

Issue Brief: Elimination of Mother-to-Child HIV & Syphilis

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NEED TO KNOW

The World Health Organization (WHO) has declared Bermuda to have eliminated mother-to-child transmission of HIV and syphilis (EMTCT) - one of only a few countries that has achieved this goal (see box below). WHO's sustainable development goals placed a high importance on preventing MTCT. Bermuda's process to confirm the elimination of MTCT began in 2015, under the guidance of the Pan-American Health Organization. Among other activities, it required extensive documentation review, tracing and verification, spot-checking services for the relevant populations by our Epidemiology & Surveillance Unit, and the Department of Health's Clinical Laboratory, Maternal Health Programme, Communicable Disease Control Clinic and other partners including the Bermuda Hospitals Board.



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FAST FACTS

To be declared free from mother-to-child transmission of HIV & Syphilis, the Ministry of Health team were required to show:

- The rate of mother-to-child transmission of HIV was less than 2%
- New cases of HIV infections in infants was 0.3 or less per 1,000 live births
- Cases of congenital syphilis of 0.5 or less per 1,000 births, including stillbirths
- More than 95% of mothers had antenatal visits that included testing for HIV & Syphilis
- Treatment for HIV and Syphilis was available to more than 95% of pregnant women with HIV and/or syphilis
- Bermuda had a monitoring and surveillance system to capture the relevant data
- The laboratory services and testing on the island are reliable, accurate and timely
- Bermuda had programmes aligned with WHO's six aspects of a health system: good health services, well-performing health workforce, well-functioning health information system, equitable access to care, good financing system, leadership & governance.
- Bermuda had a rights-based approach, which included, but is not limited to, the protection of persons with HIV, respect of confidentiality and prevention of gender-based violence.

OTHER COUNTRIES TO ELIMINATE MOTHER-TO-CHILD TRANSMISSION OF HIV & SYPHILIS INCLUDE:

- Cuba (2015)
- Belarus (2016)
- Thailand (2016)
- Armenia (HIV only)
- Republic of Moldova (Syphilis only)

Next Steps:

Our success will be published in the WHO Weekly Epidemiological Record and added to the list of only a few countries that met the WHO standard. The review also provided some suggestions for improving and maintaining our status as a country without maternal transmission of mother-to-child HIV or Syphilis. These suggestions included:

- Review legislation
- Strengthen protection of personal health information
- Develop systematic data collection plan for MTCT
- Continued use of the most current guidelines for managing pregnant women with HIV and syphilis.
- Review national policies to promote sexual health information to adolescents.

For more information visit: gov.bm/health-data-and-monitoring