

Dear Colleague,

On May 12, 2015, the Georgia Legislature passed HB 436, a new Georgia law that requires pregnant women to be tested for HIV and syphilis in their third trimester. This letter serves to brief you on the key points of the new law. For the full text of the law, please visit: <http://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/en-US/Display/20152016/HB/436>.

The key updates and points include:

- Every physician and health care provider who provides prenatal care of a pregnant woman during the third trimester of gestation shall offer to test the woman for HIV and syphilis at the time of first examination during that trimester or as soon as possible thereafter (regardless of whether such testing was performed during the first two trimesters of her pregnancy).
- If at time of delivery there is no written evidence an HIV or syphilis test has been performed, the health care provider must order a test for both to be administered at the time of delivery. The exception is when the woman refuses testing (provided that she was tested in her third trimester and does not disclose, when questioned, any activities that would pose a risk for infection since prior testing).
- All Congenital Syphilis cases must be reported within 24 hours to your [local District health office or entered into SendSS](#). This includes babies without congenital syphilis symptoms, but who were born to mothers with untreated syphilis at time of delivery.

The new testing requirement aims to help decrease the number of congenital syphilis cases. In 2013, there were 20 reported congenital syphilis cases in the state of Georgia, all of which were completely preventable. Per CDC's [2013 STD Surveillance report](#), Georgia ranked 6th (among the 25 states that reported any congenital syphilis cases), with a rate of 14.9 cases per 100,000 live births (compared to the U.S. rate of 8.7). Early treatment (at least 30 days prior to birth) has proven to be effective at decreasing the odds that a baby is born with congenital syphilis. By testing mothers in their third trimester, we can ensure mothers who are infected with syphilis are successfully treated prior to giving birth.

Thank you for helping to reduce the number of congenital syphilis cases in Georgia. By increasing testing during the third trimester, we can eliminate transmission in our state. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact your local district health office or call the Georgia Department of Public Health at 1-866-PUB-HLTH (1-866-782-4584).

Thank you,
The Cobb & Douglas Public Health STD Epidemiology Team
770-514-2452