

November 2014

TO: All Local Health Departments, Community Health Centers, Rural Health Clinics, Title X clinics, Facilities Housing HIV/AIDS Counseling, Testing and Referral (CTR) Sites

FROM: Jerome M. Adams, M.D., M.P.H.
State Health Commissioner

SUBJECT: Submission of Serology Specimens for uninsured patients to the Indiana State Department of Health Laboratory for Syphilis Testing

The purpose of this letter is to provide guidance for submitting serology specimens to the Indiana State Department of Health (ISDH) Laboratory for syphilis testing.

The ISDH Laboratory will process a serologic test for syphilis (STS) and provide laboratory supplies to physicians, clinicians, and public health officials who are clinically assessing patients for syphilis or evaluating contacts to known syphilis cases. In addition to clinical evaluations, STS testing can provide laboratory evidence to support or rule out the presence of syphilis in a patient. STS testing includes Rapid Plasma Reagin (RPR screening tests with titer) and Enzyme Immunoassays (EIA) for syphilis. Both tests are required to assist in diagnosing syphilis infections.

This letter updates the criteria established by the previous letter dated April 2010 by which authorized STD Clinics, local health departments, Community Health Centers (CHC), Rural Health Clinics (RHC), HIV/AIDS Counseling, Testing, and Referral (CTR) Sites, and Title X clinics that have the statutory ability should collect and submit an STS specimen to the ISDH Laboratory.

Please note that providing syphilis testing to refugees or immigrants from other countries as part of their Immigration and Naturalization health assessment is prohibited.

STS testing should be provided by STD Clinics, CHCs, RHCs, and Title X clinics to:

- People presenting with signs & symptoms of syphilis,
- Contacts (sex partners) to a known or suspected syphilis case; it is requested that the local STD Program be involved to confirm the case and make a treatment recommendation,
- Pregnant females requesting an STD exam,
- Sexually active, HIV-positive persons (recommended to be screened at least annually),
- Men who have sex with men (MSM) (recommended to be screened bi-annually), especially those residing in high morbidity areas,
- Persons who exchange sex for money, housing, drugs, goods, or who self identify as a Commercial Sex Worker (CSW),

*This list refers to syphilis testing on patients **without insurance**. If a patient outside these risk groups has insurance and would like a syphilis test, their test can be submitted with insurance to ISDH for testing.*

STS services should be provided by a Counseling, Testing and Referral (CTR) Site to:

- All newly diagnosed HIV positive persons at time of preliminary positive or confirmatory result
- Sexually active, HIV-positive persons (recommended to be screened at least annually) who are immigrating to Indiana seeking HIV Care Services,
- Men who have Sex with Men (MSM) (recommended to be screened bi-annually),
- Pregnant females requesting CTR services (Rarely occurs where the female is not already receiving prenatal care),
- Persons who exchange sex for money, housing, drugs, goods, or who self identify as a Commercial Sex Worker (CSW)

NOTE: The CDC Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR); August 4, 2006/Vol. 55/No. RR-11: Clinical Prevention Guidance clearly states: The prevention and control of STD's are based on the following five major strategies: 1) education and counseling of persons at risk on ways to avoid STD's through changes in sexual behaviors; 2) identification of asymptotically infected persons and symptomatic person unlikely to seek diagnostic and treatment services (targets for STS SCREENING); 3) effective diagnosis and treatment of infected persons; 4) evaluation, treatment, and counseling of sex partners of persons who are infected with an STD; and 5) pre-exposure vaccination of persons at risk for vaccine-preventing STD's.

In 2012, Indiana ranked 26th in the nation for reported cases of infectious syphilis according to the data released from the CDC's Syphilis profiles¹. It is paramount that we strive to identify and treat as many cases as possible in an effort to eliminate, or at least significantly decrease the number of Hoosiers who are infected annually with syphilis.

cc:

¹2012 U.S. Syphilis Profiles. (2014, January 10). Retrieved November 17, 2014, from <http://www.cdc.gov/std/syphilis2012/syphilis-2012-all-profiles.pdf>