

January 1, 2017

Dear Health Care Provider,

The Maricopa County Department of Public Health, with the support of the Maricopa County Board of Health, continues to recognize that the continuing high number of congenital syphilis cases among infants born in Maricopa County requires an extension of the current coordinated prevention strategy. Therefore, in accordance with ARS 36-136 (H) and (I), which states that the Department shall enforce “reasonably necessary measures for detecting, reporting, preventing and controlling communicable and preventable diseases,” the Maricopa County Department of Public Health will continue the current syphilis prevention policy for prenatal and obstetrical care through December 31, 2018.

The Maricopa County Department of Public Health therefore extends the following Order:

1. Requests that all physicians and midwives providing obstetrical services in Maricopa County perform a third trimester blood sample for syphilis. The optimal time for testing during the third trimester should be at 24-32 weeks of gestation. The third trimester syphilis screening test can be performed along with (or at the same time as) the third trimester glucose tolerance test. This allows adequate time for appropriate therapy prior to delivery.
2. Requires that all newborns or their mothers in Maricopa County will have blood drawn for syphilis testing at the time of delivery.
3. Requires a blood test for syphilis to be made on a specimen of blood taken from a woman who bore a stillborn infant or from the umbilical cord at the time of still birth delivery per ARS 36-694. For the purposes of this order, a stillborn infant shall be defined as one of 20 weeks or longer gestation.

We also take this opportunity to remind you that ARS 36-693 in part requires that “A physician shall at the time of the first prenatal examination ...take or cause to be taken a sample of the blood of the woman ... for a standard serological test for syphilis.”

To assist us in reconciling our epidemiologic data, the Department of Public Health requests that in addition to receiving a report for each positive case, hospitals submit a monthly report (see attachment) listing:

- Total number of births at the facility
- Total number of infants receiving syphilis tests
- Total number of positives

For further information, please contact Tom Mickey at the Maricopa County Department of Public Health at 602-506-6364. Thank you for your continuing help in the effort to eliminate the tragic and preventable consequences of congenital syphilis in Maricopa County.

Sincerely,



Bob England, MD, MPH
Director
Maricopa County Department of Public Health