

# Fetal Infant Morbidity Review Boards

## Texas Department of State Health Services HIV/STD Program

### Background

Texas uses the Fetal Infant Morbidity Review (FIMR) methodology to conduct enhanced reviews of Congenital Syphilis (CS) and perinatal HIV cases in Houston, San Antonio, and Dallas. Using the FIMR methodology, participants identify missed opportunities for disease intervention and barriers to medical care engagement that may have contributed to a CS or perinatal HIV diagnosis.

### Congenital Syphilis

Syphilis in newborns is known as Congenital Syphilis (CS). Pregnant people can pass syphilis to their unborn children during pregnancy or at delivery when they are untreated or inadequately treated. A syphilis diagnosis during pregnancy increases adverse pregnancy outcomes, including miscarriage, stillbirth, preterm birth, birth defects, and/or perinatal death.

### Perinatal HIV

Perinatal HIV, also known as vertical transmission, is the transmission of HIV during pregnancy, delivery, or through breastfeeding. National perinatal HIV transmission has declined by more than 95% since the early 1990s. The rate of transmission to infants born to women living with HIV has also declined in Texas. Currently, around 1% of children born to women living with HIV acquire HIV.

### Review Boards

Texas launched its first FIMR case review board in December 2015 to review perinatal HIV and CS cases due to the historically high rates of CS and perinatal HIV in Houston and the greater Harris County area. This inaugural FIMR is a partnership between Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS), Harris Health Systems, and Baylor College of Medicine.

With CS continuing to rise across the nation, federal funds were used to launch a second FIMR focused on CS in San Antonio in November 2018. The San Antonio FIMR is a partnership between DSHS and the San Antonio Metropolitan Health District and focuses on maternal and CS cases in San Antonio and the greater Bexar County area due to the high local rates of CS.

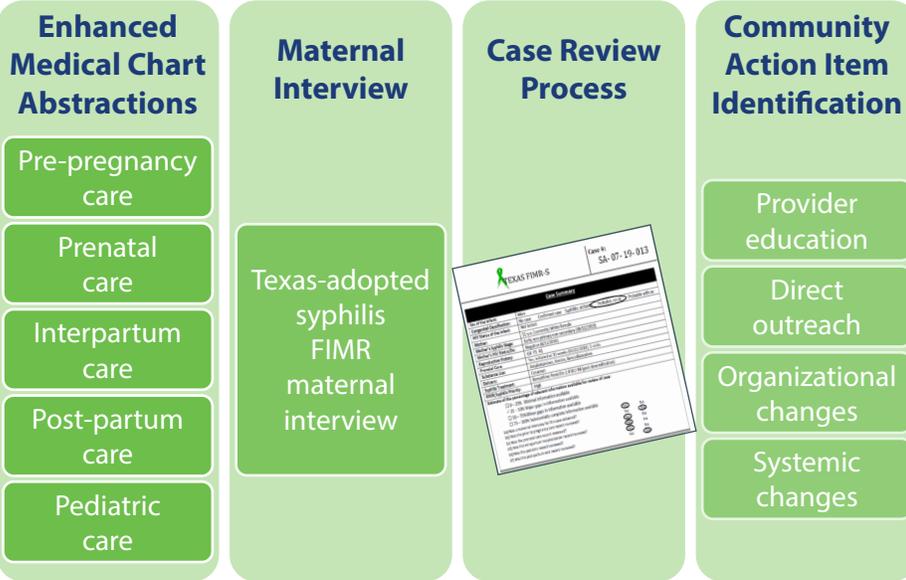
A third FIMR focused on CS was launched in July 2020 in Dallas. The Dallas-Fort Worth Area FIMR is a partnership between DSHS and Dallas County Health and Human Services and focuses on maternal and CS cases in Public Health Region (PHR) 2/3 due to dramatic increase of CS cases in PHR 2/3 the last few years.



**TEXAS FIMR-S**

## Methods

The FIMR methodology uses enhanced medical chart abstractions that review several time points in maternal and infant care, combined with a detailed maternal interview to generate a deidentified case summary for participant review. These case summaries provide valuable insight into the maternal experience prior, during, and after pregnancy, especially when a maternal interview is obtained. Maternal interviews, conducted by specialized field staff, provide a direct insight into the maternal encounters within the healthcare system and their life circumstances surrounding the pregnancy.



Case summaries are provided during the FIMR meetings so participants can review and discuss the cases to identify potential missed opportunities for disease intervention and barriers to medical care engagement that may have contributed to the CS case or perinatal HIV diagnosis. Meeting participants include medical providers, members of healthcare systems, the public health sector, and representatives from systems who serve persons diagnosed with syphilis or HIV. Over the years, trends in barriers to engagement in care emerged, such as: living at/or below the federal poverty level, transportation, substance use, child protective services involvement, intimate partner or domestic violence, criminal justice involvement, housing instability, and mental health disorders.

Following a case review, participants identify community action items ranging from the micro to the macro and include provider education and systems-level changes like legislative initiatives. Follow-up outcomes range from direct provider outreach to changes in the law.

The three Texas area FIMRs account for over 80% of Texas' CS cases in 2019. Each FIMR meets quarterly; meetings are free, continuing education credits for multiple disciplines are offered, and meeting details can be found on the [DSHS FIMR page](#).

## RESOURCES FOR FIMR

**There were 528 Congenital Syphilis cases reported in Texas in 2019\***  
This is just over 1 in every 750 infants

**There were 3 cases of perinatal HIV reported in Texas in 2019**

**There are three DSHS Fetal Infant Morbidity Reviews that review Congenital Syphilis: Dallas, Houston, San Antonio**

**Texas Congenital Syphilis FIMR Events**  
[dshs.texas.gov/hivstd/info/cs/](https://dshs.texas.gov/hivstd/info/cs/)  
[dshs.texas.gov/hivstd/info/cs/fimr.shtm](https://dshs.texas.gov/hivstd/info/cs/fimr.shtm)

**DSHS Congenital Syphilis Epi Profile**  
[dshs.texas.gov/hivstd/reports/epi-profile-cs/](https://dshs.texas.gov/hivstd/reports/epi-profile-cs/)

**DSHS TB/HIV/STD Section**

(737) 255-4300  
[dshs.texas.gov/hivstd/](https://dshs.texas.gov/hivstd/)

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*\* All 2019 data are provisional.*



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