



## IHS Division of Oral Health

### PROJECT REPORT

#### “Sexually Transmitted Infection Dental Education Initiative”

July 31, 2023



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## A. Background

*Ending the HIV Epidemic in the U.S.* (EHE) is a bold plan announced in 2019 that aims to end the HIV epidemic in the United States by 2030. Agencies across the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) developed an operational plan to pursue that goal accompanied by a request for additional annual funding. According to the result of various studies, oral lesions are observed in 70–90% of HIV-positive patients during the different stages of the disease ([1-3](#)). These lesions include oral candidiasis, hairy leukoplakia, Kaposi sarcoma, linear gingival erythema, necrotizing ulcerative periodontitis, aphthous ulcer ([4,5](#)). Other lesions reported in some articles are human papillomavirus infection, hyperpigmentation, oral submucous fibrosis, xerostomia, leukoplakia, herpes zoster, non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma, histoplasmosis, carcinoma, penicilliosis marneffeii, exfoliative cheilitis, HIV salivary gland disease, perioral molluscum contagiosum, staphylococcus aureus infections, and petechiae ([4,6](#)).

Talks have been ongoing about how DOH can support the EHE Initiative. Due to the increase in HPV-related oropharyngeal cancers, DOH took the first step in providing general information about sexually transmitted infections (STIs) rather than exclusively HIV. STIs disproportionately affect the AI/AN population. [According to the CDC:](#)

- The rate of reported chlamydia cases among AI/AN in the United States as 3.7 times the rate among Whites.
- The rate of reported gonorrhea cases among AI/AN (329.5 cases per 100,000 population) was 4.6 times the rate among Whites.



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- The rate of reported primary and secondary syphilis cases among AI/AN was 2.6 times the rate among Whites
- From 2014 to 2018, the rate of reported congenital syphilis increased 500% among American Indians/Alaska Natives
- The rate of HIV diagnoses in the United States among adult and adolescent American Indian/Alaska Native males was greater (16.2) than the rate for White males (9.6). The rate per 100,000 population among American Indian/Alaska Native females was greater (3.0) than for White females (1.7).

The IHS Division of Oral Health, as part of its ongoing promotion of multi-directional integration of oral health and overall health, partnered with the IHS National HIV/AIDS Program to develop a project whereby dental professionals will provide – as requested – patients with education about the oral manifestations of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and distribute a brochure developed by the IHS HIV/AIDS Program. The brochure, includes a self-survey to determine STI risk, directs patients to available resources. The responsibility of the dental professional is to provide a brief overview of the brochure and to distribute the brochure. If the patient has follow-up questions specific to oral health/disease, the dental professional provides the patient with education about oral manifestations of STIs. Otherwise, the dental professional refers the patient to their primary care provider for any additional questions or concerns.

### **B. Purpose/Objectives**

This pilot project identified two of our best IHS and tribal dental programs in terms of past participation in national HPDP initiatives. Participant programs received brochures from the IHS HIV/AIDS Program as well as \$5,000 in funding used to offset provider time to participate in this project. Programs were selected for participation by the IHS Division of Oral Health in collaboration with the IHS HIV/AIDS Program Director.

The purpose of this initiative was to determine if it was feasible for dental programs to perform a brief intervention/education to patients about STIs and oral disease, and refer them to available testing resources.

### **C. Collaborators**

The IHS Division of Oral Health collaborated with Rick Haverkate, the IHS National HIV/STI Consultant, and the Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board on this project. Mr. Haverkate



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provided subject matter expertise, while the NW Portland Area Indian Health Board provided the brochure and talking points for dental providers.

**D. Initiative Participants**

The two programs that agreed to participate in this short-term demonstration project were:

1. Oklahoma City Indian Dental Clinic – Monica McKee, RDH, program manager
2. Santa Fe Service Unit Dental Program – Dr. Kathyne Feng, dental director

**E. Data Analysis**

None

**F. Components/Timeline**

This project consisted of just two products, an STI Screening Brochure (Appendix A) and Dentist Provider Guidance (Appendix B).

The timeline for the project was as follows:

Component	Responsible	Start Date	Completion Date
<b>Initial discussions with Rick Haverkate</b>	Dr. Ricks	Feb 16, 2023	Feb 16, 2023
<b>Create and send public funding announcement</b>	Dr. Ricks	Feb 22, 2023	Mar 24, 2023
<b>Review/edit STI brochure</b>	Dr. Ricks NWPAlHB	Mar 6, 2023	Mar 24, 2023
<b>Identify possible participating programs</b>	Dr. Ricks Dr. Mork Dr. Lozon	Mar 24, 2023	Mar 28, 2023
<b>Project period</b>	2 participating sites	Apr 4, 2023	July 24, 2023

**G. Resources**

A total of \$10,000 was spent on this project, \$5,000 to each site for their participation.



