

Eliminating Syphilis Harris County (Houston), Texas

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

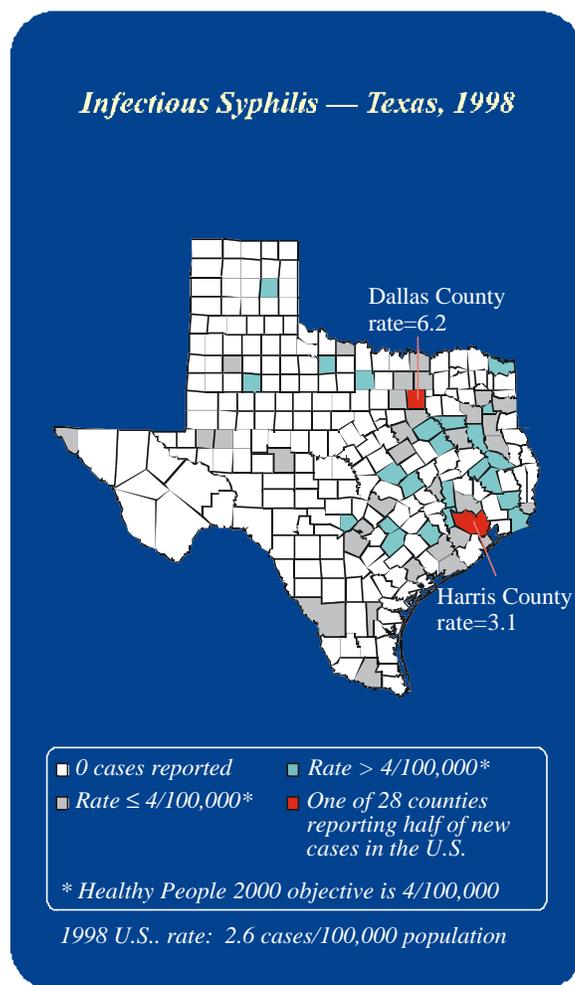
- Syphilis is a preventable and curable sexually transmitted disease (STD).
- Infectious syphilis is at the lowest rate ever reported: 2.6 cases/100,000 population (6,993 total cases).
- Syphilis is now very concentrated; half of all new cases in 1998 were reported from only 28 counties, which represent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

Why is it Important to Eliminate Syphilis in Harris County?

- **In 1998 Harris County ranked 12th in the nation** in new cases of infectious syphilis (99 cases) and had a rate higher than the national rate.
- **To reduce one of the most glaring racial disparities in health**
 - S 74% of cases are among African Americans (79% of cases nationally).
 - S The infectious syphilis rate in Harris County for African Americans is 16 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.
 - S In 1998, 57 cases of congenital syphilis were reported from Harris County for a rate of 97.3 cases/100,000 births, nearly 5 times higher than the national rate of 20.6 cases/100,000 births.

Harris County Responds

- Harris County has expanded both the number and hours of operation of community STD clinics.
- Project Cover-up is a social marketing campaign that promotes condom use.
- Affected areas are targeted for community syphilis screenings.



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<http://www.cdc.gov/StopSyphilis/>



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