



**State of Louisiana**  
Department of Health and Hospitals  
Office of Public Health

**Notice: Act 459, Third trimester syphilis and HIV testing**

May 9, 2016

Dear Colleague:

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force recommend that pregnant women be tested for HIV and syphilis at their first prenatal visit and again in the third trimester in areas with high HIV and syphilis incidence such as Louisiana. From 2013 to 2015 in Louisiana, 4 infants were born with an HIV infection and 139 infants were born with congenital syphilis. Among these were mothers that tested negative during the first trimester of their pregnancy yet were found to be positive at the time of delivery.

Effective June 4, 2014, Louisiana enacted legislation requiring physicians to offer “opt-out” syphilis and HIV testing to women during the third trimester of pregnancy, in addition to tests at the first prenatal care visit.

- ACT 459 requires that every physician attending any pregnant woman offer a syphilis and HIV test to the woman at the **first examination during the third trimester** (full text available at: <http://www.legis.la.gov>).
- Since 2007, Louisiana State Law has required that every physician attending any pregnant woman offer a syphilis and HIV test to the woman at the **first examination during pregnancy**.

Act 459 provides additional opportunities for the detection and treatment of syphilis and HIV among pregnant women in the third trimester, in time to reduce mother-to-child transmission of these serious illnesses. We encourage you to review the testing and treatment guidelines established by the U.S. Public Health Service to reduce perinatal HIV transmission (<http://AIDSinfo.nih.gov>) and the syphilis treatment guidelines established by the CDC (<http://www.cdc.gov/STD/tg2015/default.htm>).

One of the goals of the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals Office of Public Health STD/HIV Program (DHH OPH SHP) is to provide education and training to Louisiana health care professionals on the prevention and treatment of mother-to-child transmission of syphilis and HIV. Medical consultation, technical assistance, educational support, and access to a network of resources are available to help you care for your patients. For more information, please contact DeAnn Gruber, Director, STD/HIV Program ([DeAnn.Gruber@LA.gov](mailto:DeAnn.Gruber@LA.gov)) or Chaquetta Johnson, Deputy Director, STD/HIV Program ([Chaquetta.Johnson@LA.gov](mailto:Chaquetta.Johnson@LA.gov)).

Thank you for your continued commitment to providing quality medical care for pregnant women and for implementing practices that will reduce mother-to-child transmission of HIV and syphilis.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Jimmy Guidry, MD, in blue ink.

Jimmy Guidry, MD  
State Health Officer/DHH Medical Director

Handwritten signature of Rebekah E. Gee, MD, MPH, in blue ink.

Rebekah E. Gee, MD, MPH  
Secretary, DHH