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## H. Project Outcomes

Both of the participating dental clinics initiated the STI brief intervention/education with all adolescent and adult patients receiving dental examinations. This was done over a very short period of just 3 ½ months. Here are what both programs reported:

### **Dr. Kathryne Feng, Santa Fe Service Unit:**

*“It turned out to be a very simple request! Happy to have participated! I think this would be a great thing for other dental programs to do. Perhaps if dentists are reluctant to take chair time to communicate with their patients, then another approach would be to contact the CHR’s or Public Health Nurses. I’ve been asking the patients to help us “spread the word” on self-tests and share the QR code, and it seems to work. Makes it seem less like we’re telling the patient that THEY have STI.”*

### **Monica McKee, MPH, RDH, Oklahoma City Indian Dental Clinic:**

*“We have been handing them out during exams and haven’t faced any issues other than some looks of embarrassment from our teens. That’s to be expected, though. We’ve also been putting the fliers in our lobby, bathrooms, and in our public health department. I think this is something that should absolutely be part of our norm in Dental clinics throughout IHS. It may seem awkward at first, but seems to fit in really well during head/neck exams and oral cancer screenings.”*

## I. Future Implications/Recommendations

This project was presented as a table clinic at the 2023 IHS Dental Updates Conference and was well received by attendees as evidenced by comments made. The brochure and provider guide will be shared with I/T/U dental programs via an e-mail announcement and publication of this report and the two products generated on the IHS Dental Portal at [www.ihs.gov/doh](http://www.ihs.gov/doh).



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Appendix A – STIs & Your Oral Health Brochure

**What are STIs?**

Sexually transmitted infections (STIs), sometimes called STDs, are infections that spread through sex. Some STIs, like HIV, can also spread through needles or piercing and tattooing equipment. STIs can also spread through pregnancy, birth, and through chest/breast milk.

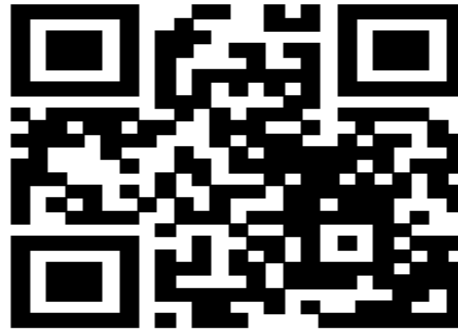
STIs are SUPER common, and many people with them don't have any symptoms. Without treatment, most STIs can lead to serious health problems. But the good news is that getting tested is simple, and most STIs are easy to treat.

**Are you at risk for an STI?**

Anyone who is sexually active can get an STI through vaginal, anal, and/or oral sex.

**Get tested.**

Self-testing is available. Scan the QR code below to order a STI test for **free**.



**Contact Us**

IHS Facility Name  
+123-456-7890  
123 Anywhere St., Any City, ST 12345  
email contact for IHS facility?  
website?

**STIs & Your Oral Health**





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## What STIs can be passed through oral sex?

You can get and pass on STIs through oral sex.

STIs that can be passed on from oral sex are:

- Syphilis
- HIV
- Chlamydia
- Gonorrhea
- Herpes
- HPV

## Does my dental health impact my chance of getting or passing on an STI through oral sex?

**Yes** – poor oral health, like bleeding gums, cavities, and other sores or open wounds in the mouth can increase a person’s chance of getting an STI.

## Symptoms

It is very common for STIs to have no symptoms. You can have an oral STI and not know. If you do have symptoms they might include:

- Soreness or burning in your throat
- Swollen glands
- White spots in the mouth
- Cuts or tears in the mouth
- Blisters in the mouth
- Sores in the mouth

STI symptoms often do not appear right away and are similar to other illnesses. This is why it is so important to talk with your dental provider about any symptoms you have so they can connect you with the care you need.

### Washing

Following an oral sexual activity, rinse your mouth with water only. Brushing and flossing can cause irritation in your mouth. Bleeding gums and any small cuts in the mouth can increase the chance of getting an STI.



### Testing

STI testing is usually quick and easy. Plus, the sooner you know you have an STI, the quicker you can get treated.



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## Appendix B



### STI Testing Recommendation | Provider Guidance

#### Normal introductions

**Provider:** *Thank you for completing the Dental Patient Medical History form. As part of our review of your medical history, we make certain recommendations to address your overall health. These include specific follow-up questions from your medical history as well as some general recommendations about your overall health.*

**The provider would then do some of the routine and non-routine (based on their assessment) screenings: hypertension, depression, domestic violence, cognitive assessment, etc.**

**Provider:** *One of the things we recommend to all sexually active adolescents and adults is to complete a self-test for sexually transmitted infections. We worry about this because some STIs cause diseases and conditions of the mouth such as gum disease, blood infections, inflammation, and even cancer. Here is a brochure that tells you more. If you have any questions, please follow up with your primary care physician or nurse here at the clinic.*

**The provider would then move on to the dental examination.**

#### References

Included within the document as hyperlinks.