

# Pregnancy connects: Prenatal care for those at risk for syphilis in pregnancy



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CATEGORY: **Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity (ELC)**

The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) partnered with a local health department and county prenatal care clinic to establish the Pregnancy Connections Clinic to address the high prevalence of congenital syphilis (CS) in California's Central Valley. Over half of referred patients have enrolled, and the program continues to strengthen community partnerships.



## The “What”

Syphilis in pregnancy and subsequent CS are associated with limited prenatal care access, homelessness and methamphetamine use, which further complicate care during pregnancy. With this in mind, CDPH used Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity for the Prevention of Emerging Infectious Diseases (ELC) funding to partner with the San Joaquin County Department of Public Health and the San Joaquin County Clinic to create Pregnancy Connections Clinic (PConn).

PConn is designed to serve pregnant people at risk for syphilis through a harm reduction and trauma-informed care framework. Housed in the Family Medicine Department, PConn specifically serves those experiencing housing insecurity and substance use. Beyond routine prenatal care, PConn offers case management, transportation, child custody navigational support, housing referrals, and parenting resources. Clinical care extends to medication for opioid use disorder and postpartum/family planning care. PConn's two physicians are supported by a dedicated case manager and a medical assistant as well as the San Joaquin's Public Health Services.



More stories are available at [stories.cste.org](https://stories.cste.org)

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### The "So What"

Of 57 eligible patients referred to PConn, 31 (54%) have enrolled in its prenatal care. Of those enrolled, 13 (42%) were diagnosed with syphilis during pregnancy, 12 of whom received adequate treatment.

Referrals hinge on community engagement in collaboration with the local public health department, which provides CS prevention services (e.g. syphilis education, testing and treatment, and linkage to care). For instance, on a recent public health visit to a local family shelter, one pregnant resident not yet in prenatal care was identified as having syphilis. The public health nurse on site-initiated treatment and referred them to PConn. At first the patient was hesitant; however, the public health nurse emphasized the clinic's convenient location, PConn's relationship with public health that would ensure continuity of the syphilis treatment, and PConn's enhanced case management. Soon after, the client successfully attended her first appointment and continues to receive prenatal care.

### The "Now What"

PConn aims to reach and serve more patients by collaborating with harm reduction organizations, shelters, and emergency departments. Formative and programmatic evaluations are ongoing. Finally, development of materials that will enable other jurisdictions to replicate these efforts in their own communities is underway. ELC funding supports all of PConn's work to reduce CS morbidity in the California Central Valley.

Learn more about PConn:

<https://communityconnectionssjc.org/programs/details/pregnancy-connections-clinic/#:~:text=Pregnancy%20Connections%20Clinic%20is%20an,County%20clinic%20in%20French%20Camp>

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