

Eliminating Syphilis Milwaukee County, Wisconsin

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 Milwaukee County?

- **In 1998 Milwaukee County ranked 25th in the nation** in new cases of infectious syphilis (51 cases) and had a rate 2 times higher than the national rate.
- **To reduce one of the most glaring racial disparities in health**
 - S 92% of cases are among African Americans (79% of cases nationally).
 - S The infectious syphilis rate in Milwaukee County for African Americans is 114 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, 6 cases of congenital syphilis were reported from Milwaukee County for a rate of 40.5 cases/100,000 births, 2 times higher than the national rate of 20.6 cases/100,000 births.

Milwaukee County Responds

- The Milwaukee STD Program has been actively involved in providing serological screening, educational sessions, and prevention measures at critical sites including affected communities, correctional facilities, substance abuse treatment centers and homeless shelters.
- An Outbreak Response Team, consisting of Public Health Advisors and community members, was activated and dispatched because of an increase in primary and secondary syphilis in Milwaukee County.



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