



## **Sexually Transmitted Disease (STD) Navigation Services Fact Sheet**

The County Health Executives Association of California (CHEAC) requests \$15 million in funding to local health departments for intensive coordination and navigation for individuals experiencing reinfections of syphilis, chlamydia, or gonorrhea.

### **Background**

Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) are increasing in all regions of the state, among both men and women. In 2018, the number of reported sexually transmitted disease (STD) cases in California was 25,344 for syphilis (all stages), which is 265% more than 10 years ago; 79,397 for gonorrhea, which is 211% more than 10 years ago; and 232,181 for chlamydia, which is 56% more than 10 years ago.

Syphilis is a major public health problem in California and has increased in all regions of the state, and among both males and females. In 2018, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), California was ranked second in the nation for primary and secondary syphilis rates.

The number of infants born with congenital syphilis in California increased for the 6th year in a row in 2018. Congenital syphilis can cause severe illness in babies including premature birth, low birth weight, birth defects, blindness, and hearing loss. It can also lead to stillbirth and infant death. In 2018, according to the CDC, California ranks fifth in the nation for congenital syphilis rates.

Chlamydia and gonorrhea are the most commonly reported STDs in California. Although these STDs are curable, they often do not show symptoms and go undetected, which can lead to serious complications like infertility. Chlamydia and gonorrhea disproportionately impact people in their teens and twenties.

Under state law, local health departments are mandated to investigate all infectious venereal diseases, including syphilis, gonorrhea, and chlamydia, within their jurisdictions and to take measures to prevent the transmission of the infection.

### **Problem**

California needs a strategy to address the STD reinfection rates, which vary from county to county and in some instances are roughly a quarter (or 25 percent) of reported cases. More intensive outreach, coordination, navigation and connection to health and social services will help local jurisdictions decrease the growth in STD rates.

However, local health departments are underfunded. There is no specific funding source to address individuals experiencing reinfections. State and federal funding for communicable disease control activities have considerably declined over time and are primarily siloed based on the disease.

While the funding provided in the 2019-20 state budget addresses screening and treatment of sexually transmitted disease, it was not intended to address the high-touch work associated with individuals who experience reinfections. Individuals experiencing reinfections of syphilis, chlamydia, or gonorrhea have several underlying complex health and social issues, which may include poverty, homelessness, substance use, disparities in access to care, the exchange of sex for money/housing/other resources, and other changes in sexual behavior.

### **Solution**

Provide targeted resources to local health departments for specific activities to target individuals who are experiencing reinfections with the goal of decreasing the STD infection rate.

### **Additional Information**

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