




State of Louisiana
Department of Health and Hospitals
Office of Public Health

PUBLIC HEALTH ALERT
NEW ORLEANS REGIONAL AREA – SYPHILIS ALERT

To: Medical Providers and Community Leaders in New Orleans Regional Area
From: Jimmy Guidry, MD
State Health Officer/ DHH Medical Director 
Date: March 10, 2016
Subject: **Syphilis and HIV in New Orleans Public Health Region**

Despite increased STD testing and surveillance by the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals Office of Public Health (OPH), the number of syphilis cases in the New Orleans area continues to be alarming:

- Louisiana was ranked #2 in the country in syphilis case rates in 2014.
- From 2012-2014, the number of primary and secondary syphilis cases more than tripled in the New Orleans region (62 in 2012 and 196 in 2014).
- Although data are not complete for last year, as of November 2015, there were 172 diagnosed primary and secondary syphilis cases in the New Orleans area.
- Syphilis case rates have continued to rise at an alarming rate from 9.1 per 100,000 in 2013 to 12.4 per 100,000 in 2014.

These astounding rates of syphilis are unacceptable. When left undiagnosed and untreated, there are serious consequences such as blindness, deafness, long term neurological dysfunction and of course, congenital syphilis. Currently, **Louisiana ranks #1 in congenital syphilis diagnosis rates in the United States.** In 2014, Louisiana reported 73.4 cases per 100,000 live births which is **six times the national case rate** of 11.6 cases per 100,000 live births.

It is clear that the OPH cannot fight this epidemic alone. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Louisiana DHH OPH, in close collaboration with local community and healthcare leaders, have been working diligently to address these high rates of syphilis in Louisiana, particularly in the Orleans and Jefferson Parish areas. **OPH is asking all licensed health care providers to increase screening and testing in their practices. OPH is asking community-based health centers to do the same in our communities.** Providers are encouraged to communicate with your laboratory service regarding the type of syphilis serological tests performed. For more specific information on diagnosis and treatment of syphilis, HIV, and other STDs, please visit the CDC website www.cdc.gov/std/treatment. Clinical consultation with STD experts can be accessed online at the Denver Prevention and Training Center: www.denverptc.org/Consultation.html

We must all work together to effectively reduce the spread of syphilis and its sequela through the appropriate application of screening, disease intervention, and treatment according to the 2015 CDC STD Treatment Guidelines. For questions or assistance, please contact the OPH STD/HIV Program Medical Director, Dr. Stephanie N. Taylor at (504) 293-6876 or staylo2@lsuhsc.edu.