



National Association of County & City Health Officials

The National Connection for Local Public Health

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **African-American Syphilis Rates Four Times Higher Than Whites According to New CDC Study**

*— Local partnerships and national action needed to address alarming rise of sexually transmitted disease in the black community —*

**Washington, DC, November 14, 2019** — The [National Association of County and City Health Officials](#) (NACCHO), representing the nation’s nearly 3,000 local governmental health departments, is deeply concerned about the racial disparities demonstrated by the newly released statistics on sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The [2018 STD Surveillance Report](#) highlights that rates of syphilis, chlamydia, and gonorrhea have surged for the fifth year. The disparity in STD infection rates for African-Americans compared to other populations remains high.

According to the study:

- [Primary and Secondary Syphilis](#) - In 2018, the disparity between Primary & Secondary syphilis rates for blacks and whites was 4.7 times greater for black females compared to white females and 4.8 times greater for black males compared to white males.
- [Gonorrhea](#) - In 2018, gonorrhea rates are significant and concerning in all populations, but there is a clear disparity between blacks and whites with black males rate 8.5 times that of white males and black females rate at 6.9 times that of white females.

- [Chlamydia](#) - The rate of reported chlamydia cases among black females was five times the rate among white females (1,411.1 and 281.7 cases per 100,000 population, respectively). The rate of reported chlamydia cases among black males was 6.8 times the rate among white males (952.3 and 140.4 cases per 100,000 population, respectively).

According to NACCHO's Board Vice President, [Sandra Elizabeth Ford, MD, MBA](#), "Data highlighting the overrepresentation of sexually transmitted diseases in the African-American population is disappointing, but not shocking." Dr. Ford, a graduate of Howard University's School of Medicine continued, "More emphasis must be placed on those issues that present barriers to prevention and care of not only STDs but other chronic diseases, such as poverty and lack of insurance, as well as racism. Until we take a hard look at these factors, we will continue to see the broad inequities in diseases prevalence that we are currently observing."

"At NACCHO, our mission is to improve the health of communities by strengthening and advocating for local health departments and supporting our minority communities to eliminate the long-standing gaps in care," said NACCHO Chief of Programs and Services, Oscar Alleyne, DrPH, MPH. "Reducing health disparities in our minority communities is a prime directive of all local health departments. Local health departments work hard every day to reduce STD rates and improve health outcomes in their communities by testing for, treating, and ultimately, preventing STDs. This includes strong prevention and treatment messaging, as well as the essential work of disease intervention specialists who are on the frontlines of efforts to disrupt the spread of STDs and prevent outbreaks. But as NACCHO's research has shown, they need more support—current resources are not enough, and local health departments and their partners need more to address these rapidly rising STD rates."

NACCHO has worked closely with the CDC to support its local health department members in actively working to mitigate rising STD rates, including by supporting localities to set-up [STI Express Clinics](#), developing tools to support the utilization of CDC's forthcoming *Recommendations for Providing Quality STD Clinical Services*, identifying and evaluating models for connecting STI clinic patients to substance use disorder treatment and other behavioral health services, as well as a new project to look at innovative

congenital syphilis interventions. In addition, local health departments across the country are actively using evidence-based strategies to increase identification of STDs; assuring appropriate clinical services for STD clients and their sexual partners; conducting health education and promotion; using surveillance data to inform programmatic efforts and focus on populations disproportionately impacted by STDs; and educating the public, providers, and key stakeholders on effective policy approaches.

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**About NACCHO**

The National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) represents the nation's nearly 3,000 local governmental health departments. These city, county, metropolitan, district, and tribal departments work every day to protect and promote health and well-being for all people in their communities. For more information about NACCHO, please visit [www.naccho.org](http://www.naccho.org).