

DATE:	27 November 2023
TO:	All Zones: AHS Healthcare Professionals and Providers, STI Services
FROM:	Alberta Precision Laboratories (APL) – Point of Care Testing (POCT) and Public Health Laboratory
RE:	Implementation of POCT Syphilis & HIV Antibody Testing

PLEASE POST OR DISTRIBUTE AS WIDELY AS APPROPRIATE

Key Message

- Beginning on December 4, 2023 POCT Syphilis and HIV antibody testing will start to become available at 18 pre-determined early adopter community clinics located across the province:
 - 15 AHS STI Services Partner Notification Nurse (PNN) locations within: Calgary, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Grande Prairie, Peace River, Bonnyville, Whitecourt, Fort McMurray, Rocky Mountain House, Red Deer, Wetaskiwin and Edmonton
 - 3 Zone STI Clinics within Calgary, Edmonton and Fort McMurray.

Background

- In July 2019, a provincial syphilis outbreak was declared impacting all Zones, with >10% of female infectious syphilis cases occurring in pregnant persons during the outbreak. In 2022, over 3,200 new infectious syphilis cases were reported. Since 2015, over 300 cases of congenital syphilis cases in babies have been recorded; the expected number of congenital syphilis cases in Alberta should be zero ([Syphilis Outbreak | Alberta Health Services](#)). Treating infected persons early in their pregnancy can significantly reduce the later adverse manifestations of a congenital syphilis infection.

Indications for Testing

- Rapid testing is recommended for persons with unknown syphilis status or who have previously tested negative and have one of the following indications:
 - Pregnant person with unknown status
 - Pregnant with ongoing risk factors and a negative syphilis test in the current pregnancy
 - Person at risk for syphilis/HIV infection and at risk of loss to follow-up
 - Recent contact with a person with suspected and/or HIV infection
 - Person with syphilis and/or HIV in the differential diagnosis

Action Required

- For sites approved by APL POCT to use the INSTI Multiplex HIV-1/2 Syphilis Ab Test kit, be aware of the **APL POCT Provincial HIV and Syphilis Testing Program** located on **AHS InSite** (*InSite Home>Teams>APL>Our Services>Point of Care Testing>Provincial HIV Syphilis Testing Program*), and follow the necessary steps to educate and inform yourself and your clinical team on correct clinical usage, testing practice and program requirements.

Effective December 4, 2023



Questions/Concerns may be directed to

- AHS STI Services and STI Clinics: Jennifer Gratrix, Manager STI Services (jennifer.gratrix@ahs.ca)
- APL POCT:

Zone	Calgary	Central	Edmonton	North	South
Email	POCT.Calgary@aplabs.ca	POCT.Central@aplabs.ca	POCT.Edmonton@aplabs.ca	POCT.North@aplabs.ca	POCT.South@aplabs.ca

Approved by

- Dr. Allison Venner, Provincial POCT Medical Lead, APL
- Dr. Graham Tipples, Medical-Scientific Director, Public Health Lab, APL

Effective September 1, 2023, APL has become the sole provider of all public lab services in Alberta. As a result, community lab services formally provided by DynaLIFE Medical Labs will become the responsibility of Alberta Precision Labs (APL). This change impacts all zones.