



Department of Health

KATHY HOCHUL
Governor

JAMES V. McDONALD, M.D., M.P.H.
Acting Commissioner

MEGAN E. BALDWIN
Acting Executive Deputy Commissioner

January 9, 2023

Dear Partners in Prevention, Care, and Sexual Health Promotion:

Building off of a strong history of working collaboratively with community members and providers to “[End epidemics, fight stigma, and promote health](#),” the New York State Department of Health AIDS Institute is asking for you to join us as partners in planning to respond intentionally and effectively to the tragic increases of congenital syphilis our state and nation are experiencing.

Congenital syphilis, which results from untreated syphilis infection in pregnancy by transmission in utero or during vaginal delivery, is entirely preventable with quality prenatal care and comprehensive partner management. Syphilis during pregnancy can have devastating outcomes including miscarriage, stillbirth, or death shortly after birth. Infants born with syphilis may have lifelong healthcare needs resulting from sequelae such as deformed bones, or nerve problems. Every case of congenital syphilis represents a failure in the public health and/or clinical healthcare systems.

The landscape of congenital syphilis around the country is grim. With less than 500 cases reported nationwide in 2012, [the CDC is reporting preliminary data of over 2,600 cases in 2021](#). In New York State alone, there were 41 congenital syphilis cases¹: the highest number of reported cases in close to two decades. Preliminary case counts for 2022 indicate these increases are continuing. Further, there continue to be immense racial/ethnic disparities with pregnant persons of color disproportionately impacted.

In an effort to stem these increases and support equitable access and care, the AIDS Institute is looking to you as our partner to join the New York State Congenital Syphilis Elimination Strategic Planning Group and collaboratively develop a comprehensive Congenital Syphilis Elimination Framework through a health equity lens.

The Group is projected to start in quarter one of 2023 and will convene partners across New York State. It is our hope that this Group will have representation from providers, community-based organizations, persons impacted, and the general community. Below is core information about the Congenital Syphilis Elimination Strategic Planning Group for prospective members.

- **Mission** - To implement a coordinated, comprehensive, and systematic approach to reducing and eliminating congenital syphilis.
- **Vision** - To be a State where congenital syphilis has been eliminated and where persons of reproductive capacity and their sexual partners have equitable access to services that are free from stigma and discrimination.

¹ Data are preliminary for 2021 and 2022

- **Goals:**
 - Develop the New York State Congenital Syphilis Elimination Framework
 - Participate in subcommittees to develop strategies and recommendations for each area of focus of the Congenital Syphilis Elimination Framework
 - Create a New York State Congenital Syphilis Elimination Action Plan based on strategies and recommendations of the Congenital Syphilis Elimination Framework
 - Develop strategies toward implementing the Congenital Syphilis Elimination Action Plan recommendations

- **Commitment:**
 - At least one year
 - Full body meetings (bimonthly-in person and/or online platform)
 - Subcommittee meetings (alternate months from full body meetings via online platform)
 - Subcommittee work (based on agreement with subcommittee)

The Congenital Syphilis Elimination Strategic Planning Group will have a total of 37-51 members. Members will serve on one of seven subcommittees with the following anticipated areas of focus: Prevention, Education, Community-Based Programming, Surveillance and Research, Medical Care and Treatment, Policy and Planning, and Marketing and Advocacy.

If interested in becoming a member of the Congenital Syphilis Elimination Strategic Planning Group, or recommending someone else for the committee, then please do so by either completing [the Congenital Syphilis Elimination Strategic Planning Group Membership Survey](#) or using the QR code. Please feel free to share this information with your networks. The deadline for completing the survey is Friday, February 3, 2023. If you have any questions pertaining to the Congenital Syphilis Elimination Strategic Planning Group, you can add them to the survey and/or contact Dr. Cord Stone at cord.stone@health.ny.gov.



Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joseph Kerwin', located below the 'Sincerely,' text.

Joseph Kerwin
Acting Director
AIDS Institute