

Act 459 - Third Trimester HIV and Syphilis Testing

Effective June 4, 2014, Louisiana enacted legislation requiring physicians to offer “opt-out” syphilis and HIV testing to women during the third trimester of pregnancy, in addition to testing at the first prenatal care visit. The full text of Act 459 is available at www.legis.la.gov. Act 459 provides additional opportunities for the detection and treatment of syphilis and HIV among pregnant women in the third trimester, in time to reduce mother-to-child transmission of these serious illnesses. Prenatal testing should be used in combination with the treatment guidelines for HIV (<http://AIDSinfo.nih.gov>) and syphilis (www.cdc.gov/STD/treatment/2010) during pregnancy. The Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals’ Office of Public Health offers technical assistance, educational support and access to a network of resources to help health care providers with the care of patients.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force recommend that pregnant women living in areas with high HIV and syphilis rates be tested for HIV and syphilis at their first prenatal visit and again in the third trimester. In Louisiana, from 2010 to 2012, 15 infants were born with an HIV infection and 83 infants were born with congenital syphilis. Some of the mothers of these infected infants tested negative during the first trimester of their pregnancy, yet were found to be positive at the time of delivery. For more information please contact: Dr. Stephanie Taylor, STaylo2@lsuhsc.edu.