

California is Still Facing an STI Epidemic

- Non-profit safety-net health centers, like Planned Parenthood locations, are still reeling from increased operating costs and decreased utilization as a result of COVID-19. Additionally, Planned Parenthood has already been subject to 18 clawbacks on lab services in just the last three years.
- A few months before the COVID-19 pandemic began, the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) announced that STI rates had reached “epidemic levels” and were at their highest rates in 30 years [1]. Layered under the current public health emergency, that STI epidemic remains.
- Public data shows that many Californians are delaying preventive health care, heightening concerns that patients with asymptomatic infections will spread an STI unknowingly while at the same time suppressed testing will artificially reduce public data on STI infection rates [2].
- Every year, Planned Parenthood affiliates provide 1.5 million gonorrhea, chlamydia, and HIV tests for Californians in Medi-Cal and limited scope programs like Family PACT through on-site laboratories. Nine out of every ten patients who visit a Planned Parenthood health center in California are covered by Medi-Cal or Family PACT.
- The Department of Health Care Services has three essential STI tests – gonorrhea, chlamydia, and HIV – scheduled for retroactive reductions of up to 20% less than current rates under approved State Plan Amendments (SPAs) 20-0003 and 20-0010. **The rate cuts to these three tests and their accompanying clawbacks will cost Planned Parenthood up to \$7 million, with an ongoing \$5 million annual loss thereafter.**
- The \$5 million ongoing cuts to STI services at Planned Parenthood locations equates to 200,000 STI tests each year, severely undermining our ability to fight California's STI epidemic.

Retroactive cuts will disproportionately harm health centers that predominately serve communities of color and communities with low incomes – communities that have historically faced significant barriers to accessing health care and continue to experience the highest disparities in STI rates.

[1] CDPH Press Release, October 8, 2019. Reported Sexually Transmitted Diseases Reach Epidemic levels in California.
<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/OPA/Pages/NR19-025.aspx>

[2] New York Times. People Are Still Having Sex. So Why Are S.T.D. Rates Dropping?
<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/28/health/covid-std-testing.html?>