



<b>POLICY AND PROCEDURE</b>	
SUBJECT/TITLE:	Syphilis Health Check – Rapid testing of Syphilis
APPLICABILITY:	Nursing Department – Harm Reduction Programming: Laboratory
CONTACT TITLE & DIVISION:	Director of Nursing
ORIGINAL DATE ADOPTED:	02/19/2025
LATEST EFFECTIVE DATE:	03/13/2026
REVIEW FREQUENCY:	Every 3 years and as needed
BOARD APPROVAL DATE:	N/A
REFERENCE NUMBER:	200-033-P

### **A. PURPOSE**

The purpose of this policy is to integrate the Syphilis Health Check, a point-of-care rapid test for syphilis, into the Syringe Service Program, SWAP (Stark Wide Approach to Prevention). The policy outlines the procedures for administering the syphilis test and ensures proper care, confidentiality, and follow-up for individuals accessing services at the syringe exchange site. The Syphilis Health Check will be administered by the HIV testing clinician and is aimed at early detection, improving health outcomes, and reducing the transmission of syphilis in at-risk populations.

### **B. POLICY**

The Syphilis Health Check will be offered as a routine service at SWAP, where it will be conducted by trained HIV testing clinicians. The program will follow the guidelines outlined in the Diagnostic Direct Protocol for Syphilis Health Check and will maintain the confidentiality and privacy of all participants. The test will be performed as a point-of-care rapid test, with results provided on-site. Positive results will be followed by immediate referral for confirmatory testing and treatment, as appropriate.

### **C. BACKGROUND**

Syphilis is a bacterial infection that can lead to severe health complications if left untreated, including neurological and cardiovascular damage. People who inject drugs, especially those sharing needles and engaging in unprotected sex, are at a higher risk for syphilis transmission. The integration of the Syphilis Health Check into syringe service programs aims to address the gap in syphilis testing among people who inject drugs, promoting early detection and facilitating prompt treatment to prevent further transmission.

Rapid testing technologies like Syphilis Health Check provide a timely and efficient means to detect syphilis at the point of care, ensuring that individuals can receive immediate guidance on next steps. As part of a comprehensive harm reduction strategy, this protocol helps improve the overall health outcomes of participants in SWAP by identifying and addressing syphilis early.

### **D. GLOSSARY OF TERMS**

- **Syphilis Health Check:** A point-of-care, rapid diagnostic test used to detect syphilis antibodies in blood samples.
- **Stark Wide Approach to Prevention (SWAP):** A harm reduction service that provides clean needles, syringes, and other supplies to individuals who inject drugs to reduce the transmission of bloodborne infections like HIV and Hepatitis C.



- **HIV Testing Clinician:** A healthcare professional trained to conduct HIV and other sexually transmitted infection (STI) tests, offer counseling, and provide referrals.
- **Point-of-Care Test:** A medical test conducted at or near the site of patient care, allowing for rapid results without requiring laboratory processing.
- **Confirmatory Testing:** Follow-up testing conducted to verify the results of initial screening tests, typically in a laboratory setting.
- **Harm Reduction:** A public health approach aimed at reducing the negative consequences of risky behaviors, particularly for people who inject drugs.

## E. PROCEDURES & STANDARD OPERATING GUIDELINES

- **Eligibility and Screening:**
  - The HIV testing clinician will offer the Syphilis Health Check to participants of the syringe service program who are at risk for syphilis, including individuals who inject drugs, engage in unprotected sex, or have a history of STIs.
  - Prior to testing, a brief screening for syphilis risk factors will be conducted, including an assessment of sexual and injection practices.
- **Test Administration:**
  - The Syphilis Health Check will be administered by a trained HIV testing clinician. The test is to be conducted at the point of care using a blood sample from a fingerstick.
  - The clinician will follow the manufacturer's instructions for the test, including ensuring proper storage and handling of test kits.
  - Results will be available within 10-15 minutes.

- **Result Interpretation and Follow-up:**

Staff will use the triplicate form known as “Laboratory Report” to document results. The following demographics will be documented: First Name, Last Name, DOB, Address, Gender, Race/Ethnicity. Until these forms are reprinted, the clinician will add Syphilis Health Check on the bottom of the form and document the result (this can be done with the positive or negative stamp).

- **Negative Result:** If the result is negative, the clinician will provide counseling on syphilis prevention strategies, including safer injection practices and condom use, and inform the client about the need for regular testing.
- **Positive Result:** If the result is positive, the client will be referred for confirmatory testing at Canton City Public Health’s STI clinic. The HIV testing clinician will explain the importance of follow-up care, treatment, and the need to inform sexual partners. If available, the DIS (disease intervention specialist) will be contacted to attempt to complete confirmation (RPR and FTA) testing during SWAP visit.



- All results, whether negative or positive, will be recorded in the client’s confidential medical file (chart).
- **Confidentiality:**
  - All client information, including test results, will be stored securely and maintained confidentially per federal and state guidelines. No information will be shared without the client’s consent, except as required for follow-up care and reporting.
- **Referral and Treatment:**
  - Individuals with positive results will be referred to the DIS and CCPH’s STI clinic for treatment, including antibiotics as recommended for syphilis.
  - The clinician will provide support and assist in connecting clients with additional healthcare resources, including STI and HIV care services.
- **Quality Control and Staff Training:**
  - Staff involved in the administration of the Syphilis Health Check will receive ongoing training on the test procedure, result interpretation, confidentiality practices, and counseling techniques.
  - Quality control measures will be in place to ensure the proper functioning of test kits, proper storage of materials, and adherence to all safety and testing protocols.

**F. CITATIONS & REFERENCES**

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). (2020). **Syphilis – CDC Fact Sheet**. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/std/syphilis>

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). (2020). **Harm Reduction and Syringe Service Programs**. Retrieved from <https://www.hhs.gov>; <https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/OASH-Syringe-Service-Programs-Webinar-07302019.pdf>; <https://www.hhs.gov/overdose-prevention/harm-reduction>

Diagnostic Direct. **Syphilis Health Check Protocol** (2023). Internal protocol and testing guidelines for Syphilis Health Check.

**G. CONTRIBUTORS**

The following staff contributed to the authorship of this document:

1. Diane Thompson, MSN, RN, Director of Nursing

**H. APPENDICIES & ATTACHMENTS**

N/A

**I. REFERENCE FORMS**

Include a list of forms needed for this policy/procedure. If none, list as N/A.

**J. REVISION & REVIEW HISTORY**

Revision Date	Review Date	Author	Notes
3/13/2026	3/13/2026	Dthompson	Added how to document lab results



**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

**Canton City Public Health**

Canton City Public Health  
Nursing  
FINAL

## **K. APPROVAL**

This document has been approved in accordance with the “800-001-P Policy Development” procedure as of the effective date listed above.