, we can continue to make a difference.”

If you would like to learn more about tuberculosis, and our decades-long battle to protect public health, please contact Ms. Barrett by e-mail at [Pam.Barrett@adph.state.al.us](mailto:Pam.Barrett@adph.state.al.us) and by telephone at (334) 206-6228.