

# Eliminating Syphilis

## Marion County (Indianapolis), Indiana

### Why is Syphilis Elimination in the U.S. within our reach now?

- Syphilis is a preventable and curable sexually transmitted disease (STD).
- Infectious syphilis is at the lowest rate ever reported: 2.6 cases/100,000 population (6,993 total cases).
- Syphilis is now very concentrated; half of all new cases in 1998 were reported from only 28 counties, which represent less than 1% of all U.S. counties.
- Other industrialized countries have already eliminated syphilis.

### Why is it Important to Eliminate Syphilis in Marion County?

- **In 1998 Marion County ranked 7<sup>th</sup> in the nation** in new cases of infectious syphilis (161 cases) and had a rate greater than 7 times the national rate.
- **To reduce one of the most glaring racial disparities in health**
  - S 91% of cases are among African Americans (79% of cases nationally).
  - S The infectious syphilis rate in Marion County for African Americans is nearly 39 times greater than the rate for white Americans.
- **To decrease spread of HIV infection**
  - S Syphilis increases HIV transmission at least 2-to-5 fold.
- **To improve infant health**
  - S Syphilis can be transmitted from mother to fetus during pregnancy causing stillbirths or congenital infection, some of which may result in persistent health problems.

### Marion County Responds

- Marion County has organized and mobilized the Marion County Syphilis Elimination Task Force, a community-based coalition consisting of faith and neighborhood organizations, to serve as a communications and media advocacy center. As a public health partner, it will meet to discuss ongoing activities and to provide input and evaluation into proposed syphilis elimination activities. Street outreach persons will be hired from affected communities to address groups and individuals about high risk behaviors, risk reduction possibilities, and prevalence of infectious syphilis in their community.
- An STD clinic has been established that is easily accessible to those at highest risk of syphilis infection and transmission.

Infectious Syphilis — Indiana, 1998



\* Healthy People 2000 objective is 4/100,000

1998 U.S. rate: 2.6 cases/100,000 population

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 PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE  
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