

DSHS

Congenital Syphilis Surveillance and Prevention Program

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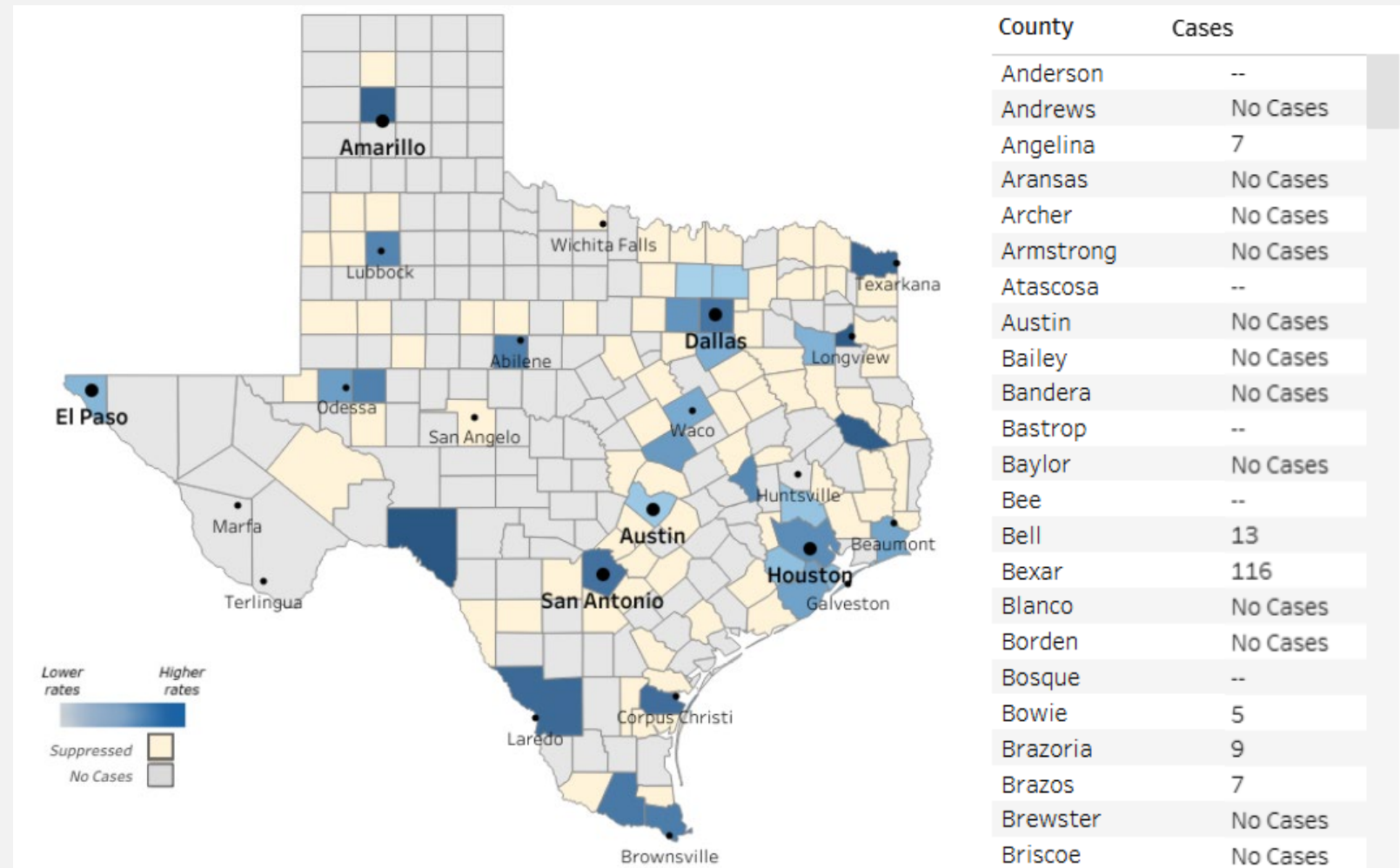
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TEXAS
Health and Human
Services

Texas Department of State
Health Services

Congenital Syphilis Cases and Rates by County, 2022



Texas Department of State Health Services

Congenital Syphilis Surveillance and Prevention Program

Transferred to Community Health Improvement Division 9/1/2025 to align with Maternal and Child Health programs

Purpose: Implement a comprehensive public health approach to improve the timeliness of testing and treatment adequacy of syphilis in pregnant women and women of childbearing age (WCBA) that is informed by research, data analytics, and best practices to decrease congenital syphilis (CS) cases in Texas

CS Surveillance Activities

Surveillance Activities

- Review all CS case investigations for case classification, data quality, and data completeness
- Conduct report matching from other data sources to enhance pregnancy ascertainment and case finding
- Generate accessible and useable CS data for the public through Texas Health (THD) Data dashboard
- Develop analysis around recommendations identified through the Fetal Infant Morbidity Review (FIMR) processes

Local and Regional Health Department (LRHD) Level Monthly Surveillance Reports

- **Women of Childbearing Age (WCBA) Trends Report**
 - DSHS provides an aggregate report to LRHDs regarding pregnancy status ascertainment, family planning and prenatal care referrals, & treatment adequacy
- **WCBA Report**
 - DSHS provides a list of women to LRHD who received inadequate treatment and their pregnancy status
- **Vital Statistics Match**
 - DSHS provides a list of infants born within the calendar year to mothers with reported history of acquired syphilis using vital statistic birth matches

CS Prevention Activities

Prevention Activities

- Support the Fetal Infant Morbidity Review
- Prioritize public health follow-up for women with syphilis who are of childbearing age or are currently pregnant and neonate/infant care
- Serve as a resource for medical consultation for complex syphilis cases
- Improve timing of case identification and treatment intervention in women who are pregnant
- Increase provider reporting of syphilis testing and treatment in WCBA and during pregnancy
- Texas Collaborative for Healthy Mothers and Babies Congenital Syphilis Quality Improvement Toolkit

Fetal Infant Morbidity Review (FIMR)



FIMR

Houston Area

Established in 2015, Houston and the surrounding areas were initially selected due to high morbidity of CS and perinatal HIV. Meets quarterly.

