

December 3, 2014

## Recent Changes to Congenital Syphilis Case Definition

During the summer of 2014, The Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists (CSTE) issued the [Update to Public Health Reporting and National Notification for Congenital Syphilis](#). This new position statement for syphilis (14-ID-03) includes revisions to the surveillance case definition for congenital syphilis.

These changes will take effect January 1, 2015. By ensuring that reported cases of congenital syphilis meet this revised surveillance case definition, we can obtain the most accurate surveillance for this disease and better address syphilis infection and transmission. Listed below are the major changes in the updated definition; these changes should not have any programmatic implications.

### Changes for congenital syphilis

- The definition of “adequate treatment” is more detailed, with explicit reference to the STD Treatment Guidelines (<http://www.cdc.gov/std/treatment/2010/default.htm>).
- The surveillance case definition now requires a reactive *non-treponemal* test result in the infant/child (if the mother was adequately treated).
- Laboratory methods have been updated:
  - Appropriate tissue types for darkfield microscopy, polymerase chain reaction (PCR), and immunohistochemistry or special stains are specified
  - Treponemal IgM is omitted from the “probable” case classification
- Suggested parameters for “elevated” cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) white blood cell (WBC) count and protein concentration are provided:
  - During the first 30 days of life, a CSF WBC count of  $>15$  WBC/mm<sup>3</sup> or a CSF protein  $>120$  mg/dL.
  - After the first 30 days of life, a CSF WBC count of  $>5$  WBC/mm<sup>3</sup> or a CSF protein  $>40$  mg/dL, regardless of CSF serology.

No changes were introduced for non-congenital syphilis or syphilitic stillbirth.

Information about case definitions are available on the [STD Data and Statistics](#) section of the CDC website. The [previous case definition](#) is available on the National Notifiable Disease Surveillance System section of the CDC website.