San Antonio Metro Area

Established in 2018, San Antonio was chosen due to the historically high rates of CS in Bexar county. Meets quarterly.

Dallas-Fort Worth

Established in 2020, Dallas was chosen due to the rising rates of CS in the Dallas-Fort Worth Region. Meets quarterly.

Statewide

Established in 2023, reviews CS and perinatal HIV cases from the areas of Texas not currently served by a FIMR. Meets twice a year and reviews five cases per meeting.

FIMR Key Findings and Action Items

Common Missed Opportunities and Barriers to Care

- Substance use disorder
- Housing instability
- No syphilis or STD testing
- Transportation
- CPS involvement
- Infected person unwilling to participate in partner services

Action Items for Community Action Teams

- Electronic Medical Record best practice alerts and flags
- Increase screening activities for STDs and syphilis
- Provider education opportunities

Texas Collaborative for Healthy Mothers and Babies (TCHMB) CS Quality Improvement (QI) Toolkit

- Targeted towards outpatient Maternal Health Care Providers
- Provides support for clinics to complete QI Projects focused on improving rates of appropriate screening, treatment, and referrals for women diagnosed with syphilis during pregnancy and for women of child-bearing age
- Emphasizes partnership with Public Health Follow Up and Partner Services at every available opportunity
- Benefit to Health Care Teams: Availability of Maintenance of Certification Credit and Continuing Education for health care staff implementing Toolkit
- Currently recruiting clinics to pilot beginning in Spring of 2026
- Data Collection in Maternal and Child Health Quality Improvement System (MCHQIS)
- For more information: tchmb-stopcs@uth.tmc.edu

Provider Education

Congenital Syphilis Prevention: Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment for Pregnant Women in Texas

- Equips health professionals with essential knowledge and skills to effectively manage syphilis in pregnant women to prevent congenital syphilis
- 1.25 accredited continuing education credits, including ethics
- Accessible at no cost on the [TRAIN Texas](#) learning platform

Congenital Syphilis (CS) Exceptional Item (1 of 3)

- **\$8.4M and 23 FTEs**
- **CS Partner Input** – Support implementation through the development of resources, workflows, algorithms
 - DSHS and Physician Expert Panel Symposium – 10/10/2025
 - CS Hotline Physician Consultants
 - LHD Survey and Listening Session – 11/6/2025
 - Ongoing Workgroups
 - Regional Resources
 - Infant Care
 - Prevention and Treatment

CS Exceptional Item (2 of 3)

- **CS Provider Consultation Hotline**

- Supports physicians and providers caring for women and infants in complex syphilis diagnoses and treatment decisions
- Connecting physicians and providers to education and prevention resources and women to healthcare and other support services
- Develop a CS Hotline Data Collection module supporting documentation and regional referrals

CS Exceptional Item (3 of 3)

- **Regional CS Response Nurses (1 FTE/PHR and 1 FTE/Central)**
 - Build partnerships with physicians, other local providers, and community resources
 - Provide intensive case management for women and infants
 - Provide treatment for pregnant women including field delivered therapy

833-62-ENDCS

Hotline Go-live: January 7, 2026

Hours: 8 AM – 9 PM

Monday through Friday



CS Medical Consultant Hotline

833-62-ENDCS



Hotline Operations

- Two Nurse Teams
 - Nurses will escalate complex cases to physician consultants
- Regional CS Nurse Referrals as needed
- Current Hours of Operation: Weekdays 8 a.m. – 9 p.m.
 - DSHS Physician Consultants: Weekdays 8 a.m.– 5 p.m.
 - After-hours record search: 5 p.m.– 9 p.m.
- Future Hours of Operation: Daily 8 a.m.– 9 p.m.
 - Expand Physician Consultants: Weeknights after 5 p.m., Weekends 8:00 a.m.– 9 p.m.
- Voicemail System for after hours calls
- Calls are documented in a centralized database

Regional CS Support Nurses



Roles and Responsibilities of the Regional CS Nurses

- Case Management
 - Receiving referrals from the call center that are specific to their Public Health Region(PHR)
 - Coordinating patient care and connection through referrals to providers within the region (OBs, pediatricians, etc.)
 - Direct patient care if needed
- Community Engagement and Development
 - Developing knowledge of who, what, and where for CS care in their PHR.
- Provider Education and Support
 - Connecting with providers and providing Congenital Syphilis education and support.
 - Technical assistance for 340B program if needed.

Regional CS Nurse Contact Information

| Region | Name | Email |
|--------------|--------------------|--|
| Region 1 | Teena Pullen | Teena.Pullen@dshs.texas.gov |
| Region 2/3 | TBD | TBD |
| Region 4/5N | LaQuista Garrett | LaQuista.Garrett@dshs.texas.gov |
| Region 6/5S | Esther Vennett | Esther.Bennett@dshs.texas.gov |
| Region 7 | Marissa Pinckney | Marissa.Pinckney@dshs.texas.gov |
| Region 8 | Cesilia Velasco | Cesilia.Velasco@dshs.texas.gov |
| Region 9/10 | Nicole Lane | Nicole.Lane@dshs.texas.gov |
| Region 11 | TBD | TBD |
| Central DSHS | Alexandra Byington | TBD |

Thank You